

EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS

*The Divine Plan
of the Ages*



2nd Annual

Summer Bible Lectures

AUGUST 11-14, 2003

Tri-County church of Christ
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CHRIST—THE FULLNESS OF GOD’S ETERNAL PLAN

Ephesians 1:3-14

by Bobby Graham

Fullness of the Godhead: Father (architect),
Son (agent),
Holy Spirit (guarantee).

United Purpose: Holy, unblemished people (v. 4),
to praise His glorious grace (v. 6),
both purposes combined (v. 12).

ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Blessings	Meaning	Location
Election	Choosing	In Him
Predestination	Pre-set bounds	By Christ
Acceptance	Favored, pleasing	In the beloved
Redemption	Release by payment of ransom—forg.	In whom
Revelation	Making known	In Him
Uniting	Sum up	In Christ
Inheritance	What we hope to receive	In Christ

"In heavenlies"

Eph 1:3 All spiritual blessings	1:20 Christ's throne (rule)	2:6 Christians and Christ	3:10 Spiritual principalities, powers	6:12 Spiritual opposition, warfare
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Who enjoys these blessings? (1:1,13-14)

1. Heard the gospel.
2. Trusted (believed).
3. Sealed with Holy Spirit (identified).
4. Received the earnest of the inheritance.
5. Saints—faithful children of God.



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THE CHURCH, THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

Ephesians 1:15-23

by Oscar Miles

INTRODUCTION: The church is the people of all ages and places who have fellowship with God through Christ. How are these people "the fullness of Christ?" Perhaps they are the fulfillment of His work, the product of all that He did. Or perhaps they are filled by Him.

This passage is a description of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians. He thanked God for the Ephesians and prayed for their growth in wisdom, and especially in God's great power toward them. The core: Christians, we should *fully* appreciate "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (verse 3), that is, cherish and esteem all described in verses 3-14. In verses 15-23, Paul emphasizes revelation, hope, inheritance and especially the great power of God exercised for Christians.

Verses 15-23 tells how Christ fills the church with wisdom, hope and power. Thus, "the fullness of Christ" as Christ filling the church is the most likely interpretation.

1. Commendation: verse 15. Paul's reason his prayer of thanksgiving: their faith toward God and love toward the saints. True faith towards God leads to love of brethren, for "the Magnet that draws sinners to himself draws them together also . . . as the spokes of a wheel approach the hub they at the same time approach each other" (Hendrickson 96). They had heard, believed, and been sealed (verses 13-14), and had responded in faith and love (verse 15). Paul thanks God for them and prayed for their further spiritual growth.

2. Thanksgiving: verse 16. Fitting to thank God for specific brethren.

BODY: Paul insists they be strengthened through a growth in knowledge. Many pray for new spiritual blessings. Paul prays Christians will grow in appreciation, understanding, and use of the blessings they already have. This is an excellent idea for us!

I) The Nature of Complete (Full) Spiritual Enlightenment (verses 17-18a): The source of spiritual enlightenment is the revelation of the Son by the glorious Father.

A) A spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of Him: verse 17. Almost anywhere you run across the word "spirit" without the qualifier "holy," you will find disagreements as to whether the Holy Spirit or man's spirit or attitude is meant. I still find the academic exercise stimulating, but in passages like this one I care less and less. When it comes to spiritual wisdom only the Holy Spirit reveals it and we only grasp it if we have the correct disposition (spirit) towards wisdom.

B) A spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him: verse 17. I think a good case can be made that "revelation" is more naturally connected to the Holy Spirit (NIV) than to our disposition, but again, it matters little. Paul wants disciples to receive

wisdom and knowledge from God's revelation. Paul prays for the gift (wisdom), mentions the mode (revelation), source (Spirit), and content (of Him [God]). It has been revealed (verse 9). We need to "grasp its full significance" and "[our] own place with in it" (O'Brien 132).

C) Eyes of heart enlightened: verse 18a. The glorious Father (verse 17) alone gives the wisdom that enlightens darkened hearts (5:8). To whatever extent we permit sin in our lives, to that extent, our hearts are darkened, our understanding of God and all that is good is tainted. Only God can clear our minds to see clearly all that is good and righteous and holy; that is, all that comes from God. John Eadie describes the figure of this passage beautifully: "If the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God be conferred, then the scales fall from the moral vision, and the cloudy haze that hovers around it melts away. It is as if a man were taken during night to a lofty eminence shrouded in vapour and darkness, but morning breaks, the sun rises, the mist disparts, rolls into curling wreaths and disappears, and the bright landscape unfolds itself. Such is the result, and the design is that they may obtain a view of three special truths" (87). Knowledge must be put to practical use. We understanding of this knowledge, comprehension of our hope and inheritance and especially of how God uses His power for our benefit.

II) The Content of Complete (Full) Spiritual Enlightenment (verses 18b-23): Emphasis on knowledge – to *fully* know – fundamentals: hope, inheritance, God's power towards them.

A) The hope of His calling: verse 18. It is His not "our" calling. Why did God call us? There is more than one correct answer to that. We might say that God has called us to serve Him, to be separate, to love others. True, but Paul often links God's calling with our "hope": Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; Philippians 3:14; (2 Thessalonians 1:5-12). So, by calling us to become His children, He calls us to expect all the blessings which He has promised: salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8), righteousness (Galatians 5:5), resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52-55), forgiveness, strength, peace, contentment, glory, eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7), and many others, so that everything is summed up in Christ (verse 10). Bible "hope" is "desire plus expectation," with the emphasis on expectation.

2:1-10 focuses on saints leaving a life of sin for a life of good works in Christ. If our goal is to honor our Creator and our focus is eternal life, we will have no time for sin and idleness.

B) The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints: verse 18. "His inheritance" could refer to us as God's inheritance as Israel was God's inheritance. But here are three reasons I think Paul refers to "His inheritance" for us: 1) the passage is emphasizing what God has done for us, and "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" amplifies "the hope of His calling"; 2) the parallel in Colossians 1:12 refers to our inheritance from God; 3) this makes good symmetry:

"the hope of His calling" (given at the beginning, when we were born into His family), "the riches . . . of His inheritance" (given at the end) and "His power towards believers" (given now for daily living). ("In the saints" is then better understood as "among the saints.") [Nevertheless it is true that the saints are His inheritance and we should fully appreciate the value He places on us and strive to live up to it.] Do we appreciate how "rich and glorious" is the "glorious wealth" of our inheritance (Barnes 31). Paul prays the saints would fully know and fully appreciate this inheritance. If we fully appreciate the "Father *of glory*" (verse 17), we will value the inheritance *of glory* He promises.

C) The surpassing greatness of His power toward believers: verses 19-23. Paul prays believers will appreciate the power God exercises on their behalf as *in Christ*. If the above interpretation is true, then Paul is emphasizing the strength that God gives us now, in this life, to live righteously. Making mention of the past and future, Paul concentrates on the present. God's power is sufficient to bring our hope to realization in our final inheritance. The NIV loses some of the force of the original with the translation "the working of His mighty strength." Paul sees the "actual operation" (working), the power behind that working (of the strength) and reaches even back to "the original unexhausted might" (Eadie 95). Paul wants saints to understand and appreciate the power God exercises on their behalf, though it surpasses our ability to fully comprehend (cf. 3:19 for a similar figure). God has placed great power at our disposal (cf. 6:10-17). But how do we know God has such power?

1) Demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ: verse 20. God publicly demonstrated this power by raising Jesus. Evidence: the empty tomb and personal appearances of Jesus. But my subheading could be misleading. When God raised Jesus, it was not mere proof of God's ability to raise us, it was the source or beginning of His work to raise us from spiritual death. Only divine power can raise a physical body from death, and only divine power can bring a spiritually dead person to life. Consider these verses in connection 2:1-10. The power by which God raised Christ, He exercises to raise us from spiritual death. This is not puncticular action but continuous.

["The same kind of power manifested in the resurrection and glorification of Jesus, is exhibited in the quickening of sinners from death. The 20th verse of this chapter is illustrated in the 6th of the following chapter, and all between is a virtual digression, or suspension of the principal idea in the analogy. The power which the apostle wishes them to comprehend was the power which quickened Jesus, and had in like manner quickened them; which raised Jesus, and had in the same way raised them; which had elevated Jesus to God's right hand in the heavenly places, and had also raised them with Christ, and made them sit with Christ in the heavenly places. Such is the general idea" (Eadie 91).]

2) **Demonstrated in the reign of Christ:** verses 20b-23. We know of God's power toward us because we believe Jesus is reigning at God's right hand. God gave public testimony: John 14:16, 17, 26, 28; 15:26; 16:5, 7, 13, 14, 17; Acts 2:33. The evidence was the coming of the Holy Spirit Who Jesus promised to send Him when had returned to the Father. Two proofs of God's power toward us: the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ with emphasis on the exaltation and subsequent reign. Extent of His reign: cf. Colossians 1:15-17. Adam was given dominion over the Earth, but men no longer exercise full dominion because of sin, but Christ, the perfect man, does have full dominion. Christ's dominion extends over every kind of authority, earthly and spiritual, present and future (verse 21).

(a) **The nature of His reign:** The rest of this chapter (verses 21-23) explains Jesus' exaltation (verse 20).

(i) **At the Father's right hand:** verse 20. "Right hand" man is a position of great authority, second only to the one on the throne.

(ii) **In the heavenly places:** verse 20. In the spiritual realm. A spiritual reign because spiritual kingdom (cf. John 18:36). The same power will seat us with Christ in the same heavenly places though not at His right hand (2:6).

(b) **The position of His reign**

(i) **Above everything:** verses 21-22a. He rules over everything, present and future. And let us not lose sight of the main point: the power that exalted Christ above everything in the universe is the power that works on our behalf.

(ii) **Especially the church:** verses 22b-23. The real application for us.

(A) **His body:** verse 23.

(B) **His fullness:** verse 23. This passage can reasonably be interpreted in two ways: 1) the church fills up Christ; 2) Christ fills up the church. The Greek can take either meaning. Here are the main arguments for both:

1. The church fills Christ: "Filled" is used this way in Mark 6:43; 8:20; 2:21; Matthew 9:16; 1 Corinthians 10:26; Colossians 1:19; 2:9. If Christ is the head, He needs a body to fill Him up (metaphorically). So, "as the bridegroom he incomplete without the bride; as a vine he cannot be thought of without the branches; as shepherd he is not seen without his sheep; and so also as head he finds his full expression in his body, the church" (Hendrickson 104). Charles Hodge: similar grammar structure using "filled" in the New Testament refers to filling in an active sense without exception (as quoted in Stott 63-64).

2. Christ fills the church: The passage could read, "the church is his 'body' (he directs it); the church is his 'fullness' (he fills it)" (Stott 65). Christ does fill His church or His people (2:21-22; 3:19; [4:13]; John 1:16; Romans 15:29). Eadie affirms that this interpretation better fits the "general use of this term [fullness] in the New Testament" (113). This parallels the general structure of the passage: Christ rules everything (verses 21-22a), especially the church (verse 22b) and fills everything (verse 23b), especially the church (verse 23a). This fits the context – which stresses the power and dominion of Christ – better. To say that this all-powerful Christ needs to be filled up seems out of place. Ephesians 4:13-16 gives us this image in a more detailed metaphor. Christ does fill the church, for He "fills all in all."

[Another alternative somewhat combines these two meanings. Barnes hints at it: "his church . . . *fills up* the honour of the universal dominion, and makes his empire complete" (34). In other words, the church fills Christ in the sense of making His dominion a complete dominion over everything. This certainly fits the context, and would make both of the above interpretations true to a certain extent.]

CONCLUSION: The church is the fullness of Christ. Christ fills His people with hope – the expectation of an eternal inheritance – and with power for daily living that our hope might find realization in eternity after lives of faithful service to His glory. Indeed "the church is named . . . [the] fullness, because it holds or contains the fullness of Christ. It is the filled-up receptacle of spiritual blessings from Him" (Eadie 113). These blessings are "bestowed in no scanty or shriveled dimensions—for the church is filled, so loaded and enriched, that it becomes the fullness itself—and as that fullness is so vitally connected with its origin, it is lovingly and truly named 'the fullness of Christ'" (Eadie 115). Just as Jesus promised "a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over" poured into our lap as we submit to Him (Luke 6:38).

The emphasis is about fully knowing the great power of God in our lives through Jesus Christ. God wants us to know about this great power; thus, the Scriptures. If we do not fully know, it is our own fault. If we do not fully experience God's power toward believers, it is our own fault for either not knowing the facts or not applying them to our lives.

We must believe the God who is powerful enough to raise Jesus and exalt Him over all, is powerful enough to subdue all evil in our own lives and draw us to Himself. God's power made us spiritually alive (2:1-10) and only God's power will sustain our spiritual lives. Let us then not rest in our own strength but in the energy of God's mighty power.

Whether or not then, the phrase "fullness of Christ" refers to how Christ fills the church with every good thing, the entirety of this passage certainly does teach that Christ fills all in all. Specifically, Christ fills the church with "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation," an enlightened

heart, an incredible hope, a rich, glorious inheritance, and a power so great that everything falls under our Lord's dominion.

We need to fully appreciate that the all-powerful God has placed Jesus above all authorities in Heaven and on Earth. He will also fulfill the hope to which He has called us. He will give us an inheritance beyond imagining. He will exercise His power for us and has already by raising Jesus and making Him the head of the church that, as the Head, He might bless those who are in Him with every spiritual blessing (1:3).

When depressed, tempted or persecuted, do you find your strength in the Lord? If not, do you not realize the great spiritual power God exerts on your behalf? How great a power raised you from spiritual death to life? It is the same great power that raised and exalted Jesus! Or do you not think that God exercises that power on your behalf? Then you are ignorant of the grace of God and His desire to bring you to eternal life. May God enlighten the eyes of our hearts to bring us that knowledge, that understanding, that full trust in the Almighty's power to bring us home to Him.

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INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

Colossians 1:1-12; 4:7-18

by Keith Sharp

- I. Author:** the Apostle Paul, with the help of Timothy - 1:1,23; 4:18.
- II. From Where Written:** prison in Rome - 1:7-8; 4:3; cf. Acts 28:16,20,30-31; Philippians 1:7,12-14; 4:22.
- III. When Written**
 - A. about the same time as Ephesians and Philemon - 4:7-14; cf. Ephesians 6:20-22; Philemon 1:1,9-13,22-24.
 - B. perhaps before Philippians.
 - 1. Onesimus still with Paul - 4:7-9; Philemon 1,10-13.
 - 2. Epaphras, Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, and Demas all with Paul at the time - 4:10-14; Philemon 23-24.
 - 3. both Ephesians and Colossians sent by Tychicus at the same time - 4:7-8; Ephesians 6:21-22.
 - C. dates the letter about A.D. 60.
- IV. To Whom Written:** to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse" - 1:2.
- V. The City of Colosse**
 - A. about one hundred miles east of Ephesus in the Lycus River valley in the Roman province of Asia.
 - B. approximately twelve miles upriver from Hierapolis and Laodicea - cf. 4:13.
 - C. city had once been large and important but had been surpassed by its neighboring cities in New Testament times and had diminished to little more than a country village.
 - D. located in a wealthy region dominated by two kindred trades: wool production from the sheep that grew nearby for garment production in Laodicea and the dyeing of cloth.
 - E. chalky waters of the Lycus River well suited to dyeing.
 - F. inhabitants of the city primarily native Phrygians and Greek colonists.
 - G. Around two thousand Jewish families brought into the region by Antiochus the Great (223 - 187 BC), and had prospered.
 - H. joined by more Jews, influence was great.
- VI. The Church in Colosse**
 - A. no evidence Paul ever preached in Colosse.
 - 1. learned of their faith by report - 1:4.
 - 2. had evidently not seen him - 2:1.

- B. gospel probably came to Colosse while Paul in Ephesus - Acts 19:1,10.
- C. heard the gospel from Epaphras, Paul's fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ - 1:7.
- D. at time Paul wrote, Epaphras with him in Rome.
 - 1. Epaphras a Colossian - 4:12-13.
 - 2. prayed in their behalf and very concerned for them - Ibid.
- E. church at Colosse made up predominantly of Gentiles - 1:21,27; 2:13; 3:5-7.
- F. Archippus with them at the time - 4:17.
- G. Paul and the Colossians very interested in each other - 4:7-9.
- H. Colossians bothered both by pagan philosophy - 2:4,8.
 - 1. denied the preeminence of Christ - 2:9-10.
 - 2. denied his incarnation - 1:21-22; 2:9.
 - 3. taught the worship of angels - 2:18-19.
 - 4. went to pagan extremes.
 - a. either asceticism (denial of all pleasure) - 2:20-23.
 - b. or hedonism (indulgence in all sinful pleasures) - 3:1-7.
- I. an element of Judaism - 2:11-17.
- J. These divergent teachings later converged into various forms of heresy known as gnosticism.

VII. Purpose: declare the **Preeminence of Christ** in all things - 1:13-20; 2:8-10; 3:4,11,17.

- A. the fullness of God,s plan for human redemption - 1:19.
- B. "the fullness of the Godhead bodily" - 2:9.
- C. our completeness "in Him" - 2:10.
- D. "our life" - 3:4.
- E. must do all in His name - 3:17.
- F. our "all in all" - 3:11.

VIII. Ephesians and Colossians Parallel

- A. overall: the **Scheme of Redemption** hidden in the mind of God from all eternity, revealed by the Holy Spirit, fulfilled in Christ, and manifested by the church.
 - 1. **Colossians: Christ the fullness of God** - 1:19.
 - 2. **Ephesians: the church the fullness of Christ** - Ephesians 1:22-23.
- B. Of 155 verses in Ephesians, 78 have parallel in Colossians.

IX. Colossians and Hebrews

- A. Colossians: the preeminence of Christ primarily contrasted with pagan philosophy.
- B. Hebrews" the preeminence of Christ over Judaism.

C. Together: Christian not to turn to or borrow from either pagan philosophy (human wisdom) or Judaism (human religious tradition).

D. Christ is complete, and we are complete in Him.

X. Theme: Christ, the fullness of God (1:19).

XI. Colossians 1:1-12

A. Salutation - verses 1-2.

B. Introduction - verses 3-12.

1. thanksgiving for the church in Colosse - verses 3-8.
2. prayer for them - verses 9-12.
 - a. what Paul asked for: their spiritual growth.
 - (1) knowledge: the facts.
 - (2) wisdom: ability to apply the facts.
 - (3) spiritual understanding: insight into spiritual things.
 - b. practical results: "that you may walk worthy of the Lord"
 - (1) "fully pleasing Him"
 - (2) "being fruitful in every good work"
 - (3) "increasing in the knowledge of God"
 - (4) "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy"
 - (5) "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light"

XII. Conclusion - Colossians 4:7-18

A. news by Tychicus and Onesimus - verses 7-9.

B. various greetings - verses 10-15.

C. directions - verses 16-17.

D. Paul's personal salutation - verse 18.

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NOTES:

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS -- An Introduction

Ephesians 1:1-3,22-23; 6:21-24

by Bobby Graham

Writer: Paul, an apostle, by the will of God.

The writer of this letter obviously thought it wise to affirm his apostolic office in writing this letter dealing with such a sensitive subject—the eternal plan of God to include many who were not Jews in redemption. He also bases his work and his writing on the doubly sure foundation of the will of God, lest any doubt or deny his motive or veracity in what he writes.

Paul describes himself as a prisoner in 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20. His (first) imprisonment in Rome is mentioned in Acts 28:30-31; it seems to have taken place about A.D. 61-63. During this same period he also wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. Tychicus carried the epistles to Ephesus and Colossae, according to Eph. 6:21 and Col. 4:7-8.

Lesson to Learn: In situations where there is a need, wisely produce all evidence that you can to satisfy any doubts and to prepare people for a ready reception of the truth.

Note: Some modernists have denied Paul's authorship, insisting that someone copied profusely from Paul's Letter to Colossae, because of the remarkable similarity between the two letters. It has been demonstrated, however, that Ephesians is also similar to other N.T. letters, as well as showing marked differences with Colossians. (See William Hendrickson's Commentary on Ephesians for an excellent discussion of this matter, as well the destination of the letter.)

Audience: to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Paul's connection with the Christians in Ephesus began as early as his second journey (Acts 18) and included a couple of years' stay there, when he taught in the synagogue and in the school of Tyrannus. Read Acts 18-20 and Revelation 2:1-7 for additional information about the history of this church. Though his acquaintance with them was established, he makes no personal references to individuals there and expresses few intimacies in his letter to them, with 1:15-16; 3:2; 4:21-22; and 6:21-22 being exceptions. A possible explanation for this absence is the nature of the material and the design of the letter for others in the area of Asia Minor (cf. 1:1). A wider audience was probably intended. It is possible that this letter was a circular letter, making its rounds to Laodicea and then to Colossae (Col. 4:16).

Message: Grace and peace from God and from Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the highest point ever reached in the message of redemption is found in this letter, reaching back to eternity past ("before the laying down of the world"), when there was only Deity, and stretching forward to eternity future, when the redeemed will be forever with the Lord who redeemed them. The message of this letter, however, makes it certain that humanity was in God's mind and plan.

Involved in the redemption described so minutely in this letter are both blessings and burdens (responsibilities). The outline being used here emphasizes (1) The Wealth of God's People, (2) Their Walk before God and Man, and (3) Their Warfare.

AN EXAMINATION OF EPHESIANS: THREE THEMES OF REDEMPTION

I. The Wealth of the Church (Chap. 1-3)

- A. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings.
 - 1. Election (v. 4)
 - 2. Predestination (v. 5)
 - 3. Acceptance (v. 6)
 - 4. Redemption (v. 7)
 - 5. Mystery of His will-wisdom and insight (v. 8, 9)
 - 6. Convened in Christ (v. 10)
 - 7. Inheritance (v. 11)
 - 8. Identified as Christ's (v. 13)
 - 9. God's pledge of future payment (v. 14)
- B. God will bestow the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (1:17).
 - 1. He has a rich and glorious inheritance in the saints (1:18).
 - 2. He will exert His great power on behalf of the saved (1:19).
 - 3. His fullness fills the church (1:23).
- C. God has fashioned us as His workmanship in Christ, having graciously saved us through our faith in Christ (2:8-10).
- D. God has brought us near by the blood of Christ (2:13).
- E. God has reconciled warring segments of humanity in Christ, so that both now have access to the Father (2:14-18).
- F. God has built us into a spiritual building around Christ as the chief cornerstone (2:19-22).
- G. God has summed up in Christ the mystery of the ages and has revealed it through the apostles and prophets (3:1-21).

II. The Walk of the Church (chap. 4, 5)

- A. Walk in unity, which God has produced (4:1-16)
- B. Walk in newness of life (4:17-32).
- C. Walk in love toward God and man (5:1-7).
- D. Walk in light (5:8-14).
- E. Walk in wisdom (5:15-21), as seen in submission to one another in the fear of God.
 - 1. In marriage (5:22-33)
 - 2. In parents and children (6:1-4)
 - 3. In masters and servants (6:5-9)

III. The Warfare of the Church (chap. 6)

- A. God's exhortation: be strong (6:10)
- B. God's provisions
 - 1. Power (v. 10)
 - 2. Armor (v. 11, 13-18)
 - 3. Information about the enemy (v.12)
- C. God's way of victory
 - 1. Stand (v.14)
 - 2. Pray (v. 18), for self and others (supplication)
 - 3. Watch (v. 18)
 - 4. Persevere (v. 18)

Conclusion

- 1. With such a treasure of blessings obtained for us, is there not sufficient motive for us to walk as we ought and to fight the good warfare?
- 2. Listen to Paul, whose obstacles were many and adversaries adamant, in 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

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NOTES:

THE REVELATION OF THE ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD

Ephesians 3:1-7

by Oscar Miles

INTRODUCTION: Verse 1 introduces our text with a personal appeal. Verse 1 picked up in verse 14. His appeal to the Gentiles causes Paul to digress and write about his role in revealing God's eternal plan. He is suffering specifically for bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. Yet the real substance of our passage is the equal standing of the Gentiles in the kingdom.

Three emphases: 1) the revelation is entirely from God; 2) Paul has a special ministry in revealing God's eternal plan; 3) his special ministry includes bringing the Gentiles into God's kingdom on equal footing with the Jews.

Lessons for us: 1) appreciate Scripture as God's revelation to us; 2) our duty to teach without partiality; 3) glory in opportunities to teach and support teachers who take the gospel out into all the world.

BODY:

I) The Message Comes from God: Notice that all credit goes to God for the plan, the revelation and even the ministry of Paul: stewardship, given (verse 2); made known (verse 3); been revealed (verse 5); gift, given (verse 7), grace, given (verse 8).

A) Jesus Compelled Paul to Preach this Message: verse 1. Paul glorifies Jesus: even in imprisonment he lives under the lordship of Jesus. He is a prisoner because of the cause of Christ. "For this reason" points back to the union of Jew and Gentile and the blessings of all believers in 2:11-22. Let us never despise our stewardship, no matter how great or small we or others consider it to be, because it is a stewardship from God.

B) God's Grace and Power Bestowed this Stewardship on Paul: verses 2,7. Paul was entrusted with dispensing the grace of God! He had the only message through which men could receive God's grace. Paul was entrusted with God's grace (verse 2) and his ministry was a gift of God's grace (verse 7). Emphasis on God giving Paul his ministry in verse 7: 1) I was MADE a minister; 2) according to the GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE; 3) which was GIVEN TO ME; 4) according to the working of HIS POWER. Verses 2,7 form a paragraph: the gospel was given as a stewardship *to* Paul and made known *through* Paul.

C) The Holy Spirit Revealed the Mystery to Paul: verse 5. The content of the revelation: "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (verse 8). But more specifically in this paragraph: the full sharing of the Gentiles in the gospel (verse 6). Not revealed for Paul's sake but for the benefit of the Gentiles: (verse 2, "for you").

II) Paul's Participation in the Revelation of the Eternal Plan of God

- A) **Previously unrevealed:** verse 5. Thus a true mystery (verses 3,4,9). Much was revealed in Old Testament, but little was understood because either obscure or because of blind hearts. Even the prophets not privy to the meaning of all they said: 1 Peter 1:10-12. Some things not revealed until they happened. When Paul wrote, it was a new revelation.
- B) **Made Known to Paul:** verses 3,5. Once a mystery, now revealed to Paul by God.
- 1) **Directly revealed to a few:** verse 5. Corresponding structure: "in other generations" versus "now"; "was not made known" versus "has now been revealed"; "to the sons of men" versus "to His holy apostles and prophets."
 - 2) **Paul given great insight:** verse 4. It is the "mystery of Christ" because the eternal plan centers on Jesus Christ. (Or possibly, because Christ revealed God. That is, Jesus Himself is the content of the revelation of the mystery of who God really is: He has fully revealed God to man.)
- C) **God Made Him a Servant of it:** verses 1,2,7. Deep down we know what truly matters in this life is helping others—especially spiritually—even if it means slowing down and changing course. Even in prison (verse 1), Paul was eager to continue serving the Gentile saints. Even when some tried to cause Paul more grief while in prison, he maintained his servant attitude (Philippians 1:15-20).
- D) **He Suffered for It:** verse 1. Because Paul preached to the Gentiles, they stirred up trouble for him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:15ff., especially verse 21), resulting in inciting a mob and his arrest (Acts 21:28ff.), and still he remained committed to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22). Now he was in prison in Rome for them. Are the Ephesians ashamed? Paul considers it an honor (cf. verse 13). Should they and we not to give him a close hearing?

III) The Content of the Eternal Plan of God

- A) **Is Found in the Written Word:** verses 3,5. God revealed His eternal plan only to the apostles and prophets. With no more apostles or prophets, we only know it through their written words. Paul had already referred to this mystery briefly: "the clause, 'as I wrote before in few words' is tantamount to 'as I briefly indicated above'" (Hendriksen 153). Tyndale renders it, "as I wrote above in feawe wordes." This refers probably to 2:11-22.
- B) **Can be Grasped:** verse 4. This verse does not teach explicitly that we can understand the gospel as well as Paul did. It says, "When read you can understand that I have great insight into the mystery of Christ" or "If you read what I wrote then,

you can see that I truly understand" (NCV) the mystery. Paraphrasing verses 3-5, "When you read what I wrote, you will see that I have great insight into the gospel, an insight God gave me by direct revelation." Nevertheless, to see that Paul's insight is great, we must be able to understand what he wrote. If I cannot understand something, I cannot say that the author has great insight. Periodicals ask experts to review books. To conclude that Paul had great insight into the gospel means they had sufficient knowledge of the subject to make such a judgment. Paul wanted all disciples to have great insight, factual and experiential: 1:17-19. We know how wise God is when dig deep, studying and applying the Bible.

C) It is the equal participation of Gentiles in the gospel: verse 6. Emphasis on Paul's ministry to the Gentiles: verses 1,2,6. God revealed through Old Testament prophets that He would welcome the Gentiles, but this remained a mystery to the Jews.

- 1) **Fellow heirs:** Have the same inheritance. Some we have already: 1:11. Some is future: 5:5. In God's house, all are equal children: God shows no partiality.
- 2) **Fellow members:** Gentiles are as much members of the body (1:22-23) as Jews. Cf. 2:11-22. There is one body (4:4) made of many different parts, all necessary for the proper growth of the body: 4:16. , Christ's conciliatory death fused Jew and Gentile into one body (2:16). The equal footing of Gentiles is not a choice made by the Jews but an action taken by the Lord.
- 3) **Fellow partakers:** Gentiles participate as equals in every respect. Jews must never consider them second class. Yet in premillennial schemes (which, oddly, are Gentile schemes), Gentiles are still second class. Once excluded from physical Israel, Gentiles are now fully included (2:11-13). Not an uneasy truce or even an "outward . . . *partnership*, but . . . a perfect spiritual union" (Hendriksen 155).
 - (a) **What They Participate In – the Promise:** What promise? Great eternal promises go back to at least Genesis 12:3. I link 3:6 with one or both of the promises of 1:13 or 2:12. The Holy Spirit as a promise: 1:13; Acts 2:38; 19:2; Galatians 3:2, 14. The covenants of promise: includes fellowship with God through Christ and hope (2:12).
 - (b) **How They Participate in the Promise:** "In Christ": the sphere in which they participate, the basis of their ability to enjoy full fellowship with God and all saints. "Through the gospel": the instrument through which they come to fully participate with God's people. Not on their own merit, but "in Christ." Not by *mere* human volition (as if asserting their rights or inventing a medium) but only through the gospel they could fully participate.

- (i) **In Christ:** Can only participate "in Christ" since all spiritual blessings are in Him (1:3) and all things are summed up in Him (1:10). "In Christ Jesus through the gospel" modifies fellow-heirs, fellow-members, fellow-partakers.
- (ii) **Through the gospel:** Back to the mystery, the revelation, the written and spoken Word of God. This passage is about Paul's taking this message to the Gentiles. Gentiles cannot know without hearing the gospel and accepting it by faith: Romans 10:14-17.

CONCLUSION: This paragraph explains why Paul is a prisoner for the Gentiles (verse 1) and sets the stage for a further discussion of God's eternal plan. Do we fully appreciate that these Scriptures are from God? It also lays a foundation for Paul's prayer for their strengthening in faith, love, knowledge, indeed to "all the fullness of God" (verse 19). Do you enjoy the fullness of God? If not, God invites you also to become a fellow-heir. If you do enjoy this fellowship, do you tell people about Christ without partiality? Do you support preachers and teachers who make great sacrifices to bring the gospel to all the world?

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BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND

Ephesians 4:17-32

by William Stewart

- Two distinct minds and associated characteristics are presented by the apostle...
- The mind is a wonderful blessing from God, able to accomplish the greatest good or conceive the worst evil...
- The mind of every accountable person is either FUTILE or RENEWED. Which it will be depends upon our reaction to the gospel...

MIND — *Gr. nous*,
“...the mind, comprising alike the faculties of feeling, judging, determining; hence specifically a. the intellective faculty, the understanding... b. reason...the faculty of perceiving divine things, of recognizing goodness and of hating evil... c. the power of considering and judging soberly, calmly and impartially...”
(Thayer’s)

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man.

- The manner of person we are is discovered by what we allow into our minds...
- An evil (**FUTILE**) mind is manifest by evil deeds (Ro 1:28; Eph 2:1-3)
- **FUTILITY** — *Gr. mataiotes*, “...emptiness as to results...” (Vine’s)
- Only in Ro 8:20; Eph 4:17; 2 Pe 2:18
- The **FUTILE** mind is accompanied by:
 - a) darkened understanding (v 18; Ps 115:4-8; Isa 44:18-20; Ro 1:21-23)
 - b) alienation from God (v 18; Eph 2:12; Col 1:21)
 - c) ignorance and blindness (v 18; Jn 12:40; ie. Pharaoh)
 - d) callousness, unfeeling, heartless (v 19; 1 Ti 4:2)
 - e) lewdness and sensual living in greed (v 19; 2 Pe 2:12-14; Jude 11)
- See the works of the **FUTILE** mind:
 - a) lying (v 25; Ac 5:1-11; Rev 21:8; Jn 8:44)
 - b) outbursts of anger (v 26; Ps 4:4; 37:8; 106:32-33; Pr 19:11)
 - c) theft (v 28; Ex 20:15; 1 Co 6:9-10)
 - d) corrupt speech (v 29; Mt 12:34-37; Jms 3:2-8)
 - e) bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice (v 31)
- Nor give place to the devil (v 27; Jms 4:7; Ro 13:11-14)
- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (v 30; Ps 78:40-42)
- The **FUTILE** mind makes us enemies of God (Col 1:21; Ro 8:6-8)
- We need to get rid of the **FUTILE** mind (v 22; Eze 18:30-32; Heb 12:1)

FUTILITY (*Gr. mataiotes*) has been rendered:
- ‘vanity’ (**King James Version**)
- ‘no profit’ (**Bible in Basic English**)
- ‘perverseness’ (**Weymouth New Testament**)
- ‘hopelessly’ (**New Living Translation**)
- ‘worthless’ (**Good News Translation**)
- ‘empty-headed, mindless’ (**The Message**)

Put on the new man which was created according to God.

- **RENEW** is to refresh, to reset, to begin anew...
- Old man must go out, new man must come in (*Eph 4:23-24*)
- Time and again, the Bible refers to the Christian way as **NEW**:
 - a) “...newness of life...” (*Ro 6:4*)
 - b) “...be transformed by the renewing of your minds...” (*Ro 12:2*)
 - c) “...inward man is being renewed day by day...” (*2 Co 4:16*)
 - d) “...a new creation...all things have become new...” (*2 Co 5:17*)
 - e) “...newborn babes...” (*1 Pe 2:2*)
- Note, this **RENEWING** is not a ‘once in a lifetime’ thing, but daily...
- The **RENEWED** mind:
 - a) is a learned way (*v 20-21; Mt 17:5; Isa 2:1-3; Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171*)
 - b) bears the likeness of God (*v 24; Ro 13:12-14; Gal 3:27*)
 - Conformed to His image (*Ro 8:29*)
 - We have the mind (*nous*) of Christ (*1 Co 2:16*)
 - We will be transformed further (*Php 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2*)
 - c) leaves **ALL** the old behind (*v 26-27; Ro 6:1-7; 1 Pe 1:14-16*)
 - d) replaces the old with better things (*v 28-32; Col 3:5-14*)
- Christianity is not a list of **DON’Ts**. For every **DON’T**, there is a **DO** given to the child of God. When speaking with people of the way of Christ, we must both crucify the **FUTILE** mind and develop the **RENEWED** mind...
- Fail to develop the **RENEWED** mind? See what happens (*Lk 11:24-26*)

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- We can give with our minds the supreme service or extreme rebellion...
 - The **FUTILE** mind will
 - The **RENEWED** mind will benefit us in this life and for eternity...

“...NO LONGER WALK AS THE REST OF THE GENTILES WALK...”

Formerly:

- futile minds (17)
- darkened understanding (18)
- alienated from God (18)
- ignorant and blind (18)
- past feeling (19)
- the old man (22)

Now:

- renewed minds (23)
- understand the Lord’s will (5:17)
- created according to God (24)
- taught (21)
- kind, tenderhearted and forgiving (32)
- the new man (24)

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THE PREEMINENT CHRIST

Colossians 1:13-23

by William Stewart

- Why such strong focus on the preeminence of Christ? Some are only willing to give Him prominence...
- We must acknowledge the true nature of Christ (*Jn 8:24*)
- His preeminence is revealed in four truths...

Preeminent over sin (13-14).

- Redeemer (*Isa 53:12; Eph 5:8; 1 Pe 2:9-10*)
- None other (*Ac 4:12; Mt 1:21; 1 Ti 2:5*)
- By His blood (*Ac 20:28; Ro 3:24-25; 1 Pe 1:19*)
- We are delivered and conveyed...

Preeminent of the Father (15a).

- He reveals God (*v 15; Jn 14:8; Heb 1:3*)
- Can't see the Father (*Jn 1:18; 1 Ti 1:17; Heb 11:27*), but He is perfectly disclosed through the Son...

Preeminent over all creation (15b-17).

- 'Firstborn' does not necessitate one who is 'born first', ie. Jacob (*Gen 27:18-40*); Ephraim (*Gen 48:14-20*); Joseph...
- *Ps 89:27* reveals what 'firstborn' means in relation to the Christ (*Php 2:9-11*)
- He is **NOT** the first creature, He is the Creator of all (*Jn 1:1-3; Rev 3:14*)
- "...He **IS** before all things..." — not **WAS** (*Jn 8:58; Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8, 11, 17*)
- "...in Him all things consist...", He holds all together (*Ac 17:28; Heb 1:3*)
- NOTE, creation is:
 - a) "by Him" — He is the origin of creation;
 - b) "through Him" — He is the channel by which all was made;
 - c) "for Him" — He is the reason for creation (ie. His glorification)

PREEMINENCE — *Gr. proteuo*,
"...to be first, hold first place..."
(Thayer's)

PREEMINENT — "...from Latin, ...to be outstanding, from prae + eminere to stand out... having paramount rank, dignity, or importance:
OUTSTANDING..."
(Webster's)

REDEMPTION — *Gr. apolutrosis*,
"...a releasing effect by payment of ransom, redemption, deliverance, liberation..."
(Thayer's)

DELIVERED — *Gr. rhoumai*,
"...to rescue from, to preserve from..."
(Vine's)

IMAGE — *Gr. eikon* (icon),
"...denotes an image; the word involves the two ideas of representation and manifestation..."
(Vine's)

FIRSTBORN — *Gr. prototokos*,
"...expressing His priority to, and preeminence over creation, not in the sense of being the first to be born..."
(Vine's)

Beware of heresies!!
"...because by means of him all [other] things were created...all [other] things have been created through him and for him." (NWT)

CONVEYED — *Gr. methistemi*,
"...to transpose, transfer, remove from one place to another..."
(Thayer's)

Preeminent in the church (18a).

- Church is often labeled the body of Christ (1 Co 12; Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16). He is the 'head' of the body...
- All authority is His (Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36; Eph 5:23). He is the 'head' of the church...
- None other can achieve that place, there is only 1 head
- The beginning (origin) of the church (Eph 1:4)
- He is victorious over death, the first of many to be so (Ac 26:23; 1 Co 15:20-23; Jn 11:25-26)

HEAD — *Gr. kephale*,
“...the head, both of men and of animals... metaph. anything supreme, chief, prominent; of persons, master, lord...”
(Thayer’s)

BEGINNING — *Gr. ardhē*,
“...a beginning, the origin, the active cause...”
(Vine’s)

That in all things He may have the preeminence (18b-23).

- Point made — in ALL things He is preeminent...
- Paul presents additional information, lest any doubts should arise...
- All fullness dwells in Him (*v 19*)
 - a) all the fullness of the Godhead (*Col 2:9*)
 - b) all the fullness of grace and truth (*Jn 1:16-17*)
 - c) all the fullness of the church (*Eph 1:22-23*)
- He (by blood) is the means of reconciliation for things in heaven and upon the earth...
 - a) Two possibilities for heavenly things:
 - already harmony (Father, angels, etc.)
 - those who looked unto His coming...
 - b) Man has been separated by sin (*Isa 59:1-2*)
 - c) We were alienated, enemies and wicked...
 - d) Now, reconciled, holy and blameless (*2 Co 5:18; Eph 1:10; Php 2:10*)
- Our redemption is conditional — “...IF...”
 - a) Bible teaching of ‘perseverance of the saints’ (*Ro 2:7; Heb 3:6; 10:38*)
 - b) “grounded” — having a foundation laid (*1 Co 3:11; Ac 4:11-12*)
 - c) “steadfast” — firmly seated, sedentary (*Ps 92:12-15*)
 - d) “not moved away” — displaced (*1 Co 15:58*)
- Knowing the Christ’s preeminence, first century Christians diligently spread the gospel “...to every creature under heaven...” (see *Mk 16:15*)

FULLNESS — *Gr. pleroma*,
“...repletion or completion, ie. (subj.) what fills (as contents...), or (obj.) what is filled (as container...)”
(Strong’s)

RECONCILE — *Gr. apokatallasso*,
“...to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace...”
(Vine’s)

- May we acknowledge and react to the preeminence of Christ...
- If we are in His kingdom, let us work zealously for Him...
- If He is to have preeminence in ALL THINGS, let us give Him preeminence in our lives (marriage, family, profession, resources...)

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THE CHURCH, THE ALIVE WITH CHRIST

Ephesians 2:1-10

by Keith Sharp

Introduction:

- A. When I was a twenty-one year old beginning preacher in Quitman, Arkansas, I invited our grocer, a Baptist, to a gospel meeting. He said he would come if the preacher would preach on "Salvation By Grace Through Faith." I did not know that was the very subject the visiting preacher would address that night. Yes, contrary to what many Protestant have been told, I believe with all my heart in "Salvation By Grace Through Faith."
- B. In Christ, His church, we who were formerly dead are now alive. - Ephesians 2:4-7
- C. How are we made alive in Christ?

Body:

I. All God has for man spiritually is in His Son, Christ Jesus. - Ephesians 1:3, 15-23

II. Past Condition: Dead in Sin. - Ephesians 2:1-3

- A. Condition: Dead - verse 1
 - 1. "you": Gentiles
 - 2. "dead": separated from God - James 2:26; Isaiah 59:1-2
- B. Cause: Trespasses and Sins - verse 1
 - 1. "trespasses" (*paraptoma*) - 1) to fall beside or near something; 2) a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness; 2a) a sin, misdeed.
 - 2. "sins" (*hamartia*): 1a) to be without a share in; 1b) to miss the mark; 1c) to err, be mistaken; 1d) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honour, to do or go wrong; 1e) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin.
- C. Manner of Life: Course of This World - verses 2-3
 - 1. "walked": manner of life - Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:1; 5:2
 - 2. "course"(*aion*): period of time, age
 - 3. "this world" (*kosmos*): the majority of mankind, under the dominance of Satan - Romans 12:2
 - 4. "the prince of the power of the air": Satan - Ephesians 6:11-12
 - 5. "sons of disobedience": Hebraism, disobedient
 - 6. "we all": Jew and Gentile
 - 7. "lusts of our flesh"
 - a. "lusts"(*epithumia*)- 1) desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust

b. "of our flesh" - Romans 8:6-8

(1) "desires of the flesh"

(2) "and of the mind"

D. Result: "by nature children of wrath" - verse 3

1. "nature"(*phusis*) - 1c) a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature - cf. Romans 2:14

2. "children of wrath": associated with wrath

III. Present Condition: Alive with Christ. - verses 4-7

A. Life: Fellowship with God - 1 John 1:1-3; 5:13

B. Where the Life Is

1. "with Christ" - verse 5; Romans 6:4-5

2. "in Christ Jesus" - verses 6,7,10; Romans 6:3

C. The Basis of the Life: God's

1. "mercy" (*eleos*): 1) mercy: kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them - verse 4; cf. Luke 10:33,37

2. "love": active good will - verse 4; cf. 1 John 3:16-18

3. "grace": undeserved favor - verse 5

4. "kindness": goodness, generosity - verse 7

IV. How: By Grace through Faith. - verses 8-10

A. God's Part: Grace

1. Is salvation wholly of grace?

a. If so, man has no part in his own salvation. - Acts 2:40

b. If man has no part in his own salvation, then either:

(1) unconditional election - Titus 2:11-12

(2) universalism - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

(3) no one saved - Matthew 25:46

2. Does the fact salvation is a gift eliminate all conditions? - Ephesians 2:8; cf. Acts 2:38; Joshua 6:2; give away a dollar bill

B. Man's Part: Faith

1. What is "faith"? - Hebrews 11:1,6

2. What about works? - Ephesians 2:9

a. Does this eliminate all works? - John 6:28-29; Galatians 5:6

- b. It eliminates boastful works. - Ephesians 2:9; Romans 3:27-28
- c. What is there to boast about in being baptized? - Romans 6:3-4
- d. God created us in Christ so that we might do the works of faith He foreordained us to live in. - Ephesians 2:10

Conclusion:

- A. God's grace was manifested in a gracious act of supreme love. - John 3:16-17
- B. Our faith must be manifested in a simple, trusting act of faith. - Galatians 3:26-27
- C. Will you by faith accept His grace?

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NOTES:

BE IMITATORS OF GOD - *part 1*

Ephesians 5:1-14

by Tom Rainwater

INTRODUCTION

Earlier in this epistle, Paul commands the Ephesians to put off “the old man” (4:22) that was “dead in trespasses and sins” (2:1). In the past, they had given themselves over to the deceitful lusts of the flesh (2:3; 4:22) and acted “according to the prince of the power of the air” (2:2). Now, as Christians forgiven by the mercy of God, they must “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk” (4:17). Rather, they are to “put on the new man, which was created according to God” (4:24). God planned from before the foundation of the world that His people should walk a different course (1:4). That path would be one of “righteousness and true holiness” (4:24), “faith” (3:17), “love” (1:4; 3:17; 4:2), humility and longsuffering (4:2), kindness and tenderheartedness (4:32), and forgiveness (4:32). In 4:32, Paul admonishes the Ephesians to forgive others just as God forgave them in Christ. Thus Paul begins his emphasis (5:1) that *God* is the pattern of conduct for the Christian in all things.

I. The Call to Imitation. (5:1-2).

A. Be followers of God. (v.1).

1. “followers” (KJV, NKJV, YLT); “imitators” (ASV, NASB, NIV, ESV).
 - a. “an imitator” (Thayer, p.415; Vine, p.245; Young, p.360.)
 - b. This is the Greek noun *mimetes* [3402] from which we get the English word “mimic.” (See also *1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; Hebrews 6:12.*) The verb form [3401] is found in: *2 Thessalonians 3:7,9; Hebrews 13:7; 3 John 11.*
 - c. We must copy God and duplicate His moral attributes to the best of our ability.
2. “as dear children” (KJV, NKJV); “as beloved children” (ASV, NASB, ESV); “as dearly loved children” (NIV).
 - a. The example of imitation is found in the father-child relationship. As an admiring child wants to imitate the qualities of his parents, so we must desire to live after the example of our heavenly Father.
 - b. A loved child will naturally want to love his parents in return. (*1 John 4:19*).
 - c. Sadly, some children are ungrateful to their parents for raising and caring for them. Let us not be ungrateful children of God.

B. Walk in Love. (v.2).

1. “Walk” [4043].
 - a. Signifies “the whole round of the activities of the individual life..” (Vine, p.664.)
 - b. “to regulate one’s life, to conduct one’s self..” (Thayer, p.504).
2. “Love” - AGAPE [26].
 - a. Not a selfish infatuation or feeling, but genuine good will and servitude toward God and others as a moral duty, even to the point of sacrificing self.

- b. True love builds relationships (*Colossians 3:14*), whereas any selfishness or resentment breaks them down. We must be mindful of how we present ourselves to God and others, and truly live to serve them.
- 3. As Christ has loved us and given Himself for us.
 - a. Jesus is the ultimate example of love in self-sacrifice (*John 10:11,15; 13:1; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Peter 2:21-24; 1 John 3:16*). His voluntary self-surrender had two motives: a desire to please the Father (*Luke 22:42*), and a desire to serve us by becoming a ransom for our sin (*Matthew 20:28; John 1:29; Galatians 3:13-14; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 2:2*).
 - b. Now that the example is set before us, we must imitate Jesus in His love (*cf. John 13:12-17,34-35*), and give of our time, energy, resources, and even our very lives for service to God and brethren and for the salvation of others.
 - c. His loving sacrifice can greatly motivate us to this same service. (*Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15*).
- 4. His offering and sacrifice to God was to God a fragrant smell.
 - a. “offering” - a gift given or offered to God (*cf. Hebrews 8:3*). Christ gave Himself as a gift to the Father. He was both the offerer (priest) and the offering (*Hebrews 7:27; 10:10,12; Isaiah 53:10*).
 - b. “sacrifice” - lit., “to make go up in smoke.” It involves the giving up of a life (*cf. Leviticus 17:11*). Christ sacrificed His own life (*Hebrews 9:26*).
 - c. This image of a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God is found in the Old Testament, primarily in the Law of Moses. (*Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18,25,41; Leviticus 1:9,13,17; 2:2,9,12; 3:5,16; 4:31; 6:15,21; 8:21,28; 17:6; 23:13,18; 15:13,7,10,13,14,21,24; 18:17; 26:31; Numbers 15:3; 28:2,6,8,13,24,27; 28:6,8,13,24; 29:2,6,8,13,36*). It indicated God’s satisfaction and acceptance of man’s obedience (*cf. Ezekiel 20:40-41*).
 - d. God expects us to follow after Christ and offer ourselves to Him as a sweet-smelling sacrifice. (*cf. Romans 12:1; 15:16; Philippians 2:17; 4:18*).

II. Those Things Not Fitting for Saints. (5:3-7).

Note: All of the sins listed below act contrary to love. The individual who commits them does so out of a blatant disregard for the well-being of others and a contempt for all things spiritual. Thus such actions are “not fitting” (5:3,4) (improper, inappropriate) for “saints” (holy ones set apart from the world to God). In fact, such must “not even be named among you.” (5:3). In other words, the imitator of God does not speak of evil deeds with pleasure, nor does he “leave any impression that he practices, approves or condones such actions.” (Caldwell, p.232). Immoral conduct *never* smells sweet to God. To Him it is a foul stench, an abomination. We, as imitators of God, must see it the same way and avoid it at all cost.

A. Fornication. [4202]

- 1. “fornication” (KJV, NKJV, ASV); “sexual immorality” (NIV, ESV); “immorality” (NASB).

2. “prop. of illicit sexual intercourse in general” (Thayer, p.532).
 3. “illicit sexual intercourse” (Vine, p.252).
 4. This is *all* actual illicit sexual intercourse including premarital (*1 Corinthians* 7:2), extra-marital (*1 Corinthians* 5:1), unscriptural marital (*Matthew* 5:32; 19:9), homosexual (*Jude* 7), and any form of prostitution (*1 Corinthians* 6:15-18).
 5. Christians must abstain from *all* illicit sexual relationships. (*Acts* 15:20,29; 21:25; *1 Corinthians* 6:13,18; *Galatians* 5:19; *Colossians* 3:5; *1 Thessalonians* 4:3).
 6. One must guard his/her heart as a preventative (*Matthew* 5:28; 15:19; *Mark* 7:21).
- B. All Uncleanness. [167]
1. “all uncleanness” (KJV, NKJV, ASV); “any kind of impurity” (NIV); “any impurity” (NASB); “all impurity” (ESV).
 2. “uncleanness...the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living” (Thayer, p.21).
 3. Conduct tainted and stained with dirtiness; moral uncleanness.
 4. Christians must have no part of this kind of life. (*Romans* 1:24; 6:19; *Ephesians* 4:19; *Colossians* 3:5).
- C. Covetousness. [4124]
1. “covetousness” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV); “greed” (NASB, NIV).
 2. “lit., ‘a desire to have more’” (Vine, p.136).
 3. “greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice..” (Thayer, p.516).
 4. Greed, always wanting more, not having enough, never satisfied, “I deserve more!”
A self-indulgence that forgets the soul in favor of possessions and desires. Such a person thinks nothing of gratifying himself at the expense of others.
 5. A covetous man is an idolater (5:5; *Colossians* 3:5), worshiping what he covets above all else. You don’t have to burn incense to something and bow down to it for it to be your idol. Whatever you desire *more* than worshiping and serving God, helping other people, and assembling with the saints *is* your idol.
 6. We must abstain from idolatrous pursuits (*1 John* 5:21) since only God is worthy of such a preeminent place in our lives.
- D. Filthiness. [151]
1. “filthiness” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, ESV); “obscenity” (NIV).
 2. “baseness, dishonor” (Thayer, p.17).
 3. “‘baseness’ (from *aischos*, ‘shame, disgrace’), is used in Eph.5:4, of obscenity, all that is contrary to purity....Broadly speaking, *aischrotes* signifies ‘whatever is disgraceful’” (Vine, p.237).
 4. Filthy, nasty conduct that should bring immediate shame and disgrace upon the offender. Out of habit or a lack of care, he takes no notice of the offending nature of his actions or how decent people may be appalled or embarrassed by it.
- E. Foolish Talking. [3473]
1. “foolish talking” (KJV, NKJV); “foolish talk” (NIV, ESV); “silly talking” (NASB).
 2. “foolish talking” (Thayer, p.420).
 3. “from *moros*, ‘foolish, dull, stupid,’ and *lego*, is used in Eph.5:4; it denotes more

than mere idle 'talk.' Trench describes it as 'that talk of fools which is foolishness and sin together'" (Vine, p.618).

4. A vulgar mouth, a loose tongue, the talk of a dim-witted fool. He speaks this way because he lacks spiritual wisdom and any foresight to the eternal consequences of his words.

F. Coarse Jestng. [2160]

1. "jesting" (KJV, ASV); "coarse jesting" (NKJV, NASB); "coarse joking" (NIV); "crude joking" (ESV).
2. "in a bad sense, scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting.." (Thayer, p.263).
3. "properly denotes 'wit, facetiousness, versatility' ...it came to denote 'coarse jesting, ribaldry,' as in Eph.5:4.." (Vine, p.333).
4. Crude humor, dirty jokes for the sake of wit and cleverness.
5. "It involves spicy language fitted to the moods and conditions of the listeners. It refers to immoral language or joking which is time-serving. A sly question, a smart answer, a shrewd intimation, a clever retort, or a lustful joke..." (Caldwell, p.232).

G. The Alternative: the Giving of Thanks to God. (5:4).

1. *See Psalm 69:29-33; 95:2; 100:4; 107:21-22; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2.*
2. "Thanksgiving raises us up above the baseness and vileness of this world and keeps us pure. Prayer and praise are the language of the saints, as opposed to obscenity...Men can see our godliness and they will usually avoid being as obscene around us. If all they hear from us is clean, and if we react to events around us with expressions of appreciation to God in our normal conversation, they will be inclined to a moral, noble speech themselves....Too often we hide who we really are!" (Caldwell, p.233).

H. The Consequences of Imitating the World:

1. No inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (5:5).
 - a. The ungodly reaps his "rewards" now: fleeting pleasures. But in doing so, he loses a glorious and eternal inheritance from Deity in the heavenly kingdom.
 - b. We must ask: Is a dirty joke or brief lust really worth losing everything?
2. The wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. (5:6).
 - a. Don't be deceived by the advocates of evil who skillfully seek to convince you that sin is not so shameful or dirty, but attractive. They will argue that sin is natural, innocent, necessary, unavoidable, pleasurable and satisfying. Such words are empty and without substance -- hollow promises of the devil.
 - b. The truth is that God will pour out His anger in judgment upon those who partake in (and share together with others in) evil. (5:7; *Romans 1:18,32*). We must not allow ourselves to be duped into sin, because condemnation will surely follow.

III. Our Duty as Children of Light. (5:8-13).

Note: Paul didn't say that they were *in* darkness (5:8), but that they *were* darkness. Before their conversion to Christ, the Ephesians embodied evil as they lived it and influenced others in it. Paul is emphasizing the great change that occurred. They *were* darkness; now they *are* light. (*Acts 26:18; Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9*). Such a change necessitates a permanent change of conduct. As they imitate the light of God, the end product or result is they themselves radiate light (the fruit of the Spirit) for all to see. (*Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15*).

A. Walk as children of light in the fruit of the Spirit. (5:8-9).

Note: the ASV, NASB, NIV, and ESV all read "fruit of the light."

1. Goodness. [19]
 - a. "goodness" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, YLT, NIV).
 - b. "uprightness of heart and life" (Thayer, p.3).
 - c. "is genuine moral excellence. It includes kindness, beneficence, good character, and honorable conduct toward others..." (Caldwell, p.239).
 - b. *Romans 15:14; Galatians 5:22*.
2. Righteousness. [1343]
 - a. "righteousness" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, YLT, NIV).
 - b. "the character or quality of being right or just." (Vine, p.535).
 - c. "integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting" (Thayer, p.149).
 - d. "is associated with justice and refers to what is truly right to do. It involves giving their due to others (both to God and man)...to maintain strict loyalty to God's standard of right." (Caldwell, p.239)
3. Truth. [225]
 - a. "truth" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, YLT, NIV).
 - b. "sincerity of mind and integrity of character, or a mode of life in harmony with divine truth: 1Cor.5:8; 13:6...; Eph.4:21...; 5:9; [6:14].." (Thayer, p.26).
 - c. "that which is reliable as fact...the opposite of error and deceit. It is established in integrity. It does not arise out of ignorance or blindness or prejudice...Truth is acted upon, not simply known." (Caldwell, pp.239,240).
4. "Goodness centers in the heart...Righteousness centers in action and conduct... Truth...centers in words transmitting..reality from God to the mind of man." (Caldwell, pp.239-240).
5. Only God's Word provides the real measure as to what is good, right, and true. (2 *Timothy 3:16-17; John 17:17*).

B. Proving what is acceptable to the Lord. (5:10).

1. The Christian walking in the light proves to himself and others the value in doing God's will. He has put the word of God to the test and found it to be right, good, and true. He has spiritual fruit in his life to show as proof. (*Romans 12:2*). He will not be swayed by those who would try to convince him otherwise.

2. “Nothing in life is more fearful than walking in darkness. Nothing is more satisfying than a productive life in the light. There is no joy in evil. There is every inner blessing and happiness in doing good. It is amazing that man so often does not realize the beauty of God’s way of living. He searches in the darkness for that which is readily available in the light. God’s word lies open to all who would read it, accept it, and turn their attention toward following its direction.” (Caldwell, p.241).
- C. Expose the unfruitful works of darkness with your light. (5:11-13).
1. Expose (5:11) - convict, rebuke.
 - a. Walking in the light, we will be a living rebuke to evil.
 - b. We must turn the light on the evil man to expose his sin and convict him to repentance. (*John 3:20-21*). The old saying that “honey will catch more flies than vinegar” is often used to convince brethren they shouldn’t point out sin to the ungodly. “You’ll only run them away.”
 - c. How else can we rescue people from sin if we don’t tell them of their danger? This is true love. To do any less is to withhold part of the gospel. Those brethren who will not expose the unfruitful works of darkness usually hold back because they fear persecution or fear leaving their own little zone of comfort. Either way, it is selfish.
 - d. Our silence communicates acceptance, and even fellowship.
 - e. If we want to truly imitate Christ, we will do as He did -- and He did not refrain from identifying sin, telling its eternal consequences, and calling for people to repent.
 2. It is shameful even to speak of those things done in secret.
 - a. Sin is done in secret because evildoers want to hide the shame of their sin. But God sees all. (*Hebrews 4:13*).
 - b. As Christians, we do not speak of sin with pleasure, nor do we describe the lurid details of those sins that are so filthy and vile that even the mention of them brings disgust to the hearer. Also, we have no business repeating the crude and dirty things other people say.
 - c. We can identify and expose the sin without participating in it or passing it on.
 3. Without adequate light, the evildoers’ shame will not be exposed nor will they be led to repentance. Nothing else but the light of God reflected through those imitating Him will work to bring others out of darkness.

IV. The Lord’s Admonition and Promise. (5:14).

- A. Awake and arise!
1. Calvinists say it is impossible for a spiritually dead person to awake to his condition and do something about it. Paul says otherwise; in fact he commands it.
 2. God offers an escape from the darkness to all who will take it.
 3. Jesus’ invitation to come: *Matthew 11:28-30*.
- B. Christ will give you light. (“will shine upon you” -NASB)

1. This is the promise of God to those who obey.
2. The light of God's word enlightening our understanding (*Ephesians 1:18*).
3. The heavenly light that shines bright and never ends (*cf. Revelation 21:23-25*).

CONCLUSION

In summary, if we want to enjoy the blessings of the light of Christ, we must: (1) imitate God as dear children; (2) walk in love as did Jesus Christ; (3) avoid those things that are improper for saints; (4) have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and (5) walk as children of light. We must be lights in a dark world. Who will know how to come to the Christ's light if we walk in darkness? Brethren, the darkness is left behind. It's time to walk forward in the light of God.

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NOTES:

THE PEACE AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:1-6

by Keith Sharp

Introduction:

- A. Latest figures indicate there are over 3,000 separate, recognizable religious bodies in America.
- B. This same study reported the fact of division in the church of Christ.
- C. How can we have peace and unity in the church?

I. We must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. - Ephesians 4:3.

- A. We can have peace without unity. - Romans 12:18.
- B. But we cannot have unity without peace.
 - 1. "peace": "harmony, concord"
 - 2. "bond": "that which binds together"

II. To have peace, we must "walk worthy" of our calling. - Ephesians 4:1-2.

- A. "calling" - 2 Timothy 1:9.
- B. What are the characteristics of a worthy walk?.
 - 1. lowliness - Philippians 2:3-8.
 - 2. gentleness: "Gentleness" is "regularly used of animals which have been tamed, and which have learned to accept discipline and control." (William Barclay, **Flesh And Spirit**. 113-14).
 - a. obedience to God - Philippians 2:8.
 - b. gentleness to fellows - 1 Thessalonians 2:6.
 - 3. longsuffering: "long-tempered" - James 1:19-20.
 - 4. bearing with one another: "to hold up from retaliation" - 1 Peter 2:21-23.
 - 5. love: active good will - 1 John 3:16-18.

III. The Divine Platform for the unity of the Church. - Ephesians 4:4-6.

- A. One Body (unity of relationship) - Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 1:11-13.
- B. One Spirit (unity of revelation) - John 16:13; Galatians 1:6-9.
- C. One Hope (unity of aim or goal) - 1 Peter 1:3-5.
- D. One Lord (unity of authority) - Acts 10:36; Matthew 28:18; Colossians 3:17.
- E. One Faith (unity of doctrine) - Jude 3.

F. One Baptism (unity of entrance requirements) - Romans 6:3-4.

G. One God (unity of worship) - John 4:23-24; Matthew 15:9.

Conclusion:

A. Indeed, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" is a desirable and achievable goal. - Psalm 133.

B. If we will follow the divine plan, we will attain it. - Ephesians 4:1-6.

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THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

(Putting Off and Putting On)

Colossians 3:1-17

by Bobby Graham

- * Effort *not complete* at conversion.
- * *Positive, negative* elements.
- * *Primary* focus of lesson—*motivation* to do it.

Principles to Remember

1. Spiritual status: risen with Christ (1)
2. Attitude helpful: reckon self (3)
3. Security in Christ: Life hidden (3)
4. Appearing Christ to consummate life (4)
5. Avoiding divine wrath a reason (6)
6. Need to be like Christ (10,13)
7. Equality in Christ—distinctions, deficiencies (11)
8. Live consistently with your favored place as elect of God (12)

Efforts to Make

1. Seek—earnest, continuing effort (1)
2. Set mind—mental inclination (2)
3. Put to death—destroy old man (5,8,9)
4. Put on—cultivate new man(10, 12-17)
5. Yield wholly to rule of Christ (17)

Mortifying the Earthly

Fornication—all kinds of sexual immorality
Uncleanness—sexual impurity, dirt
Passions—sexual in nature
Evil desires—base impulses
Covetousness—self-seeking greed (idolatry)

Put Off

Anger—emotion that rises fast, subsides slowly

Wrath—rage

Malice—badness

Blasphemy—insults against deity and humanity

Filthy language—obscene, foul-mouthed abuse

Lying—speaking or acting falsely

Put On New Man (ever-increasing knowledge, after Christ)

Heart of compassion—pity, mercy

Kindness—generosity of spirit

Humility—lowliness

Longsuffering—patience with others

Forbearance—putting up with others

Forgiveness—graciously releasing from wrong, not holding a grudge

Love— perfectly bonds other virtues

God's peace—serve as umpire

Thankfulness—continuing

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HUSBANDS and WIVES; CHRIST and the CHURCH

Ephesians 5:22-33

by Oscar Miles

INTRODUCTION: My approach: the primary teaching is the husband-wife relationship. The Christ-church relationship illustrates the ideal for the husband-wife relationship. Everything this text says about both relationships is true and not used *merely* to illustrate.

God's arrangement: the husband as head and the wife in submission. Only thus will a married couple will succeed in subduing the Earth, filling it with people and glorifying their Creator. What a picture! The husband: a depiction of the strong, loving, sacrificial Savior. The wife: the beautiful bride, quietly, faithfully submitting to his lead.

Biblical leadership and subjection in marriage is the husband lovingly providing everything the wife needs and the wife willingly submitting to him as they build a beautiful life.

To discover the full glory of being a woman or man, follow God's instructions for willing submission and lovingly leadership. Both are two aspects of the same virtue – selflessness.

BODY:

I) Duty of Wives: Submit to Husbands (verses 22-24): Subjection is a duty of wives. The husband is not commanded to and cannot put his wife in subjection because subjection includes the mind. The best way a husband can encourage subjection is to follow the commands God has given him as the leader. Subjection is a challenge. Often wives must practice it unwillingly before true subjection from the heart occurs. A wife must make a once for all time choice to submit to her husband regardless of how he treats her.

A) To your own husband (verse 22): Why add "own"? For emphasis. Not your ideal, not your father, not any other man. A wife must know her husband so well that she can submit to the unique person he is with his strengths, uniqueness, talents and weaknesses.

B) As to the Lord (verse 22-23): "As to the Lord" means as part of her duty to the Lord. God ordained these roles, so, to submit to them is to submit to the Lord. To refuse is to disobey God. Why? Verse 23 explains: because God made the husband the head.

C) In everything (verse 24): Even while he is absent. If she knows he wants a clean house but spends her day watching soap operas and surfing the Internet, she is not in subjection. A godly wife does not look for excuses (all husbands are imperfect) to be unsubmitive.

"In everything" does not include areas that conflict with God's will. There is a higher duty of submission: to God (cf. Acts 5:29). Further, the wise husband delegates some decisions to his wife, realizing God calls the wife "the house despot" in 1 Timothy 5:14. Even in those areas, she should make decisions with her husband's wishes always in mind.

II) Duty of Husbands: Love Your Wives (verses 25-30): First, the husband is the "head" (verse 23). It is wrong for the wife to try to usurp leadership and it is wrong for the husband to give it or allow it to be taken. A wife who tries to take the reins of leadership puts her husband in a terrible spot: if he allows her to take it, he is a wimp whose wife wears the pants in the family; if he refuses, he is a tyrant and bully. Husbands, God calls us to stand up and act like leaders and give our wives the choice of submitting or not. A wife whose husband is a good leader should thank him and God often, for only by having such a leader is she free to become her full feminine self. A wife who tries to take her husband's position fails to honor the God who made her for a different role and gave men strong leadership abilities. If the wife wants the best for her family, she will submit and even give her husband the right to make mistakes. If indeed the husband will lead as this passage describes, only a wicked woman would not wish to submit. If a husband refuses to lead, he disobeys God.

Verse 23 also mentions Christ as the Savior of the church. Paul could have written, "Christ is the head of the church, being the Master of the body" but he wrote, "being the Savior of the body." Certainly a husband doesn't save his wife as Christ saves the church, yet the word "savior" was used of kings and warriors who provided for the people and protected them from harm. In this way, a husband can be the savior of his wife, that is, the provider and protector, so that in his arms, she feels perfectly safe. God does not require a husband to provide an extravagant living for his family, however, and a wife should be content with the necessities and show her appreciation by submission.

Authority is implied in headship but sacrificial love is more important. Paul gives two illustrations of how to love his wife: 1) as Christ loves the church; 2) as he loves his own body.

A) As Christ loves the church (verses 25-27): But just how does Christ love the church? He loved her enough to give Himself up for her, enough to sanctify her and cleanse her. The result is that He will present the church to Himself in a perfect and glorious state. Husbands ought to do the same and may expect the same result. When a husband does not lovingly look after the best interest of his wife, he is not the kind of "head" God describes even if he shouts about being the boss.

1) He gave Himself up for her (verse 25): Jesus gave Himself up for us in order to sanctify us, to make us His special people. He sanctifies when and after he cleanses in baptism. A husband sanctifies his wife by making her a special woman set apart for him alone. He doesn't wash her with water (though he can do that if they both like!), but he helps keep her pure.

A husband must be willing to give up his life for his wife. Husbands do not "get to" go to work, they "have to." Godly husbands give up many dreams to have a successful family. He works hard to provide for his family as his obligation before God. He gives up what he wants for the best interests of his wife and children. All the rights – to be provided for, protected, etc. – go to the wife! The husband gives himself up.

- (a) **To sanctify her:** Without the sacrifice of Christ, there is no sanctification. Steps of presenting Himself a perfect bride (verses 25-26): #1 die on the cross; 2) wash away our sins; 3) sanctify us. A man should marry with the idea of giving himself up in order to sanctify his wife as his special helper, suitable to him in every way.
- (b) **Having cleansed her:** It is the blood of Christ that cleanses by God's grace through our faith when we are baptized (cf. Ephesians 1:7; 2:8; 5:26) according to what is written in God's Word.
- (i) **By the washing of water:** Jesus chose baptism as the time when He would cleanse us. A husband "cleanses" his wife of all improper thoughts, words and deeds by protecting her physically, emotionally and spiritually. Imitating Jesus, the husband gives the wife no reason to seek sexual satisfaction or emotional security elsewhere. Thus, he cleanses her or keeps her pure. Every wife will answer for defiling herself, but some husbands will also answer for her defilement. If he does not pay proper attention to her sexual or emotional needs, he will answer for his lack of leadership even if she never sins.
- (ii) **With the word:** Jesus revealed His will through the word; thus, purification is through His Word: 1 Peter 1:22-23. A husband helps keep his wife pure by knowing what God's Word teaches about marriage, following it, and encouraging (not bullying or nagging) his wife to follow it. Even more practically, the husband makes his desires known to his wife, since they cannot read minds (1 Corinthians 2:11). Jesus did not leave the church without knowledge of what He wants; neither should husbands.
- 2) **To present to Himself the church:** Christ does all this expecting to receive a glorious, spotless, special people of His own. "The bride does not make herself presentable; it is the bridegroom who labours to beautify her in order to present her to himself. His love and self-sacrifice for her, his cleansing and sanctifying of her, are all designed for her liberation and her perfection, when at last he presents her to himself in her glory" (Stott 228-29). A wife is the product of how her husband treats her. Is your wife not what you wish? Maybe she is the product of how you treat her.
- (a) **In all her glory:** We often speak of the church in less than glowing terms because we recognize that the church consists of people with sins and weaknesses. But the church Jesus will present to Himself will be glorious! A wife is a husband's glory when she is his perfect helper in subduing the world, filling it with people and glorifying their Lord. If she is glorious in his sight, he has helped to make her so.

(i) **Having no spot:** God's people will have no spots because Jesus washed them all away. Husbands of course cannot wash sins away in the sense Jesus does. But they can lead their wives to greater purity by giving their wives the security they need to live righteously, knowing they can always count on their husbands for support. They can lead their wives to greater spiritual strength by showing them the love of Jesus in the form of someone they can physically embrace.

(ii) **Having no wrinkle:** These three terms "spot, wrinkle, blemish," emphasize perfection and describe the "glory" of the church Jesus will present to Himself. The secret to a wrinkle-free wife is not Oil of Olay but the loving leadership of a Christ-like husband.

(iii) **Having no blemish:** This is true not just in theory but in fact. Because Jesus washes away all sins, His eternal assembly will not have a single blemish. As the newlywed husband, may we see the noble characteristics our wives possess and overlook their faults. With sin, husbands help their wives follow the example of Christ more perfectly by providing a living example of Christ for them to follow.

(b) **Holy and blameless:** Christ's eternal bride, having been completely sanctified, will be so special no one will be able to discredit her. A husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church, will produce a special wife everyone will praise.

B) As your own body (verses 28-30): The Bible assumes a certain amount of self-love or self-respect in at least two important commandments: We are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39), the second greatest commandment, and we are to love our wives as our own bodies. We are to love our "own wives," not some ideal wife or a replica of our mothers. We might state our preferences, but we also love her for who she is, glorying in her uniqueness even if she does not do all things well. A loving husband never says, "Don't you know anything?" He provides for her individual needs and protects her dignity. Failure to do this often leads to resentment in the wife.

1) To do so is to love yourself: It could be said that if you are really selfish and want to get the most out of your marriage, you will be unselfish and love your wife as your own body, because this is the way to your own personal enjoyment.

(a) **No one ever hates his own body:** By natural instinct, humans love their own bodies. We feed, protect, pamper, and coddle it. So, a husband provides the physical necessities for his wife and pampers and coddles her in a way SHE enjoys. This necessitates knowing her needs and what

makes her feel good. It is not defined by what you think should or shouldn't make her feel good!

(b) But feeds it as Christ does the church: Jesus gives every ounce of needed spiritual nourishment: John 4:14. A husband must supply every ounce of physical and emotional nourishment his wife needs. A wife easily detects selfishness and cannot fully give herself to a selfish husband. But if she believes he considers her well-being in all he does, she will give her love to him freely. A husband must provide opportunities for her spiritual nourishment: allowing her and encouraging her to attend services, special ladies Bible classes, etc.; helping her look after the children during worship; giving her time to herself while you take care of the kids or taking the kids off somewhere. A husband who never provides his wife the opportunity to get nourishment away from the care of children has not fulfilled this responsibility. Sadly, the number of such husbands is legion.

(c) But cares for it as Christ does the church: In this passage Christ is held up as the example for husbands to follow! Think of it! Christ provides everything His people need to be content in this life and gain eternal life. Whatever His bride cannot do for herself, He does for her: washing away her sins, giving her strength for daily living, providing a way of escape from every temptation, etc. Husbands must also provide for wives what they cannot provide for themselves. An alternative interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:4 is that the wife does not have the power (ability) to satisfy her own body nor can the husband satisfy his own sexual needs. Husbands must do for a wife what she cannot do for herself. She cannot satisfy herself sexually like you can. She cannot provide as much security for herself as you can. But Jesus does much more than provide what we need – He provides many extras besides: think of the roses, the different types of food, all of the beauty and variety of nature. A husband who follows Christ in caring for the church will not merely give his wife the bare minimum of what he thinks she requires, but will lavish his love on her. There is a time to buy diamond earrings.

2) As Christ takes care of His own body: Christ takes care of every member of his body. So, a husband should look after every area of his wife's well-being. A wife should have ultimate gratitude if she has a husband who provides physical and emotional security and encourages her spiritually.

III) Summary (verses 31-33)

- A) One flesh from the beginning:** verse 31. Wives and husbands giving themselves over to acting in the best interest of their spouses was God's design from the beginning. A true one-flesh relationship comes about only when both are willing to give up their own wishes for the good of the other.
- B) The great mystery:** verse 32. Since Paul uses the word "mystery" in Ephesians as that which was previously unrevealed but is now revealed, he means here that this comparison between the husband-wife relationship and the Christ-church relationship is now known, being revealed and illustrated in what he has just written. The way Paul uses the word "mystery" in this book means nearly the opposite of "mysterious." He could be referring to all of verses 22-31 or to verse 31 in particular. If he refers to the entire passage, then the relationship between Christ and the church is illuminated by the husband-wife relationship. This still does not mean that the primary thrust of verses 22-33 is Christ and the church. Just as in other epistles, Paul mentions the duties of slaves, children, husband and wives in the same section. He has done the same here. However, he has used Christ's relationship with the church to illustrate the marriage relationship. This served not merely as an illustration but as an opportunity to teach other important truths. Paul used that opportunity, even to extending a metaphor in order to plunge into some of the depths of the gospel (mystery) of Christ. The allegory seems to have a corresponding application at every point to both relationships.

If Paul is referring to verse 31, then the meaning evidently is that the mystery of the unity of Christ with His church is now revealed in the union of a husband and wife. Certainly the unity of the body of Christ and the union of the body with Christ is an important teaching in Ephesians.

C) Summary of marital duties: verse 33.

- 1) Husband: love your wife as yourself:** If a husband shows no less regard for his wife than he does for himself, mutual happiness is nearly inevitable. There is no room for selfishness. The husband's selfishness scares wives most and males are most susceptible to this vice. Selfishness turns a family into a pack of hyenas, each vying for affection, attention, money, etc. Loving leadership eagerly provides all the family needs. Do you take care of your own needs? Protect yourself from every kind of harm? Do you do exactly the same for your wife? That is what is required.
- 2) Wife: respect your husband:** Respect goes beyond submission. It is utterly selfless, for husbands badly need respect and do not always deserve it. When a husband believes his wife respects him, he will act even more respectably. A wife is to be her husband's greatest cheerleader.

CONCLUSION:

For a good illustration of mutual selflessness see The Gift of the Magi in The Book of Virtues (pages 166-170).

You choose what kind of spouse you will have. A selfish husband produces a selfish wife. An uncommunicative husband produces a bitter wife. A domineering husband produces a contentious wife. And vice versa. If you want a loving husband, be a quietly submissive wife. If you want a loving, feminine wife, be a loving, sacrificial leader.

When people look at your marriage, is that what they see? Husbands, do others see Christ's sacrifice and devotion in your devotion to and sacrifices for your wife? Wives, do others see the respect and quiet submission of the true people of God in the way you treat your husband? It is an awesome responsibility we have!

Sources:

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The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society (The Bible Speaks Today), by John R. W. Stott (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979).

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NOTES:

THE COMPLETE CHRIST (Christ, not Human Wisdom) - *part 1*

Colossians 1:24 - 2:10

by Tom Rainwater

I. Paul's Ministry. (1:24 - 2:3).

- A. The **Attitude** of his Ministry: *Joy in Affliction. (1:24).*
- B. The **Source** of his Ministry: *According to the Stewardship of God. (1:25).*
- C. The **Message** of his Ministry: *the Mystery of God. (1:26-27).*
- D. The **Activity** of his Ministry: *Proclaim. Admonish, Teach. (1:28a).*
- E. The **Goal** of his Ministry: *to Present Every Man Perfect in Christ Jesus. (1:28b-29a).*
- F. The **Power** of his Ministry: *the Mighty Workings of God. (1:29b).*
- G. The **Personal Sacrifice** of his Ministry: *to Suffer for their Growth. (2:1-3).*

II. Paul's Concern for their Continued Stand for Christ. (2:4ff).

A. Continuance in the truth is the best defense against deceptive teachings. (2:4-7).

- 1. Paul was concerned that someone may deceive them.
 - a. "beguile" (KJV); "deceive" (NKJV) (2:4) - to deceive by false reasoning.
 - b. "enticing words" (KJV); "persuasive words" (NKJV) (2:4) - persuasive speech or confidently given arguments.
 - c. A real danger exists that you may be deceived by good-sounding men who teach good-sounding doctrines (*Romans.16:18; Ephesians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4*). What sounds "religious" or "righteous" or "right" may not be! Do not accept anything on the basis of whether or not it "sounds good."
 - d. To be swayed by error is spiritually fatal. (*2 John 9*).
- 2. Paul was thankful for their faithfulness, and wished he could be with them. (2:5).
 - a. "order" (2:5) - military term: orderly condition.
 - b. "steadfastness" (2:5) - military term: firmness, strength, stability.
 - c. Though Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he rejoiced to know of their orderly, disciplined conduct and their strong, firm faith. "I feel as though I were with you there. I have that same love and appreciation for you here as if I were there. My heart is with you."
- 3. Paul admonishes them to continue in the faith. (2:6-7). How?
 - a. "rooted" - to strengthen with roots...to cause one to be thoroughly grounded.
 - b. "built up" - as a house built from a sure and strong foundation.
 - c. "established" - to make firm, secure, durable, proven, long-lasting.
 - d. "abounding in it with thanksgiving" - the expression of gratitude toward God in life and in prayer.

B. Worldly philosophy cannot add to Christ's Fullness or to the Christian's Completeness. (2:8).

1. "spoil" (KJV); "cheat" (NKJV) - to carry off as spoils and captives of war. ("See to it that no one takes you captive" - NASB).
2. "philosophy" - the love of human knowledge and wisdom.
3. "empty deceit" - false impressions and influences that are empty and vain.
4. You can be led away as captive to worldly wisdom. You must arm yourself with the truth. You may be fooled into leaving Christ by that which seems impressive or promising, but all it can really offer is emptiness. (*Ephesians 5:6*).
5. Don't let your fondness for secular studies lull you into compromising with error.
6. "tradition" - knowledge or customs handed down (*Matthew 15:7-9; in contrast with 1 Corinthians 11:2; Galatians 1:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6.*)
 - a. Worldly wisdom may be promoted as tradition.
 - i. "the way we've always believed, done, responded, etc."
 - ii. "you must follow in the footsteps of..."
 - b. Tradition originating with man is condemned by Christ. (*Matthew 15:1-9*).
7. "rudiments" - basic elements and fundamental principles of any art, science, or discipline.
 - a. Other passages with this same word: *Galatians 4:3,9; Colossians 2:20; Hebrews 5:12; 2 Peter 3:10,12.*
 - b. Worldly wisdom may be presented as an elemental (or basic): the so-called "basic facts" of science, philosophy, arts, humanities, etc.
8. That which is "handed down" or considered "basic knowledge" is not necessarily after Christ.

C. Christ is Deity, and thus *the* Source of all Divine Blessings. (2:9-10).

1. Jesus Christ is not deficient in His Eternal Being nor in His Divine attributes. In substance and character, He is complete.
2. Jesus Christ *is* Deity! He possesses as much "God-hood" as the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus, He is the source of all Divine blessings. We can be spiritually complete thanks to the fullness (completeness) of Christ's Deity.
3. Christ is the supreme ruler over every ruler and authority whether heavenly, earthly, angelic, or spiritual. (*1:16; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22*).

CONCLUSION

Paul, in his ministry to make every man complete in Christ, was concerned that the Colossians may be lured away from the truth to follow after worldly philosophy. He urged them to be rooted, built up, and established in the faith. Personal and spiritual fulfillment cannot be found in the wisdom of men. Though human traditions and systems sound good, they are all vanity. We must look to *Christ* who made all, who knows all, and who is the head of all. Only He, in whom is complete Deity, can make us complete.

**THE CHURCH, the BODY of the RECONCILED
and THE FAMILY and TEMPLE of GOD**
(or, the Four Pictures of the Church)

Ephesians 2:11-22

by Bobby Graham

- Having stressed the uplifting effect of divine grace in the lives of the Ephesians, Paul next described for them the position they occupied in God's eyes.
- He pictures their role in God's plan under four figures—members of a body, citizens in a kingdom, people in a family, and parts of a temple.
- Each of these four pictures gives us a unique insight into God's view of His people and their duty before Him, though they appear in a setting stressing the "togetherness" of the Lord's people.

I. A body of reconciled people (11-18): Former enemies now equals before God

- Need for reconciliation—their state before reconciliation (11-12)
- Means of reconciliation—through Christ (13-17)
- Result of reconciliation—access to God (18)

A. Through Christ—mediator

B. We both—former rivals, now reconciled beneficiaries functioning as members of the same spiritual body—have access(privilege of admittance, entrance)

C. In one Spirit (capitalization not decisive)

- sometimes identified as the common spirit of those benefiting from this access, but basis for such an idea is absent from context
- Holy Spirit's crucial role in revelation here coupled with the role of the Father and of Christ, as elsewhere in this letter (1:3-14; 2:22; 3:5, 16)—in the realm of the Spirit

D. Unto the Father—exalted One into whose presence entrance is gained

II. A kingdom of citizens (2:19): Spiritual realm under the rule of Christ

- No longer strangers (outsiders) and foreigners (temporary residents but rights denied)
- Fellow-citizens with the saints (equal rights gained)
- Common citizenship of new spiritual nation shared by all subjects of the King
- Citizenship apart from submission to King impossible

III. A family of God's children (2:19-20): OT objective a NT reality

- Of God's household—more intimate relationship than citizenship
- Built on foundation of apostles and prophets (NT) –laid by, truth taught
- Joined by Christ the chief cornerstone—role in joining two walls of the building (Jews, Gentiles), which conform to it

IV. A temple inhabited by the Lord (2:21-22):

- Whole building a temple, composed of different valuable parts – equality of all parts of building
- Unified, harmonious structure—no compartmentalization
- Indwelling of the Lord (Tabernacle/ Temple in OT; His people in NT; Acts 17:24; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2)
- In the Spirit
 - A. spirit as opposed to flesh, possible
 - B. Holy Spirit—all made possible by Spirit's revelation (instruction, calling, encouragement of the Spirit)
 - C. Age of the Spirit; whatever of God's will/work is accomplished is performed under the administration of the Spirit.

Conclusion

1. No study of the church would be complete without some notice of the figures (pictures) used by the Holy Spirit to portray the role of God's people in relation to God, each other, and the world.
2. (1) The peaceful relations of God's people, (2) their privileges and duties under their King, (3) their nearness to God as being like that of children to their Father, and (4) their function as priests in worship and service to God find emphasis in these four pictures.
3. Better informed Christians are better prepared to conduct themselves according to God's will and design.

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BE IMITATORS OF GOD - *part 2*

Ephesians 5:15-21

by Tom Rainwater

INTRODUCTION

This lecture is a continuation of my previous one on Ephesians 5:1-14. (*See page 29 of this book.*) We've already studied that as beloved children, we must imitate God in all we do. Our duty is to walk in light and never retreat back into the darkness. We must not be deceived by the proponents of evil into doing those things not fitting for saints. Rather, let us use our light to expose the evil deeds of darkness, thus leading others to repentance. We can so do without being partakers with them in evil. By walking in the light and bearing spiritual fruit, we not only prove to ourselves that God's way is true and right, but we prove it to others also. We must see ourselves as "the light of the world" (*Matthew 5:14*) and live accordingly. It is God's plan that we do so (1:4). As the apostle Paul continues his exhortation in verses 15, he introduces *wisdom* as being essential to our walk as imitators of God.

We could have outlined Ephesians 5:1-21 in this way:

- I. Walk in Love (5:1-7).
- II. Walk in Light (5:8-14).
- III. Walk in Wisdom (5:15-21).

I. How to Walk in Wisdom. (5:15-17).

A. Walk circumspectly. (v.15).

- 1. "walk circumspectly" (KJV, NKJV); "look therefore carefully how ye walk" (ASV); "be careful how you walk" (NASB); "look carefully then how you walk" (ESV).
- 2. The English word *circumspectly* contains these parts:
 - a. *circum-* - meaning "around."
 - b. *-spec-* - meaning "to look."
- 3. The English translation "circumspectly," is from two Greek words that together mean, "to look at accurately, diligently, exactly." (*cp. "accurately" in Acts 18:25,26*).
- 4. The Christian is careful, cautious, and precise about how he lives. He wants to walk in such a way as to accurately and exactly reflect the word of God. That way his steps will be sure and his path will be straight.
- 5. We cannot approach life haphazardly and without thought as fools do. Rather we must exercise our knowledge of God's word to make common-sense application as to how we should live. Insight and forethought before action is a demonstration of wisdom. Fools act on impulse and fleshly desire with no thought of moral or eternal consequences.
- 6. How careful and wise was Jesus in regard to His own attitude, conduct and speech? Aren't we to be *imitators* of our Lord?

B. Redeem the time. (v.16; Colossians 4:5).

- 1. "redeeming the time" (KJV, NKJV, ASV; YLT); "making the most of your time"

(NASB); “making the best use of the time” (ESV); making the most of every opportunity” (NIV); “buy up your opportunities” (1912 Waymouth).

2. “Redeeming” [1805]

- a. “‘to buy out’...especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom. It is used metaphorically...(b) in the middle voice, ‘to buy up for oneself,’ Eph.5:16 and Col.4:5, of ‘buying up the opportunity’..(..where ‘time’ is *kairos*, ‘a season,’ a time in which something is seasonable), i.e., making the most of every opportunity, turning each to the best advantage since none can be recalled if missed.” (Vine, p.515).
- i. “Time” in 5:16 is not calendar time (*chronos*) nor a unit of nature (*hora*), but seasonal time (*kairos*). Ephesians 5:16 refers to the season in which we currently live, breathe, think, and act.
- ii. The governor Felix responded to Paul’s teaching by saying, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time (*kairos*) I will call for you.” (Acts 24:25). This was Felix’s time (opportunity) to learn more, repent and obey, yet he chose to waste it.
- b. “*to buy up for one’s self, for one’s use...*Eph.5:16 and Col.4:5, where the meaning seems to be *to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good*, so that zeal and well-doing are as it were the purchase-money by which we make the time our own.” (Thayer, p.220).
- c. We cannot buy back wasted time. But we can use the present time to its full potential by zealously grabbing hold of existing opportunities (as though we would pay any price to have them) and using them wisely before they are gone. (*Galatians 6:10*). God has given us this time -- we can either “buy it up” and “make it our own” or we can hand it to the devil. It’s our choice.

3. “Because the days are evil”

- a. Evil times make for fewer opportunities. Thus each one becomes so much more precious.
- b. Procrastination is an aid to evil. If the devil cannot influence us to do overt acts of disobedience, then he will tempt us to *delay* overt acts of obedience. Every wasted opportunity for good strengthens the devil’s influence around us. In a world where the righteous and righteousness is in the minority, we cannot afford to lose ground this way.
- c. Evil days are not an excuse to give up, but a reason to work harder!
- d. Buying up our opportunities and using them gives our lives true meaning. It helps us keep things in perspective while suffering through evil times.

C. Understand the will of the Lord. (v.17).

1. “Understand” [4920]

- a. “‘to bring or set together,’ is used metaphorically of ‘perceiving, understanding, uniting’...so to speak, the perception with what is perceived’ (Vine, p. 650).
- b. “to put (as it were) the perception with the thing perceived; to set or join

- together in the mind, i.e., to understand..” (Thayer, p.605).
- c. The word conveys a bringing together of understanding in the mind.
2. It is possible to understand.
 - a. The foolish make little effort, if any, to understand the will of God (*cf. John 6:60-66*). They’re looking for something else. Their heart is with the devil. (*cf. Matthew 13:19*).
 - b. The foolish lack understanding is because of their own unwillingness to hear what their Creator says (*cf. Acts 13:46; 28:17-27*). Religious ignorance and confusion is *never* the fault of God’s revelation.
 3. It is commanded.
 - a. Some believe “we cannot all understand the Bible alike.” Would God command of us something that we could not possibly do? (*cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:20-23*).
 - b. God’s revelation was written to be understood. *Ephesians 3:3-4*.
 - c. We will be judged based upon our understanding and obedience of God’s will. *John 12:48*. Religious error and ignorance will be no excuse. *Matthew 7:21-23*.
 - d. Are we truly making an honest effort to understand God’s will for us? Or are we in the habit of reading our own prejudices, biases, and think-so’s into the text? The wise man accepts God’s word as it is, and thus has no need to run it through another man’s filter first.

II. How to Be Filled with the Spirit. (5:18-21).

A. Do not be drunk with wine. (v.18).

1. It is impossible to be filled with the Spirit and wine at the same time. That which clouds or dulls the mind must first go before any real spiritual progress is made.
 2. “drunk” [3182]
 - a. “to begin to be softened [*with drink -tr*]” (Young, p.275).
 - b. “to grow drunk (marking the beginning of *metheuo*)” (Bullinger, p.238).
 - c. “signifies ‘to make drunk, or to grow drunk’ (an inceptive verb, marking the process or state expressed in No.1), ‘to become intoxicated,’ Luke 12:45; Eph.5:18; 1Thess.5:7a.” (Vine’s, p.186).
 - d. This describes the process of drunkenness from the first drink, as one begins to be softened, to that of being fully intoxicated. When you’ve drunk one drink, you’re one drink drunk, and so forth.
 - i. “You do not have to be ‘drunk’ to be dangerous...As little as two drinks or two beers is sufficient to produce a definite impairment of judgment.” (the American Medical Association).
- Note: If judgment is already impaired, how can one “Know when to say when”?*
- ii. “There is no minimum (blood-alcohol concentration) which can be set at which there will be absolutely no effect.” (“*Are You Fit to Drive?*”, Journal of the American Medical Association).

- iii. Would you feel safer if your airplane pilot or heart surgeon had a drink before starting their job?
- 3. “in which is dissipation” (NKJV); “for that is dissipation” (NASB); “in which is dissoluteness” (YLT); “wherein is riot” (ASV); “for that is debauchery” (ESV).
 - a. “dissipation” [810] Also found in *Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 4:4*.
 - b. The Greek word *asotia* literally means “not (*a*) saved (*sozo*)” as though such a person is far from where he should be -- far from rescue. He is severely wasting his life in moral recklessness.
 - c. “denotes ‘prodigality, a wastefulness, profligacy’” (Vine, p.536).
 - d. “an abandoned, dissolute life; profligacy, prodigality” (Thayer, p. 82).
- 4. Alcohol perverts judgment (*Leviticus 10:9-10; Isaiah 28:7; Proverbs 31:4-5*), weakens restraint against illicit acts (*Habakkuk 2:15-16; Genesis 19:30-35*), makes violent (*Proverbs 20:1*), drives to poverty (*Proverbs 23:19-21*), is addictive (*Isaiah 56:12*), and keeps one from considering God (*Isaiah 5:11-12; Luke 21:34-36*).
- 5. The use of alcohol for pleasure is clearly forbidden in both testaments.
 - a. Old: *Proverbs 23:29-35*.
 - b. New: *1 Peter 4:3*.
 - c. “Perhaps more pitiful are those instances of church members justifying social drinking and alcohol use in the home. What absence of thought motivates a child of God to forget the children who see the indulgence of parents or the neighbors who witness church members coming out of wine shops?...Are we so forgetful that indulgence in a little is where all drunkards and alcoholics begin their dissipation?” (Caldwell, p.251).

B. Sing. (v.19; Colossians 3:16).

- 1. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
 - a. We teach and edify one another when we sing together.
 - i. Understandable words are implied.
 - b. The spirits of all who *participate* and *listen* to the words will be uplifted.
 - c. The types of songs that will accomplish this are specified. Though there is overlap in meaning (perhaps Paul is presenting a triplet for emphasis), something can be learned from each term:
 - i. Psalms. [5568]
 - aa. Is the same word that refers to the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. *Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33*.
 - bb. “in all probability the *psalmoi* [psalms] of Eph.5:19, Col.3:16, are the inspired psalms of the Hebrew Canon” (Trench, p.296).
 - cc. “designating a song which took its general character from the O.T. ‘Psalms’ (although not restricted to them, see 1Cor.14:15,26)..” (Thayer, p.637).
 - ii. Hymns. [5215]
 - aa. “a song of praise” (Thayer, p.637).

- bb. “a song of praise addressed to God.” (Vine, p.316).
- iii. Spiritual songs.
 - aa. “the *ode* (Eng., ‘ode’) was the generic term for a song; hence the accompanying adjective ‘spiritual.’” (Vine, p.316).
 - bb. These “are inspirational odes...designed to edify, admonish, and/or teach. They should conform to Scripture and Christians should insist that what they sing in worship truly express biblical truth.” (Caldwell, p.257).
- 2. Make melody in your heart to the Lord.
 - a. Singing must come from the heart.
 - i. God is interested in what comes from the heart, and if it is sincere. It doesn’t matter if we can’t “carry a tune in a bucket” or if we aren’t exactly precise with the sheet music. However, that doesn’t excuse us from doing our best in singing. It should be comforting to Christians that God is more interested in the sound of the heart than the tone of the vocal cords.
 - ii. On the other hand, those who are hypocritical or indifferent should be fearful that God is displeased with the sound of their hearts! God has *never* accepted worship that was only done halfheartedly.
 - b. Not only are we singing to one another, we are singing to the Lord.
 - i. Our words do not fade away into thin air unnoticed. God is watching and listening.
 - ii. Remember that we are worshiping the same God that created all things and has done many other wonderful works.
 - iii. Singing must be done with a goal to pleasing and praising the Lord.

C. Give thanks to God always for all things. (v.20).

- 1. What? “Give thanks to God the Father”
 - a. “‘Thanksgiving’ is the expression of joy Godward” (Vine, p.625).
 - b. *James 1:17; Psalm 30:12; 86:12; 118:28; Colossians 4:2; 3:15.*
 - c. Paul’s example: *Acts 27:35; Colossians 1:3.*
- 2. For what? “all things” *Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.*
- 3. When? “always” *1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; Ephesians 6:18; Hebrews 15:13.*
 - a. “Constant thanksgiving multiplies appreciation and eliminates selfishness.” (Caldwell, p.259).
 - b. Paul knew how to be truly thankful, even while in prison: *Ephesians 1:3,16; Colossians 1:3,12; Philemon 4.*
- 4. How? “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” *Colossians 3:17.*
 - a. The “name” of Christ calls to mind who He is, His will, and His authority.
 - b. “We cannot do something in one’s name if he does not want us to do it. In

order to act in one's name, you must have a relationship with him....you must do it on his behalf and at his instructions.” (Caldwell, p.261).

- c. Things done, accomplished, or performed “in His name”:
 - i. Teaching. (*Luke 24:47; Acts 9:27-28; cf. 4:18; 5:40; James 5:10*).
 - ii. Conversion. (*1 Corinthians 6:11*).
 - iii. Salvation. (*John 20:31; Acts 4:12; 10:43*).
 - iv. Baptism. (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5; 10:48*).
 - v. Good deeds. (*Matthew 18:5*).
 - vi. Miracles in the first century. (*Acts 3:6,16; 4:7-10; 4:30; 16:18*).
 - vii. Apostolic commands. (*1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6*).
 - viii. Local church discipline. (*1 Corinthians 5:4*).
 - ix. Requests to God. (*John 15:16*).
 - x. The giving of thanks for all things. (*Ephesians 5:20*).
 - xi. Everything the Christian says and does. (*Colossians 3:17*).

D. Submit to one another in the fear of God. (v.21).

- 1. “Submit” - military term for subordination under a commanding officer. It means you voluntarily turn your will over to someone else. (*e.g., the employee, the citizen, the wife, the child, and those in a local church under elders*).
- 2. “to one another”
 - a. As a Christian, we cannot always do our own will. Obviously we submit to Jesus Christ -- but we must also submit to one another as brethren. In other words, we respond to other people's needs and put them above our own. (*Romans 12:10*).
 - b. *Matthew 20:26-28; John 13:12-17*.
 - c. Pride or arrogance or the desire to control others is not compatible with service or love. We are not here *to be* served; we are here *to serve*!
- 3. “in the fear of God” (“Christ” in some MSS).
 - a. “‘reverential fear,’ (1) of God, as a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral, not a mere ‘fear’ of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing him” (Vine, p.230).
 - b. Our reverence for our Lord is the motivation behind our attitude and conduct. Because he wills it, we do it, even in the matter of putting others first above ourselves.

CONCLUSION

In these evil days, wisdom is required of us in our daily walk. We must be careful and precise in how we live, making sure it is according to the will of the Lord. We must make the most of the time we have, buying up every opportunity for good. A life of singing, thanking, and submitting will not only bring blessing and happiness, it will demonstrate to the world that we are committed to imitating the One we love, the Lord God of Heaven.

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THE MATURITY OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:7-16

by William Stewart

- MATURE — “...having attained a final or desired state... having achieved a low but stable growth rate... relating to a condition of full development...” (**Webster’s**)
- Church maturity is dependent upon individual and collective growth...
- As the physical body, to work effectively, requires that all parts of the body grow, so does the body of Christ...

Individuals are given gifts from God (7-10).

- We are inseparable with regard to the list of “one” given in v 4-6, “but” the bestowal of God’s grace upon us is individual...
- “Each one”, all Christians, have been given gifts to benefit the whole (*1 Co 12:4-11; 1 Pe 4:8-11*)
- What types of gifts? (*Ro 12:4-8*)
 - a) various miraculous gifts were distributed;
 - b) gifts for public service in worship;
 - c) ability for benevolence and hospitality;
 - d) physical strength, engineering knowhow;
 - e) creative imagination (Bible class materials)
- Each has been blessed with gifts according to our ability (*Mt 25:15*)
- The occasion for the bestowing of God’s grace upon men is the ascension of Christ (*Ac 2:29-33*) [note, he descended first]
- “He led captivity captive” A (*Ps 68:18-19*) A
 - a) Christ is victorious over all foes
 - b) Satan is captive (*Jn 12:31; Heb 2:14; Col 2:15*)
 - c) We’re in triumphant procession (*1 Co 15:54-57*)

GRACE — *Gr. charis*,
“...that which affords joy,
pleasure, delight, sweetness,
charm, loveliness... good will,
loving-kindness, favour...”
(**Thayer’s**)

Here, used of God’s pleasure to
impart gifts among His people.

“It is language derived from a conqueror, who not only makes captives, but who makes captives of those who were then prisoners, and who conducts them as a part of his triumphal procession. He not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumph. The allusion is to the public triumphs of conquerors, especially as celebrated among the Romans, in which captives were led in chains, (Tacitus, Ann. xii. 38) and to the custom in such triumph of distributing presents to the soldiers.”
(**Barnes New Testament Notes**)

The church is given gifts from God (11).

- Certain positions have been given in the church for the express purpose of building up the body...
 - a) Apostles — Jesus’ chosen vessels, no more...
 - b) Prophets — God’s spokesmen, reveal His will, future, etc., no more...
 - c) Evangelists — bearer of good tidings / gospel...
 - d) Pastors — leaders in the local congregations, shepherds, elders...
 - e) Teachers — used more times of Jesus than anyone else (40)...

The purposes of church leaders (12-15).

- It's wrong to think that church leaders are responsible to perform the work of the church, it would then be called the work of the church leaders. They have a God-given task to perform...
- They equip the saints... (cf. 2 Ti 3:16-17)
- Two specific actions are identified for which the saints are to be equipped:
 - a) "...the work of ministry..." (Lit. service)
 - to God, fellow saints, non-Christians...
 - b) "...the edifying of the body of Christ..."
 - all are responsible to build up the church (more in next section)
- Church leaders are responsible for ministry and edification, but notice, their appointed task in this text is to prepare the rest for the same...
- See the characteristics of the church (and individuals) who are prepared to minister and to edify as commanded:
 - a) unity of the faith (*Eph 4:5; Jer 32:38-39; 1 Co 1:10*)
 - b) knowledge of the Son of God (*Jn 17:3; 2 Co 4:6; Php 3:8*)
 - c) perfect man, measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
 - growth (from child to adult), attaining the stature of Christ is to be full-grown;
He is the standard, we must grow to become as He is...
 - d) no longer misled by falsehoods (*Heb 5:12-14; 2 Co 11:3-4; Gal 1:6-7*)
 - e) speak the truth in love (*2 Co 4:2; Ro 9:1-3; 10:1-3*)
- If these are present, the congregation (and its members) have matured and must continue on that same course, to become more and more as He is...

EQUIPPING — *Gr. katartismos*,
"...making fit, 'perfecting',
preparing fully..."
(Vine's)

"...we may increase to Him in all
things, who is the head – the
Christ..." (YLT)

We have personal responsibility (16).

- The church's maturity is dependent upon the mean maturity of the members. If the church is not what it ought to be, it is because the members are not what they ought to be...
- Note, "*each one*" was granted God's grace (ie. gifts). Thus, "*each one*" (not just those in leadership) share in the growth of the church (*1 Co 14:26*)
- Key phrases — "...joined and knit together...", "...every joint supplies...", "...every part does its share..."

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- The church will only grow if we work together, each one doing our part...
 - Every member is responsible to see that the church grows to be what God designed it to be...
 - To affect growth of the body, we must first effect growth in ourselves...

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NEW RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRIST

Ephesians 6:1-9; Colossians 3:18 - 4:1

by Keith Sharp

Introduction:

- A. In Colossians the apostle Paul emphatically declared the **Preeminence of Christ** in all things. - Colossians 1:19; 2:10; 3:4, 9-11, 17
- B. It is Christ who determines how we act in life's various relationships. - texts
- C. It is not His will that we seek to change society but that we seek to influence others to Christ within society. - Titus 2:9-15
- D. What is the Lord's will for us in life's varying relationships?

I. Home

A. Wives - Colossians 3:18

1. Responsibility: "submit to your own husbands"

("submit": "**hupotasso**" - 1) to arrange under, to subordinate 2) to subject, put in subjection 3) to subject one's self, obey 4) to submit to one's control 5) to yield to one's admonition or advice 6) to obey, be subject A Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader". In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden". (TDNT)

2. Reason: "as is fitting in the Lord"

("fitting": "**aneko**" - "2) to pertain to what is due, duty, as was fitting" (TDNT)

B. Husbands - Colossians 3:19

1. "love your wives"

2. "do not be bitter ("harsh" [NIV]) toward them."

C. Children - Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3

1. First Responsibility: "obey your parents in all things" ("in the Lord") - cf. Acts 5:29; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20-22

2. Reasons

a. "for this is right"

b. "for this is well pleasing to the Lord"

3. Second Responsibility: "Honor your father and mother"

a. in words and actions - Leviticus 19:32

b. providing for their needs when they cannot - Mark 7:9-13; 1 Timothy 5:3-4,16

4. Reason: "which is the first commandment with promise" - cf. Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Proverbs 30:17

D. Fathers - Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4

1. First Responsibility (negative): "do not provoke your children to wrath," ("exasperate" [NASB])
 - a. by being cutting and discouraging in speech - Proverbs 15:1; 25:11
 - b. by being unfair, cruel, or overly demanding
 - c. by showing partiality - Genesis 37:3-4,26-35
 - d. by cruel teasing - Genesis 21:9; cf. Galatians 4:29
2. Reason: "lest they become discouraged."
3. Second Responsibility (positive): "but bring them up in" ("*ektrepho*" - "nurture" [ASV])
 - a. the training
("paidea"-"chastening" [ASV]; *the whole training and education of children [which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment.... [Thayer. 473]; "stresses training by act" [Vine. 1:30.]; Proverbs 13:24; 23:13; 29:15; Hebrews 12:7-11*
 - (1) example of life
 - (2) restraint from wrong - 1 Samuel 2:12-17,22-25,27-36; 3:11-14; 4:12-22
 - b. and admonition of the Lord."
("nouthesia" - "lit., a putting in mind.... is the training by word,, whether of encouragement, or, if necessary, by reproof or remonstrance...." [Vine. 1:30]). - Genesis 18:17-19; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6

II. Work

- A. Bondservants - Colossians 3:22-25; Ephesians 6:5-8; cf. 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:18-20
1. Responsibility: Obey - Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22
 - a. With Humility - Ephesians 6:5; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 7:15; Philippians 2:12
 - b. With Sincerity - Ephesians 6:5-6; Colossians 3:22
 - c. With Good Will - Ephesians 6:7
 - d. With Trust - Ephesians 6:8; Colossians 3:24
 - e. With All the Heart - Colossians 3:23
 2. Reasons:
 - a. "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

- b. "But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality." ("whether he is a slave or free.")
- B. Masters - Colossians 4:1; Ephesians 6:9
 - 1. Responsibilities:
 - a. Be Fair
 - b. Be Kind
 - 2. Reason: " knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him." - cf. Romans 2:11

Conclusion:

- A. Our daily lives are in service to Christ just as our public worship is. - Colossians 3:23-24
- B. By submitting to the will of Christ in all life's relationships we:
 - 1. honor and glorify Him,
 - 2. please Him,
 - 3. lead others to Him, and
 - 4. save our own souls.

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NOTES:

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-20

by Tom Rainwater

INTRODUCTION

- a. This is Paul's last exhortation to the Ephesians in this epistle: "*Finally, my brethren..*" In observing the Romans soldiers guarding him in prison, Paul uses their military gear as an illustration of how Christians should properly equip themselves for spiritual conflict. In order for Christians to be successful in imitating God and doing battle against evil, each one must put on the *whole* armor of God.
- b. *Pep-talk*: "You volunteered for the Lord's army. Now you have to live up to your commitment, soldier, and join your fellow-soldiers in the field. God will equip you with all your gear. It is not enough to be *partially* out-fitted -- you need *all* your equipment to survive. You're going to be responsible for maintaining it. Remember, the enemy is *real*. This is *not* practice; this is *not* a drill. We're dealing with live ammo, and you've got to be on your toes at *all* times." I'm sure those in the audience who are military can relate to the need for preparedness and courage in times of deployment. Military basics haven't changed much in two-thousand years. Neither has spiritual warfare changed in that time.
- c. The warfare we wage is more important than any war on a physical battlefield because it is spiritual, with eternal consequences. Our enemy is much more clever and deadly than Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. Though we force him into retreat (*James 4:7*), he will return repeatedly to fight and weary us all the days of our lives. Yet we know the final victory is ours if we remain faithful to our Commanding Officer in Heaven.
- d. Some other passages using military terminology: *1 Thessalonians 5:8*; *2 Timothy 2:4*.
- e. The text of our study is comparable to the last words a soldier hears from his superiors before going into battle -- sober words that lift the spirits of men into battle-readiness. It is guaranteed that the inspired apostle Paul writes exactly what the Ephesians need to hear at this point to prepare them for a lifetime of hard spiritual conflict.

I. Be Strong in the Power of the Lord's Might. (6:10; Colossians 1:11).

- A. "Be Strong" [1743] *endunamoo*.
 1. In the Roman army, you had to be *strong* to fight; it wasn't enough to be skillful. It took strength to bear the heavy armor in the heat, on long marches, and especially in swift attack. In preparation for this, the Roman began his military training by carrying his armor, weapon and gear in a 20 mile march. He had to do it within five hours. Not until each soldier was sufficiently strengthened was he to receive any additional training. Likewise, the Christian must be strong in order to fight.
 2. "'to make strong' (*en*, 'in,' *dunamis*, 'power'), 'to strengthen'" (*Vine*, p.605).
 3. "*to receive strength, be strengthened, increase in strength...in union with the Lord, Eph.6:10*" (*Thayer*, p.214).
- B. "in the Lord" - That strength is gained by closer fellowship with God.
- C. "and in the power of His might." (KJV, NKJV, YLT); "and in the strength of His might."

(ASV, NASB, ESV).

1. “Power” [2904] *kratos* - force, strength, manifested power, dominion.
2. “Might” [2479] *ischus* - ability, all the strength one has. *cf. Mk.12:30,33.*
3. The Lord’s *power/strength* (as manifested in Creation and in our own lives) indicates He possesses a greater, immeasurable, infinite *might*. (*cf. Ephesians 1:19.*) “There’s more where that came from!”

D. Application:

1. We cannot be strengthened spiritually from ourselves. It must come from the Lord. Though we work hard in His service, the strength is His. When we serve Him, He makes us strong spiritually in ways that we don’t always fully realize and understand. (*cf. Ephesians 3:16-20; Philippians 4:6-7.*)
2. The example of Paul: *2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:17.*
3. Other passages encouraging us to be strong in Christ: *Ephesians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:1.*

II. Put on the Whole Armor of God. (6:11; Romans 13:12).

The Roman army dominated the known world for hundreds of years because of its numerical strength, rigorous training, strict discipline, and modern armor (that is, *modern* for *that era*). The majority of the army was equipped for close combat. As a Roman soldier, you were dressed in such a way as to be able to deflect both the arrows of archers and the swords of infantrymen. You had a weapon, too -- sharpened and ready to pull out of your sheath for cutting down the enemy. You owned all your own gear as each piece was fitted and hand-crafted for you. As a common soldier, you had to pay for all of it out of your own wages. So you took care of it, cleaned it and polished it. Your armor was your life: it represented your livelihood and it preserved your life. It was your most important possession. Without it, you were nothing. Likewise, we have an armor from God that, when used properly, will make a profound difference in our spiritual destiny. Without it, we perish.

A. The Whole Armor. [3833] *panoplia*.

- a. “whole armor” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV); “full armor” (NASB, NIV).
- b. “full armor, complete armor” (*Thayer*, p.476).
- c. “lit., ‘all armor, full armor,’ (*pas*, ‘all,’ *hoplon*, ‘a weapon’)...among the Greeks the *panoplia* was the complete equipment used by heavily armed infantry.” (*Vine*, p.38).
- d. The Roman soldier knew that every piece of armor was essential to victory. If he lacked any piece of equipment before battle, he was disciplined. If he lost any of it during battle, he knew his safety was severely compromised. He needed it all.

B. Reasons for putting on the Whole Armor:

1. To be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 - a. “stand” [2476] *histemi*.
 - i. “‘to stand, stand by, stand still’ ...of steadfastness, 1Cor.7:37; Eph.6:11,13,14; Col.4:12.” (*Vine*, p.598).
 - b. “wiles” [3180] *methodia*.
 - i. “wiles” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT); “schemes” (NASB, NIV, ESV).
 - ii. “denotes ‘craft, deceit’ (*meta*, ‘after,’ *hodos*, ‘a way’), ‘a cunning device, a

- wile,’...in 6:11, ‘the wiles (plural)(of the Devil.)’” (Vine, p.676).
- c. “devil” [1228] *diabolos* - accuser, slanderer, maligner.
 - d. The devil is crafty, deceitful, and resourceful. He, in his “war room,” plots continually against the Christian. It’s guaranteed that he will avail himself of every opportunity to attack where your front lines are weakest and where your flanks are unprotected. This evil general is experienced and knows all the tricks of the trade. He will stop at nothing (within his power) to see you fallen and slain on the field of battle. Remember that not only is he aggressive; he is desperate. His time is running out and he wants to fill the battlefield with the blood of would-be saints who have forsaken their armor. Paul says it take the *whole* armor to *stand* against the schemes of this enemy.
2. To wrestle against spiritual powers: (cf. Colossians 2:15).
- a. Principalities. [746] *arche*.
 - i. “principalities” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT); “rulers” (NASB, NIV, ESV).
 - ii. “‘beginning, government, rule,’ is used of supramundane beings who exercise rule, called ‘principalities’” (Vine, p.488).
 - iii. “*the first place, principality, rule, magistracy...*the term is transferred by Paul to angels and demons holding dominions entrusted to them in the order of things...Rom.8:38; 1Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col.1:16; 2:10,15.” (Thayer, p.77).
 - iv. This term emphasizes the *high position* from which a ruler rules: *first place* in an assigned dominion.
 - b. Powers. [1849] *exousia*.
 - i. “powers” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB); “the authorities” (YLT, NIV, ESV).
 - ii. “denotes ‘authority’ (from the impersonal verb *exesti*, ‘it is lawful’). From the meaning of ‘leave or permission,’ or liberty of doing as one pleases, it passed to that of ‘the ability or strength with which one is endued,’ then to that of the ‘power of authority.’” (Vine, p.45). “Angelic beings are called ‘powers’ in Eph.3:10 (cf. 1:21); 6:12; Col.1:16; 2:15 (cf. 2:10).” (Vine, p.479).
 - iii. “used also of demons....Eph.4:12; Col.2:15” (Thayer, p.225).
 - iv. This term emphasizes the *authority* that a ruler has in his position.
 - c. Rulers of the darkness of this age.
 - i. “the rulers of the darkness of this age” (NKJV); “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (KJV); “against the world-rulers of this darkness” (ASV); “against the world forces of this darkness (NASB); “with the world-rulers of the darkness of this age” (YLT); “against the powers of this dark world” (NIV); “against the cosmic powers over this present darkness” (ESV).
 - ii. rulers [2888] *kosmokrator*.
 - aa. “denotes ‘a ruler of this world’...In Greek literature, in Orphic hymns, etc., and in rabbinic writings, it signifies a ‘ruler’ of the whole world, a world lord. In the NT it is used in Eph.6:12...The context...shows that not

- earthly potentates are indicated, but spirit powers, who...exercise satanic and therefore antagonistic authority over the world in its present condition of spiritual darkness and alienation from God.” (Vine, p.540).
- bb. “*lord of the world, prince of this age*: the devil and demons are called...Eph.6:12; cf. 11; Jn.12:31; 2Co.4:4..” (Thayer, p.356).
- iii. This phrase emphasizes the *realm* in which the ruler rules. In this passage Paul describes the *state* of that realm in which Satan and his allies rule: *darkness*. (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 5:8; cf. Matthew 6:23). The *place*, the base of their operations, is *this world*. (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8; John 12:31).
- d. Spiritual hosts of wickedness.
- i. “spiritual hosts of wickedness” (NKJV, ASV); “spiritual wickedness” (KJV); “the spiritual forces of wickedness” (NASB); “the spiritual things of the evil” (YLT); “the spiritual forces of evil” (NIV, ESV).
- ii. “spiritual” [4152] *pneumatikos*.
- aa. “(a) the angelic hosts...Eph.6:12” (Vine, p.594).
- bb. “2. belonging to a spirit...(i.e., spiritual beings or powers..)wicked spirits, Eph.6:12.” (Thayer, p.523).
- iii. Though the word “hosts” is not in the original text, the word translated “spiritual” implies a plurality of spiritual beings.
- iv. This phrase emphasizes the *number* of beings that possess such rulership, and also the cause they promote: *wickedness*.
- e. *Application*: Paul uses four similar descriptions as a point of emphasis. He wants the soldier of Christ to understand that the enemy is not just one, Satan, but includes a whole army of wicked beings in service to him. Even the common soldier understands the significance of numbers in battle. The implication here is that we ought to be frightened into a greater dependence on the Lord and his protective armor as well as train harder in hand-to-hand spiritual combat.
- f. To “wrestle” [3823] describes a *struggle* between two locked in a wrestling grip as each tries to throw down the other and pin his neck to the floor. In a combat situation, it is a death struggle as one must kill the other to survive. We cannot let our spiritual enemies get us down. We have to fight back!
3. To withstand in the evil day.
- a. “withstand” [436] *anthistemi*.
- i. “withstand” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV); “resist” (NASB, YLT); “stand your ground” (NIV).
- ii. “to set one’s self against, to withstand, resist, oppose” (Thayer, p.45).
- iii. “‘to set against’ (*anti*, ‘against,’ *histemi*, ‘to cause to stand’)” (Vine, p.528).
- b. “evil day”
- i. “evil day” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, ESV); “the day of evil” (NIV).
- ii. “evil” [4190] *poneros*.

- aa. “1. *full of labors, annoyances, hardships...*b. *bringing toils, annoyances, perils...*of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness, Eph.5:16; 6:13.” (Thayer, p.530).
- bb. “akin to *ponos*, ‘labor, toil,’ denotes ‘evil that causes labor, pain, sorrow, malignant evil’...(b) with the meaning toilsome, painful, Eph.5:16; 6:13; Rev.16:2.” (Vine, p.212).
- c. The dark days that try our souls are times the forces of evil try to get us in a choke-hold. They are hoping that sorrow and discouragement will cause us to lower our shield, let slip parts of our armor, and put down our sword. But those are the days we must tap into the mighty strength of the Lord! We must *resist* what is against us! This is the time to take courage and *stand our ground!*
- 4. To remain standing at the end.
 - a. “and having done all, to stand.” (KJV, NKJV, ASV); “and having done all, to stand firm.” (ESV); “and having done everything, to stand firm.” (NASB).
 - b. “to stand” [2476] *histemi*. (*same word as used in verse 11*).
 - i. “‘to stand, stand by, stand still’...of steadfastness, 1Cor.7:37; Eph.6:11,13,14; Col.4:12.” (Vine, p.38).
 - ii. “of one who vanquishes his adversaries and holds the ground, Eph.6:13” (Thayer, p.308).
 - c. This describes the defeat of the enemy. He is beaten forever. The battle is won. You are the one that remains standing in the end. This is your ultimate goal. To win, you must win *big* or not at all. Here is the armor you need to do that...

C. Components of the Whole Armor:

- 1. The belt of Truth.
 - a. The Roman belt: The narrow belts were made of leather with a bronze buckle and belt-plates for decoration. Several leather strips hanging down from the front of the belt served as a protective apron or groin guard. The belt held the tunic in place and carried the sword. It was the foundation for the full uniform.
 - b. Truth [225] *aletheia*.
 - i. “having girded your waist” - The tense assumes you’ve already done this and are putting on the whole armor *now!* Paul is not allowing us to waste time!
 - ii. “having girded” indicates readiness turned to action: *cf. Luke 12:35,37; 17:8; Acts 12:8.*
 - iii. Truth is the revealed thought from the mind of God. It is only through reading and understanding His recorded word that we can discern between good and evil (*Hebrews 5:12-14*) and evaluate our true spiritual selves. This truth convicts the hearts of sinners to repentance (*John 16:7-15; Acts 2:37*) and offers them freedom from sin (*John 8:32*). It is powerful in changing the very character of those who apply it (*1 Peter 1:22*). Truth does not fear investigation and cannot be overcome. It is eternal (*1 Peter 1:23-25*). Without the truth of God, we would be helpless against the devil’s lies and deceptions.

The armor begins here. As the belt was the foundation garment for the Roman soldier, so is the truth the foundation for the Christian. It makes possible the following...

2. The breastplate of Righteousness. (6:14, cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:8).
 - a. The Roman breastplate: In early Roman history up to the 1st century A.D., the Romans wore a single sheet of bronze armor as a chest plate over his tunic. In later years, only the highest ranking officers wore them. During the reign of Tiberius in the 1st century, the common soldier started wearing segmented armor. Multiple iron plates were hinged together with leather straps to form a very flexible and durable protection. This design is entirely Roman. The segmented armor was easier to make than chain mail, and tougher than scale armor.
 - b. Righteousness. [1343] *dikaiosune*.
 - i. “having put on.” - Christian, Paul says you’ve already done this, and now you must keep it on.
 - ii. As the breastplate protected the soldier’s heart from incoming weapons, righteousness protects the Christian’s spiritual heart from wickedness. The very reason we are engaged in this spiritual conflict is we stand for that which the devil’s forces cannot bear. They rule where there is no righteousness; they expand their kingdom in men who disregard God’s moral standard. Thus, they despise us and concentrate their attack on us because we promote that which lessens their influence in this world. They know if they can penetrate our heart and corrupt it, they’ve won. We can’t let them influence us to evil. That means nothing less than a serious commitment to righteousness on our part. That means *daily* righteousness -- in attitude, in speech, in action, and in thought.
 - iii. “When godliness and integrity are woven into one’s being, he has wrapped himself in an iron vest which cannot be penetrated.” (Caldwell, p.313).
3. The shoes of the Gospel of Peace.
 - a. The Roman sandals: These shoes were made of leather with iron hobnails fastened underneath for traction, somewhat like a football player’s cleats. The top and sides of the shoes were composed of multiple leather straps. Aside from being good for ventilation, they secured the feet into the soles to prevent blistering. The soles were designed with patterns to withstand miles of marching and transfer weight between the different parts of the foot. These sandals were used during the 1st and 2nd centuries. After that, regular boots were preferred.
 - b. The Gospel ([2098] *euaggelion*) of Peace ([1515] *eirene*).
 - i. “having shod your feet” - This is something else the Christian has already done in putting on the whole armor.
 - ii. the preparation of
 - aa. “preparation” [2091] *hetoimasia*.
 - bb. “2. the condition of a person or thing so far forth as prepared, preparedness, readiness...with the promptitude and alacrity which the

gospel produces, Eph.6:15.” (Thayer, p.255).

cc. “(b) ‘preparation’; it is found in Eph.6:15, of having the feet shod with the ‘preparation’ of the gospel of peace; it also has the meaning of firm footing (foundation), as in the Sept. of Ps.89:14...if that is the meaning in Eph.6:15, the gospel itself is to be the firm footing of the believer, his walk being worthy of it and therefore a testimony in regard to it.” (Vine, p.483).

dd. Preparedness is absolutely necessary in a fight. This preparedness originates from God’s gospel. *It* prepares us to fight -- nothing else can adequately do this. The good news of Christ is a motivator and a guide; it gets us on our feet and calls us to action. Its evidences concerning Christ give us a sure footing and a confidence to charge.

iii. The Gospel of Peace. It may seem a paradox to describe something in terms of peace when Paul uses it to motivate to war. However, peace has been the motivation for many wars. Those who suffer under a tyrannical dictator greatly desire peace and may resort to war to obtain that peace and freedom -- for themselves, their families, and their countrymen. As Christians, we understand that inner peace can *only* be found through the gospel -- and we are ready to fight for its spreading. Having shod our feet, we are ready to *go* with the gospel and free the lost from Satan’s rule and bring them to the Prince of Peace.

4. The shield of Faith.

a. The Roman shield: The Roman *scutum* was a tall curved rectangular shield used to protect the body. It could weigh as much as 22 pounds and was held with the left hand. The common shields were made of three layers of glued plywood covered with canvas and hide. Many were dyed red and had additional decoration. At the center was a raised iron knob used to deflect weapons.

b. Faith. [4102] *pistis*.

i. “taking” - We are presently taking this up and growing in our use of it.

ii. quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

aa. “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (NASB, NIV).

bb. “quench” [4570] *sbennumi* - to extinguish or put out fire.

cc. “fiery” [4448] *puroo* - that which is set on fire, ignited and burning up.

dd. “darts” [956] *belos* - an arrow, missile, dart or what is thrown.

ee. “wicked” [4190] *poneros* - in an ethical sense: evil, wicked, bad.

iii. In ancient battle, archers ignited their arrow tips using a flammable substance and shot them directly at enemy soldiers or camps or chariots. The presence of fire could slow or demoralize an enemy. In many cases, the arrows stuck in the wooden shields, burning them and rendering the enemy defenseless. The kind of shield God provides his army is incapable of sustaining any damage when used with confidence.

iv. “Faith” is used here to describe the belief and trust one has in the revealed word of God (*Romans 10:17*). A strong conviction in the factual evidence

presented by God leads to a strong hope of eternal life (*Hebrews 11:1*). It is this confidence and trust in God that overcomes the doubts and fears that Satan tries to throw at us. The stronger our faith, the more futile Satan's attempts are to consume us -- his darts deflect away from us thoroughly quenched.

5. The helmet of Salvation. (6:17, cf. *1 Thessalonians 5:8*).

- a. The Roman helmets: The classic Imperial helmets were made of bronze and fit close to the skull for a secure fit. The cheekplates lay close to the face while the ears stuck out past the helmet skull. To prevent the ears from being exposed, many helmets had projecting earguards for protection. A brow prevented a direct sword blow to the main headpiece. Helmet liners and cheek padding, made of felt and/or linen, were placed inside to make the helmet comfortable. A leather chinstrap was secured through a ring on the underside of the neck guard. The design, which allowed the soldier to see and hear clearly, is of Greek influence. Centurions wore crests on top of their helmets as an indication of rank and/or legion. These crests contained either feathers or horse hair dyed in the appropriate colors. It made it easy for their soldiers to spot them on the battlefield and to know when to follow.
- b. Salvation. [4992] *soterios*.
 - i. "take" - Paul urges us to complete the whole armor by taking what we lack.
 - ii. If the Roman soldiers were marching in the distance, people could easily identify they were Roman by the style of their helmets. The world needs to see us as a saved people. They should be able to tell us apart from the world by our righteous conduct and faith. The more we let our light shine and take our stand against evil, the more people will know to ask us, "What must I do to be saved?" (*Acts 16:30*).
 - iii. The enemies of Rome delighted in taking Roman helmets as prizes of war. To them it meant one less Roman to have to contend with, and that he probably died from a head wound. The devil would love to see us removed from our salvation. He can never strip it from us against our will. Salvation's fit is secure so long as we continue in God's service. But if we desire in our minds something *more* than God's salvation, that helmet will fall -- very much to the delight of our enemies who will come in for the kill.

6. The sword of the Spirit.

- a. The Roman swords: The Romans used the *gladius* as their main weapon. It was a long-pointed double-edged sword of Spanish design that was effective in close combat for stabbing and slashing. Foot soldiers wore their sword on their right, the officers on their left.
- b. The Word of God. (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*).
 - i. "take" - There is always the constant need to take up the word of God.
 - ii. The sword was the main offensive weapon of the Roman infantryman. It was all he needed to wreck havoc with the enemy. Likewise, God's word is all we

need. It is the weapon Satan fears the most. The revealed truth cuts through his schemes and his lies like butter. It is the answer to every temptation (*Matthew 4:4,7,10*), and its sharp edge (*Hebrews 4:12*) sends the devil away (*Matthew 4:11*) though he will later return (*cf. Luke 4:13*). If we grow in our knowledge and application (*1 Peter 2:2*) of the Spirit-revealed word (*1 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Peter 1:21*), keep it ready at hand, and love it more than our own lives, we will overcome our enemy (*Revelation 12:11*).

III. Pray Always.

- A. Though prayer is not technically a part of the armor, it is nevertheless as essential.
- B. “Prayer” is the general word for communication between us and God. The term emphasizes God’s availability to hear us. Prayer must be a habit with the Christian, even in the best of times. (*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Colossians 4:2; Luke 18:1; Proverbs 3:6*).
- C. “Supplication” (petition -NASB) is urgent prayer expressing need in times of distress and trouble. The term emphasizes the seriousness of the need. Supplication is offered by those who admit they can’t “go it alone.” It is a humble expression of dependence upon God for all things. (*Philippians 4:6,19; 1 Peter 3:12*).
 - 1. For all the saints.
 - a. *Philippians 1:4; James 5:16; 2 Corinthians 9:13-15*.
 - b. “Nothing enhances the fellowship of saints more than praying for one another. We pray for forgiveness, for safety, for strength, for health, and support in times of grief and loss, for physical blessing and prosperity, and for many other wonderful favors from God. I would not want to be part of a church full of people who were so unconcerned that they did not pray for me when I was in need. On the other hand, I would think they would not cherish fellowship with me if I were so selfish to overlook them in prayer.” (Caldwell, pp.318,319).
 - 2. For those who preach and teach the gospel.
 - a. Paul often asked for prayers. (*Romans 15:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2*). Knowing that his brethren were praying for him gave him confidence. (*Philippians 1:19*). He was thankful for what those prayers accomplished. (*2 Corinthians 1:11*).
 - b. Paul requested they pray that “utterance” may be given to him. (*Colossians 4:3-4*). Even while in prison, Paul looked for opportunities to preach the gospel and knew we was dependent upon God for the words of truth. Likewise, preachers today are God’s “ambassadors” to the world. Our dependence is upon the revealed Scriptures and our mission is to teach it to the world in whatever circumstances of life we face.
 - c. Paul requested they pray that he speak boldly. The gospel message is bold and demands a bold presentation. Paul was given the opportunity to teach the Roman soldiers guarding him, and eventually Caesar. Boldness was definitely required.
 - d. God answered those prayers: *Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22*.
- D. “in the spirit” - I believe this phrase refers to man’s own spirit and the need for a sincere

heart in the expression of prayer (*cf. 1 Corinthians 14:15*). It is possible that it could refer to the “Holy Spirit,” with the meaning that our prayers need to be in accordance with the Spirit’s will. (*1 John 5:14*).

- E. The attitude of the soldier is just as important as what he wears. We must humble ourselves in prayer in order to receive strength and encouragement from the Lord. The Lord is an ally and captain we cannot afford to forget. With Him personally helping us, we need not fear “for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” (2 *Kings 6:16*). Indeed, “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (*Romans 8:31*).

IV. Be Watchful with all Perseverance.

- A. “Watching” (“be on the alert” -NASB; keep alert -ESV). Guard duty was commonly expected of the Roman soldier. He had to remain alert and attentive\ in guarding his prisoner or protecting his fellow soldiers. If he failed his watch, he would be executed as punishment. Constant watchfulness is necessary for the soldier of Christ (*cf. 1 Peter 4:7*). The enemy will try to strike when we are most off-guard.
- B. “with all perseverance” Perseverance in this passage means steadfastness, giving constant attention to something. It is a continual, never-ending devotion to duty. It is being watchful with a concentrated and focused vigilance. This describes a soldier who is not easily discouraged from his task (he is determined to see it through), nor is he easily disheartened by what happens around him. We as spiritual soldiers need that kind of focus and determination.

CONCLUSION

Notice that, in the text, there is no armor for protecting the backside. As a Roman soldier, you were expected to always face your enemy. To be injured in the back usually meant that you retreated or carelessly took your eyes off the enemy. The spiritual battle we face cannot be won in retreat nor in slumber. We have to face the enemy with the kind of courage and strength that comes from knowing and trusting God. We have to put on the *whole* armor of God. If we do these things with humility, watchfulness and perseverance, we will “withstand,” and “having done all, to stand.”

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THE COMPLETE CHRIST (Christ, not Human Wisdom) - *part 2*

(or, *Christ, Not Human Tradition, Makes Us Complete*)

Colossians 2:11-23

by Oscar Miles

INTRODUCTION: Background: religious teachers trying to convince the Colossians that they had a superior way of spirituality.

Paul's goal: to "present every man complete in Christ" (1:28; cf. 1:24-29). All wisdom is found in Christ (2:3; cf. 2:1-10) and all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ. He is certainly all sufficient to make us spiritually complete. Jesus makes us whole and causes our lives to overflow with every spiritual blessing.

Proof of the all-sufficiency of Christ: their own salvation: 2:11-13. When God saved them, He abolished the Old Law: 2:14-15. So, the Colossians did not need the the regulations of Judaism to make them complete: 2:16-17. They had everything they needed to enjoy full fellowship with God and with His people and would therefore be foolish to allow anyone to convince them there was something more than Christ: 2:18-23. Whether angels or asceticism or whatever human traditions (elementary teachings), nothing has any spiritual value outside Christ and we need nothing but our Lord Jesus.

BODY:

I) Christ Alone Brings Complete Salvation (verses 11-13):

A) **Through spiritual circumcision (verse 11):** The third "in Him" in as many verses: that is, in Christ in whom all the fullness of deity dwells (verse 9) and who has made us complete (verse 10a) and who has dominion over every power that exists (verse 10b).

- 1) **Not made by flesh:** That is, simply "made by God." Paul's purpose for saying, "not made by flesh" is that he is urgently warning the Colossians not to be led astray by practices that were simply fleshly in nature, such as physical circumcision (which once had a deeper meaning but no longer) and ascetic practices. Christ completely saves us: He needs no help from man and man can add nothing to His Way.
- 2) **But spiritual – to remove fleshliness:** In fact, so far from being a carnal ordinance, their "circumcision" had removed carnality. The purpose of this circumcision is to cut away not physical flesh but fleshly-mindedness. That is, when we submit to Jesus, He empowers us to cast aside the old self that was ruled by fleshly desires and to become all that God originally intended for us to be by putting on a new self that is ruled by spiritual interests (cf. 3:9). Thus, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God now (Romans 12:1) and we use our bodies to serve Him (Romans 6:12-13).

B) Through baptism (verse 12): I don't think Paul is equating circumcision with baptism or saying that instead of circumcision we have baptism. Rather, I think he is saying, we have a better circumcision than Old Testament circumcision, and this circumcision took place when we were baptized. That is, the spiritual circumcision does not consist of baptism but took place when we were baptized. Practically, there is no difference.

1) The process: All spiritual sufficiency is traced to Christ: your baptism was burial WITH CHRIST; your raising from baptism was a raising WITH CHRIST.

(a) Burial with Christ: When we are baptized, we are buried with Christ.

(b) Raised up with Christ: When we are lifted up from the waters of baptism, we are raised up with Christ.

2) The power: the working of God: So now, through God's power, we are free from the old man because God has recreated us in Christ. So, while we did the human work—submitting to baptism—God did His work of spiritually circumcising us, cutting away the fleshliness and replacing it with spiritual-mindedness. But all of it is through Christ: nothing spiritually beneficial originates from man.

(a) Through faith: This passage shows the relationship between faith, baptism and salvation. Teaching Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16, etc. means putting our faith in "the working of God," i.e., that God will wash away our sins when we submit to baptism). Faith in God means trusting God's way exclusively for salvation. Thus, baptism is "the washing of water with the Word" (Ephesians 5:26) because we show our trust (have faith) in God by submitting to the baptism taught in His Word. We believe it is the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5).

(b) Illustrated in the resurrection of Jesus: We believe that the God who could raise Jesus from the dead can wash our sins away at baptism.

C) Through resurrection (verse 13): Verses 11-13 teaches that baptism is the point when God erases the old way of life and gives life, direction, and power to live a new way. To turn anywhere else for spiritual fulfillment is to spurn what God did for us at baptism.

1) You were dead: That is, in a state separated from God.

(a) In your transgressions: Our transgressions caused the separation from God (Isaiah 59:2).

(b) In the uncircumcision of your flesh: Here "uncircumcision of your flesh" refers to the same thing as "the circumcision of Christ" which removed "the body of flesh" in verse 11. Cf. Ephesians 2:1-3.

2) **He made you alive:** That is, brought us back into fellowship with God. Who did this? Christ and Him alone! Without the Law of Moses or human traditions.

(a) **Together with Christ:** Only Christ makes this possible, since all spiritual blessings are in Him: Ephesians 1:3. Were they now looking for a greater spiritual life? But man had never been able to find ANY spiritual life by himself! It was God who brought spiritual life to us through Christ and we have no business seeking any spirituality anywhere else because it cannot be found! Seeking such is useless. Instead, we are to submit to His ways.

(b) **Having forgiven us all our transgressions:** In order to bring us to life, our transgressions had to be forgiven, because transgressions separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). As long as we have unforgiven transgressions, we cannot be joined in sweet fellowship with God. Notice the change in pronoun from "you" to "us." Paul could be making the same point Peter made in Acts 15:11 or merely bringing himself and Timothy into the discussion.

II) Salvation in Christ Brings Full (Complete) Spiritual Life (verses 14-23): Verse 14 starts "having canceled out." This participial phrase refers back to "made you alive" in verse 13. Part of God's process of giving us spiritual life was canceling out the Law of Moses and bringing to nothing every human religious scheme. If it is new or if it is apart from Christ, it is not from God. There is NOTHING LEFT that God has not already done for us in Christ!

A) By liberating man from the Law (verses 14-17): How do we know Paul is referring to the Law of Moses? Because it "consisted of decrees" (verse 14), included food regulations, festivals, Sabbath days (verse 16), and foreshadowed Christ (verse 17).

1) God canceled it (verse 14):

(a) **God took it out of the way:** This describes what God did.

(b) **God nailed it to the cross:** This describes how and when God did it.

(c) **Because it was hostile to us:** This describes why God canceled it. The Law itself is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12), but to anyone who had sinned (all of us), it became hostile, because it demanded the punishment of separation from God without hope of redemption. This was a debt we would not wish to pay, and God did not wish us to pay it either, so He provided a way to have our debt paid by the only Person who could pay it.

2) God disarmed the rulers and authorities (verse 15): All rulers and authorities, but particularly Jewish ones. Why return to rulers whom your current Ruler has defeated? Or possibly Paul refers to evil spiritual powers – the devil and his angels – as in John 12:31; 16:11; Hebrews 2:14, but this seems slightly out of context unless false teachers were claiming that evil spiritual entities were still exercising great power in the world.

- (a) **God made a public display of them:** Jesus, while teaching in the temple or on the mountain side often made a public display of the foolishness of the Jewish leaders. More than that, in raising Jesus from the dead, God really displayed the impotence of all the Jewish rulers who had publicly denied Jesus was the Messiah, put Him to death and taken every precaution to guard His tomb.
 - (b) **God triumphed over them through Christ:** This is a triumph over every religious way proffered by men, though particularly here the Jewish rulers who did everything they could to thwart the plans of God.
- 3) **So, Let No One Judge You About Keeping the Law (verses 16-17):** This judging could be positive or negative. "Don't let anyone debase you because you do not observe the following nor let anyone elevate you because you do. These are not matters of God's righteousness."
- (a) **In ritual matters (verse 16):** What was obligatory under Moses is strictly voluntary now: Romans 14:5-6.
 - (i) **Food or drink:** The Old Testament regulations on food are well-known. Peter himself received direct revelation that these had been done away with: Acts 10:9-16. There were few regulations with regard to drink other than prohibitions against strong drink and for certain persons absolute abstinence from alcohol. So, the "drink" may indicate they were mixing ascetic practices (as later in this text) with the regulations of Moses, but this is not necessarily so.
 - (ii) **In holy days:** The Law of Moses had many regulations regarding festival days, monthly sacrifices (new moon, cf. Numbers 29:6).
 - (b) **Because they are a mere shadow (verse 17):** It could hardly be said that pagan festivals foreshadowed Christ, but it could be said for Old Testament holy days (cf. Hebrews 4; 8:5; 10:1), including the Sabbath days (cf. Hebrews 4). "So it is *you*, with your claims to be superior, *who are still living in the shadows*" (Lucas 115). To the Jews, so accustomed to ritual and splendor (the temple), humble discipleship in Christ must have seemed inferior. "These are still uncomfortable words. They rebuke the traditional catholic teaching on the priesthood of the apostolic ministry, just as they rebuke more generally loose talk about the ordained ministry as priesthood" (Lucas 116). A rebuke to the ordained ministry, period, as well as the view some brethren hold on the role of elders.
 - (c) **But Christ is the substance (verse 17):** Jesus fulfilled all Old Testament types and shadows. He is the substance. It is foolish to leave the real thing for the shadow. The theme: verse 10. Cf. Romans 8:3-4.

B) By liberating man from manmade traditions (verses 18-23)

- 1) Let No One Defraud You (verse 18):** Do not forfeit fellowship with God, eternal life, all spiritual blessings in Christ for inferior traditions. God's way in Christ bring full spiritual fulfillment; anything else robs a man of true spiritual enlightenment.

(a) With seemingly pious practices

- (i) Self-abasement:** Usually translated "humility," here means a false humility which is really the result of pride ("inflated"). Perhaps parading humility.
 - (ii) Worship of angels:** This worship of angels may have consisted of the actual worship of angels or the use of special spiritual techniques in order to reach the point of spirituality in which one could worship God in the same way the angels did (e.g., "the worship of holy men" could refer to worshiping holy men or the worship holy men offer). Liturgies supposedly reproducing the worship of angels around God's throne have been found at Qumran (see O'Brien on this passage).
 - (iii) Visions:** Things have NOT changed! How will you disprove a vision? Not by denying the vision, but by testing the spirits (1 John 4:1). If the vision contradicts, adds to, or subtracts from God's Word, it did not come from God. If it fits perfectly with God's Word, there is no harm in following it. But the authority then is from God through His Word. The word "visions" is not in the original, and thus, this could refer to those tangible, physical regulations of food and drink (verses 16, 21-23). Some manuscripts have "things not seen" (thus the KJV translation), in which case it would refer to matters involving angels and the unseen spiritual realm.
- (b) Which are fleshly in origin:** His fleshly mind – not his great piety and spirituality – has inflated his mind. Many fleshly motives may be in their minds, determining their exact motive is not important.

2) But hold fast to Christ (verse 19)

- (a) The head:** The head is the ultimate authority, but here more specifically, the supplier of the body, sufficient to make it whole, complete and healthy.
- (b) The supplier of the body:** Theme: Christ alone can supply everything you need.
- (i) Holds the body together:** Members of the body of Christ do not hinder the work of other members of the body but rather assist as opportunity arises. But where some members follow a "higher" path to spirituality, the unity of the local church crumbles

- (ii) **Causes the body to grow:** Following Christ, the body grows together. This implies the growth of each part (cf. Ephesians 4:16). Christ supplies sufficient nourishment for every disciple not just for some. All growth is from Christ.

C) Do Not Submit to the Commandments and Teachings of Men (verses 20-23)

1) For you have died (verse 20a)

- (a) **With Christ:** This is not exactly the same point as verse 12, but it completes the picture, for now we have died with Christ, been buried with Christ and been raised up with Christ.
 - (b) **To the elementary principles of the world:** Specifically, what we have died to or become separated from are the basic principles, that is the usual philosophy by which worldly people guide their lives.
- 2) So do not submit to manmade decrees (verses 20b-21):** If they now turn to these manmade decrees, they have merely exchanged one human way of living for another human way of living and so are no better off than when they lived in the world!
- (a) **Ascetic practices (verse 21):** Every age has such teachers. But God does not absolutely forbid partaking of these things, though He does regulate its use for purposes that are good and legislates moderation in all such things. One may preach about the virtues of fasting, but he may not command fasting. And certainly Christians never call eating and drinking or sexual activity evil, for it is all good when used with thanksgiving to glorify God: 1 Timothy 4:1-5.
 - (b) **Destined to perish (verse 22):** Christianity consists of the spiritual. What little is material is symbolic. The water of baptism signifies cleansing. Bread and wine signify the body and blood of Christ. This is significantly different from the Law of Moses and every manmade religion.
 - (c) **Because they are of man (verse 22):** Verses 20-22: "The decision to follow Christ was a decision to leave behind all manmade ways of living."

3) Although they appear pious (verse 23)

(a) They appear wise

- (i) **Self-made religion:** Men will always concoct religious principles that seem wise and holy TO MAN. But true wisdom comes from God and may not "appear" wise to men.
- (ii) **Self-abasement:** This appears very, very pious, but true humility is doing whatever God says, even if it makes us look good in the sight of men.

(iii) **Severe aesthetics:** Buddhist monks who set themselves on fire, radical Muslims who die in suicide bombings provoke some to extol their "courage," "faith" and "devotion." Not all that appears to be pious really is. We may benefit from times of abstinence, but to command such is to usurp God's authority. Suicide attacks have never been God's will.

(b) **Their reality: of no value against sin:** Every human needs to conquer "fleshly indulgence." Thus, man invents ways to conquer alcoholism, etc. Such methods are only effective inasmuch as they are in harmony with God's laws revealed in nature and Scripture. Ascetic practices will not give spiritual discipline against "fleshly indulgences." Only Christ living in us will curb such desires. So, once again, Christ makes us complete, and everything else is utterly worthless.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, everything you need spiritually, you already have in the Christ who died to wash away your sins. He gave you a new life when you were raised from the waters of baptism, a spiritual life complete in every way. Therefore, we should never allow anyone to convince us to turn to the Law of Moses or any other human tradition as a means to give us greater spiritual fulfillment. All such practices are shallow compared to the Way of Christ, will defraud us of our eternal prize, are destined to perish, and have no real value for those who have died to such ways of the world. Should we return to the Law of Moses, seek the holiness of angels, or submit to any worldly religious power? No, for our current Master rules them all! Should we search for hidden religious wisdom? No, for our Lord Jesus Christ possesses all wisdom and knowledge! Can we get closer to God through the worship of angels or heavenly visions? No, for Christ is our companion and He Himself is fully God!

EXCURSUS #1

ON PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Old Testament required physical circumcision

- Genesis 17:14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

But emphasized spiritual circumcision, that is, inward purification

- Deuteronomy 10:16 "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer."
- Deuteronomy 30:6 "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live."
- Jeremiah 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

The prophets predicted that spiritual circumcision (inward purity) would be even more important under the new covenant

- Ezekiel 36:25-27 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."
- Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Today physical circumcision is no longer required because it has been replaced by obligatory spiritual circumcision

- Just as no Israelite was in covenant relationship with God who was not physically circumcised
- Without spiritual circumcision one cannot enter a covenant relationship with God today
Romans 2:28-29 "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."
Philippians 3:3 "for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh"

What is the "circumcision of Christ" in Colossians 2:11?

- The circumcision Christ experienced. Not His physical circumcision on the 8th day, but His crucifixion. Then "the removal (stripping off) of the body of flesh" refers to the loss of His life on the cross which would lead naturally to baptism in v. 12
* Romans 6:5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

(That is, it is possible "the circumcision of Christ" could refer figuratively not only to what He does for us but what was done to Him as with the figure of baptism going along with Jesus' burial and resurrection; i.e., the circumcision of Christ was His crucifixion by which He circumcised us; this makes the picture complete in Colossians 2:11-12 having circumcision

signify the crucifixion, baptism the burial, raising from baptism the resurrection.)

- The circumcision Christ performed.
More natural interpretation.
Happened when we were baptized.
Still involves our identification with His crucifixion.
Romans 6:6 "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin"

EXCURSUS #2

ON THE "CERTIFICATE OF DEBT" (*Colossians 2:14*)

(Although I believe Paul had the Law of Moses specifically in mind here, note the emphasis on our debt instead of the Law itself and that application can still be made to the Gentiles apart from the Law of Moses.)

"Certificate of debt" is literally "handwriting"

- A common term referring to one's own handwriting in signing a certificate of debt
- Therefore, the emphasis is on the debt incurred by the Law of Moses rather than the Law itself
- But it was the Law of Moses that the Jews had signed an obligation to keep
Exodus 19:8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (Also Exodus 24:3)
24:7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"
Also Deuteronomy 5:27; 26:17
- The Gentiles had also "signed off" to keep God's laws
Romans 2:14-15 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them

Canceled out . . . taken out of the way

- Specifically, the Law of Moses has been taken out of the way, canceled. All of it has been taken away. This includes the keeping of the Sabbath, which can hardly be called a "moral" law. Resting may well be an eternal principle connected with good stewardship (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), but the particular day on which one rests is hardly a moral principle.
- The Gentile way of life, living by the dictates of their conscience in accordance with whatever revelation they had received from Christ, has also been taken out of the way.
- Every past way of life incurred a debt we could not pay. So, He has done away with all those past systems and included all, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, under the gospel.

Nailed it to the cross

- Perhaps an allusion to the accusation nailed above Jesus on the cross
- Jesus nails the accusation against His people to the cross
An accusation that Satan – the Accuser – formerly could make legitimately because the Law of Moses could not take away sins (and by extension, neither could the laws the Gentiles followed by conscience)
- As He hung from the cross, the forces of spiritual wickedness supposed Him defeated, but at that very time He was grappling with them and defeating them!
Colossians 2:15

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THE CHURCH, the MANIFESTATION of the ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD

Ephesians 3:8-21

by William Stewart

- Some in the religious world believe the church to be an after-thought, a temporary fix, in the plan of God...
- It is the fruition of God's plan from before time began (*v 11; 2 Ti 1:9*)
- Those who are members of it share a relationship like none other with one another, and with God, the creator and judge of all...

The eternal mystery revealed in the church (8-13).

- "...least of all the saints..." – Paul counted it an immense blessing to preach of Christ and God's wondrous plan through Him...
- Consider the topics specified:
 - a) the unsearchable riches of Christ (*Ro 11:33*)
 - they have been revealed to us (*v 19; Col 2:1-3; 1 Co 2:9ff*)
 - filled with blessings (*Eph 2:7; Ps 31:19*)
 - the mystery is revealed and His riches are manifest, yet, it still cannot be traced out. The Lord and His workings are an inexhaustible mine, never to be fully explored...
 - b) the fellowship of the mystery (*Ro 16:25-27*)
 - if "fellowship", all men may join together as one in Christ Jesus;
 - if "dispensation", the means and time whereby God revealed the mystery...
- This eternal mystery has a glorious end:
 - "...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places..."
 - a) revealed in part, but kept secret (*1 Pe 1:12; Dan 12:9; 1 Co 2:7-16*)
 - b) God's wisdom displayed (*Eph 1:3; Ps 104:24; Mt 11:25-27; 1 Ti 3:16*)
 - c) "Principalities and powers"? (*Eph 1:21; Ro 8:38; Col 1:16; 1 Pe 3:22*)
- This plan from eternity past could only be accomplished in Christ Jesus. He broke down the middle wall of separation, He reconciled Jew and Gentile to God in one body, the church, the manifestation of the eternal plan of God...
- Now, those who are in the church have access to the Father...
 - a) we can approach with boldness (*Heb 4:14-16*)
 - b) we can have confidence when coming to Him (*Heb 10:19-22*)

UNSEARCHABLE

Gr. anexichniastos,

"...that cannot be traced out, that cannot be comprehended..."

(Thayer's)

"Paul undertook to track out the untrackable in Christ."

(Robertson's Word Pictures)

Many versions read 'dispensation' (*Gr. oikonomia*) rather than 'fellowship' (*Gr. koinonia*). Perhaps a transcription error, perhaps not.

- The Gentiles in former times were aliens (*Eph 2:12*) and the Jews had access through a faulty system (*Heb 8:1-8*)

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian brethren (14-19).

- After a divinely guided tangent, Paul not pens his prayer for them (*3:1*)
- “*For this reason...*” All the excellent blessings in Christ motivates his prayer, but some specifically rouse him...
 - a) Jew & Gentile made one (*2:11-13, 16*)
 - b) removal of the law (*2:14-15*)
 - c) God's new dwelling place (*2:19-22*)
 - d) revelation of the mystery (*3:3-11*)
 - e) our access by faith in Christ (*3:12*)
- The church is a family, the largest in the universe, comprised of those faithful to God of all ages, both living and dead. All are named with the name of Christ (*Ac 4:12; Rev 3:12*)
- What does he pray for them?
 - a) for strength in the inner man (*Ro 2:28-29; 2 Co 4:16; 12:9; 2 Ti 4:17*)
 - b) for the indwelling of the Christ through faith (*Isa 57:15; Jn 14:23*)
 - c) for them to be rooted and ground in love (*1 Jn 4:16; Gal 5:6*)
 - d) that they learn the greatness of Christ's love (*Job 11:7-9; Isa 55:9*)
 - not complete comprehension, for it is beyond our knowledge...
 - e) that they be filled with the fullness of God (*Mt 5:6; Eph 4:13; Col 2:9-10*)
 - ie. filled with all that which fills...

“In Christ”, we are:

- given all spiritual blessings (*1:3*)
- made holy and without blame (*1:4*)
- adopted as sons (*1:5*)
- made accepted (*1:6*)
- redeemed from sin (*1:7*)
- revealed the mystery (*1:8-9*)
- predestined heirs (*1:11*)
- sealed with the Spirit (*1:13*)
- made alive together (*2:5*)
- giving exceeding riches (*2:7*)
- brought near to God (*2:12-13*)
- made a new man (*2:14-15*)
- made into a holy temple (*2:20-22*)

Praise of God's care for His people (20-21).

- “...exceedingly abundantly above all...”
- We serve a limitless God:
 - a) His riches are unsearchable (*v 8*)
 - b) His love passes knowledge (*v 19*)
 - c) His care exceeds all we could ask or think (*v 20*)
- Our “...ask and think...” is often limited by a lack of faith, but even the mature will be surprised...
- Note, the power emanates from US (*Php 4:13; Eph 1:19; Col 1:29*; ie. God working in us)
- The end of all this: the design of the church, the growth of saints, the supply which comes from God
 - to glorify God...
- The church was not a divine after-thought, but the eternal wisdom of God...
- Through it, all glory is to God, for all who will come can be saved...
- Only in the church, the Lord's body, can we find salvation (*Ac 2:47*)

EXCEEDINGLY / ABOVE

Gr. huper,

“...over, beyond, away over, more than... metaph. of the measure or degree exceeded... above (ie. more and greater than) all...”

(Thayer's)

ABUNDANTLY

Gr. perissos,

“...exceeding some number or measure or rank or need over and above, more than is necessary, superadded...”

(Thayer's)