

Commentary on the Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 1

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

2Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul writes to the church at Ephesus where Timothy was an elder. He describes himself as he usually does as an apostle (sent one of God who had seen Christ personally) of Christ, chosen in Him to be a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). Paul credits Christ as the author of His salvation (Hebrews 12:2), though certainly he had to respond in faith and repentance to Christ's revelation to him. He also credits the Lord with his present calling and purpose in life, recognizing that he is doing what God had ordained and prepared for him to do (Ephesians 2:10). He writes to the saints, who are called saints and not sinners because they are positionally justified and clean in Jesus. Though the saints will sometimes stumble (James 3:2), they are said to be faithful in Christ because Christ will be faithful to them by completing the good work He began in them (Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 12:2). Paul gives his familiar greeting, wishing the saints peace and grace from God and Christ to be able to live pleasing to Him and to be sustained by Him.

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Paul blesses God the Father Who has given us His Son Christ through Whom we have access to every spiritual blessing in heaven. We have all that we need for life and godliness in this life (2 Peter 1:3), and we have the assurance and promise of eternal life with Christ in heaven forever. Though it is true that we each are responsible before God for either receiving Him or rejecting Him, it is also true that God knew before the foundation of the world who would respond in faith to Him (c.f. Psalm 139:16). Indeed, those who choose God were first chosen by God in His infinite wisdom and perfect purpose even before the world was created. God planned the future from the beginning, knowing perfectly well that He would have to step in and redeem man from his sin which He would do by giving up His only Son as a sacrifice for sin.

Those who receive Christ in faith are blameless and holy in the sight of Christ because we are seen in light of the righteousness of Christ. What we could not do, God did by sending Christ (c.f. Romans 8:3). His desire is that we who are saved would live lives that are blameless and holy before Him. In His great love, God predestined

(foreordained, predetermined, appointed) those who believe to be adopted as sons of Christ. God desired that all would come to know Him, but in His sovereignty and omniscience He knew that only certain ones would. Seeing the end from the beginning, we can rest in the fact that we who are saved were adopted as sons of God because it was God's kind intention to do so. Ultimately, we must credit God with the redemption plan, the redemption call, and the redemption work, though doing so does not negate man's free will and responsibility to choose to repent. God's plan from before the foundation of the world was to send Christ to bring men and women across the globe to a restored relationship with Him. This entire passage is a perspective that the church must embrace because it reminds us that God is sovereign and in total control of all things. Nothing takes Him by surprise, and all that unfolds in human history was ordained from the beginning, though that is not to say that He delights in all that transpires. Yet He gives man the ability to choose his own destiny, a destiny which He has foreordained and foreknown. It also reminds us that even our own salvation is not because of some inherent goodness in us that compelled God to save us, but our salvation was a manifestation of the love of God toward us, demonstrating His love to those who were unwilling, uninterested, and ungrateful. Furthermore, our salvation was done not for our glory but for the praise of the glory of His grace. God's gracious nature is what deserves the praise, and this He demonstrated to us in giving us His Beloved Son and our Beloved Savior. God gave Jesus in love to us freely because of His grace, and Christ, having conquered sin and death, now extends to the world a free gift of salvation, if only they will receive it (Romans 6:23).

7In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

8which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

9He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

10with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

It is through Christ alone that man can be restored to relationship with God, being delivered and liberated from the power of the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). Christ's death paid the ransom so that God could receive us as adopted children. The beautiful part is that, since God sent Christ, God Himself paid our ransom. Hebrews 9:22 explains that "without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." The penalty of sin is death, and Christ bore the penalty so that we would not have to, dying in our place. It is through His shed blood that forgiveness is even possible in God's economy. His blood is our ransom payment, ordained by God and paid by God in Christ to satisfy God's own wrath, and this is why we must remember His blood shed and His body given for our sake (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Our sins can be forgiven us because they were nailed with Christ to the cross (Colossians 2:14). God lavished His grace on us in pouring out just wrath for our sins on Christ Who had no sin of His own. What grace that God would die for man because of His love which we didn't deserve!

When we respond in faith to Christ, God opens our eyes in His wisdom (Colossians 2:3) and insight so that we can see things clearly, make a right judgment of ourselves, and choose to repent and receive Christ by faith. We have manifest in the person of Christ having come to earth the mystery of God revealed to us of God's great love and plan from the beginning to redeem us. God had all the events of history in view from the beginning, and at the proper time, God sent Christ to speak to the world about His love. Christ fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17), and He instituted a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6). Now it is clear that all things from Genesis to Revelation point to Christ and the love, sovereignty, grace, and power of God. The love of God and the grace of God are summed up in Christ. He is preeminent over all things (Colossians 1:18), and all things point to Him. He is the head of the church, He holds all things together, all things whether in heaven on earth were created through Him and for Him, and He is the fullness of Deity (Colossians 1:13-19). Christ is the point, Christ is the message, and Christ is to be glorified.

In Him

11also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

If it wasn't for God's grace, we would all be going to hell. There is nothing that we could do to undo our own sinfulness. We need God's intervention, and we received God's intervention because He sent Christ. It was God's good will, pleasure, and purpose to give those who would hope in Him an inheritance in Christ. Thus, our being restored to relationship with God is praise ultimately to God because it was God's ultimate purpose. Our inheritance is every spiritual blessing with Christ forever in eternity. It starts even now because the word translated "inheritance" implies being chosen as one's private possession. In other words, God purposed to take ownership of us as His children. He worked to make it so that we could be adopted and therefore enjoy the rights that even His own Son enjoys. Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ as He enables us to live godly in this life (2 Peter 1:3) and have fullness of joy in knowing God (Psalm 16:11). The fullness of His glorious riches are yet to be seen, but we as His children can be confident that we will see them when He glorifies us to go and be with Him in eternity.

13In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

The Ephesians heard the message of the gospel (c.f. Romans 10:17) and were saved. The truth set them free (John 8:31-32) from their enslavement to sin and Satan (Romans 6:6). They heard, understood, and received the message of Christ, having believed in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Because of their faith, they, and all believers, were sealed as

children of God in Christ with the Holy Spirit Who was promised to come, Who had now come, Who indwells the people of God (1 Corinthians 6:19), and Who serves as a deposit guaranteeing the fullness of their future inheritance. God, in giving us the Holy Spirit, is making a pledge to us that we will receive our full inheritance His children. We are God's own possession (1 Peter 2:9) because He Himself had paid our ransom so that He doesn't have to pour out His wrath on us. The debt we owed God that we couldn't pay, He took upon Himself to pay in giving us Christ. God has made a serious, permanent, and binding pledge to us that we will enjoy life forever with Him as His children. The Holy Spirit even now reminds us that we are indeed sons of God (Romans 8:16). God will finish this work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6) because it brings Him glory and praise.

**15For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,
16do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;
17that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.**

The Ephesians have a strong faith in God, and they have a great love for all the saints. Paul is extremely thankful that a mature and Biblical body of Christ is continuing to grow to the praise of God at Ephesus. As he prays for them, he cannot help but keep giving thanks to God for what God has done there in that city. He prays that God Who is the Father of glory would give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom such that they would continue to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God. The specifics of what Paul desires would be revealed to them follows.

**18I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
19and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might
20which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
21far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**

The specific truths that Paul prays the Ephesians would come to understand and fully appreciate concern the glory of God and the glorious plan of God for them in Christ. He wants them to hope strongly, fervently, and completely in their calling in Christ. They have much to look forward to, and thus there is no reason for them to doubt or lose hope. God has called them to come to Him as children, and God does not retract His adoption. God is thrilled and overjoyed to have men and women everywhere respond to Him in faith. He has riches beyond what we can imagine, but His prized possessions, aside from Christ Himself, are we, His saints. We are His glory because He has replicated His image in us and loved us. Christ in us in His glory, and we as vessels of clay contain the glory of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 4:7). God will conform our mortal bodies to be fit

for heaven as well (Romans 8:11) such that our entire being can be part of God's wealth and glory, a testimony of praise to Him for the transforming and redeeming work which He has done in us who believe. God has immeasurable power, and He uses it on our behalf. God, our loving Father of all glory, longs for us to share in His glory forever. He will thus bring us home to Him and perfect our faith. He will enable us to honor Him in this life as we walk by faith. He longs to work on our behalf through the power of His Son in and through us to advance His kingdom. God wants to show Himself strong through us even though we are but weak instruments. God demonstrated that all power was His when He raised Christ triumphantly from the dead, proving that there is no force or being that has power which surpasses His. The wonderful truth is that this is the same power that the same God says is acting on behalf of His children. The power that it took to raise Christ and seat Him at His right hand in heaven, giving Him the name above all names (Philippians 2:9-11) and the position of utmost authority (except for His own, of course- 1 Corinthians 15:27-28) is the same power and strength which God applies to believers. Thus, we can be confident that He gives us strength to do His will (Philippians 4:13) and give us all that we need to live blamelessly (2 Peter 1:3). Furthermore, we can have great hope in His calling because, if He can raise Christ from the dead, surely He can raise His adopted children from the dead as well. The power that God demonstrated to raise Christ will one day raise us also.

22And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

23which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Because Christ was obedient to the point of death on the cross, God has exalted Him. He has been granted all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The devil has been defeated, and death has been swallowed up in victory. Sin's sting, death, is gone for the believer because Christ has conquered it (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Christ has all power by God's decree, and there is nothing that anybody or any spirit being can do to change this reality. Satan thus knows that he is doomed. Christ is in authority over all things including the church, being our head, our authority and master. Just as the head of a person controls the body and directs it as to what it should do, Jesus is to control and direct His body, the church. We are His body, and He lives within us, desiring to fill us with His Spirit to do His will by His strength, power, and authority (Ephesians 5:18). Satan doesn't fear what a believer can do in his own strength, but he must cower in fear at what Christ is able and willing to do in and through His church. The church must find its power in Jesus and not in its own feeble abilities and mechanisms. Christ indwells every person that constitutes His true church. Individually and corporately, we are His and filled with Him.

Ephesians 2

1And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

2in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Prior to being redeemed by God in Christ and being given such a great inheritance and promise in Christ, we were sinners, dead in our sins and deserving of eternal death (Romans 6:23). We all deviate from the truth, thereby missing the mark of God's holy and perfect standards. None of us were excepted from this condition (Romans 3:23), for every person born as a human being is born with a deceitful and wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9) that only Christ can change as He is received in faith and repentance and comes to indwell His children. As descendants of Adam, the first sinner, all of us carry innate sinfulness, and thus we naturally sin (1 Corinthians 15:22). We are prone to do evil, to love evil, and to remain evil because we are born dead in sin. There is no spiritual desire or love for God in the heart of the natural man. He is opposed to the things of God. Paul elaborates upon the natural condition of man in 1 Corinthians 2:14 saying, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Man as he is born naturally into the world is unable, apart from the grace of God manifested through the Holy Spirit, to both accept and understand spiritual things. Left to himself and apart from any divine intervention, he will choose disobedience leading to hell one hundred percent of the time. He understands that God has expectations and that there are consequences for violating His standards (Romans 1:32), but he willfully participates in them anyway. The natural state of man is thus one of incurable self-deception save for the intervention of divine grace. He doesn't even seek God of his own initiative, for none seek God (Romans 3:11). Salvation is thus ultimately a work of God in the heart of man in which He draws men to Himself (John 12:32). All men are called, but only a few are chosen in that they respond in faith to God's gracious gift in Christ (Matthew 22:14). As the Spirit calls to man's heart, man must respond in belief and faith, choosing to trust in Christ and repent of his sins. If he humbles himself and does this, his spirit can be awakened, and his mind will be able to understand spiritual things. To not respond in humility is to blaspheme the Spirit and remain in darkness, destined for hell (Mark 3:29).

The saved are those who receive the Spirit and are born again unto new life in Christ. They go on to praise God for His grace and His gift, recognizing His goodness and sovereignty over enlightening their minds and hearts so that they would be broken over their sin and respond in faith to Christ. God is the One Who alone can bring life to the lifeless and spiritually destitute. No man can open another man's heart unless God spiritually opens it in His grace. Yet our calling is to preach the gospel to all, for God uses His Word to open hearts to faith (Romans 1:16, 10:17) as we declare it to them as His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Christ and His Word are sufficient, and we must trust in God to do what we cannot (John 15:5, Hebrews 4:12). This is why the gospel message is called the "word of His grace" (Acts 14:3, 20:32), for man is fully dependent upon the grace of God from the beginning of salvation to the end, since Jesus is both the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). This does not keep man from his responsibility to place his faith in Christ and His Word (Hebrews 11:6).

Those who have not received the grace of God in salvation are unable to walk in the Spirit, for they do not have the Spirit to lead and guide them in the way of truth. They

live indicative of who they really are in their hearts, sinning because they are sinners. Their deeds are in line with their father, the devil (John 8:44), and the evil world system over which he is prince (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is the mastermind of deception and lying, and he is ultimately the enemy of the Christian (Ephesians 6:12). Christians used to be enslaved to him because they were enslaved to sin, but once they turn to Christ, they are free. They no longer have to continue in sin. In fact, true Christians do not make a practice of sin (1 John 3:9). That is, they do not celebrate and pass their time in a lifestyle of sinfulness. They still stumble (James 3:2) and may rebel for a time (as even King David did, concealing his sin for a time), but they have cast their former ways aside. They used to walk after the flesh and according to the ways of the world because they loved the world. They loved evil, and they were devoted to their sin. But Christ moved in their hearts to show them the exceeding offense it was against a holy God, and He showed them His wonderful grace and love in being crucified on the cross for their sake. They responded to the gracious call of God in repentance and faith, and now they have different loves and desires (2 Corinthians 5:14). Christ rules them, rather than the devil. They have come under the authority of the King of Kings, and they no longer serve the whims of the prince of this world. God allows Satan to work evil on the earth, which has been cursed, and such is his kingdom. Yet God advances His kingdom in the hearts of those who receive Him, and ultimately, He will establish a literal kingdom on the literal earth.

There are children of God, and there are children of the devil (1 John 3:10). We are either one or the other, and the Ephesians have laid aside their associations with the devil by no longer loving the world but choosing to love Christ. They are now children of God, with a wonderful inheritance coming, having been saved by His grace through faith.

3Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Paul makes it clear that Christians are no better than the world as far as how they enter the world. All are born into sin, and thus they live out the lusts of the flesh. They indulge the flesh and the mind, going after sinful pleasures that bear the consequence of hell. Thus, all people, including believers before they received grace, were destined for an eternity without God, being children of wrath in that God's wrath abided on us all because of our sin. The beautiful thing is that God knew that He would reach out to us and that we would respond to His call in faith, thereby freeing us from being children of wrath so that we could be children of the Light (Ephesians 5:8). Those who have received this grace look back at their former lives, viewing what they had done with as being shameful, rather than finding any pleasure in it (Romans 6:21).

**4But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ
(by grace you have been saved),
6and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in
Christ Jesus,**

7so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God is credited as the ultimate initiator of salvation, though this in no way denies our responsibility to respond in faith. God does call all people to be saved, but only some respond, demonstrating the reality of their hearts which God knew all along. It was because of His mercy that He demonstrated love to the world (Romans 5:8). It wasn't because man was so wonderful, but it was because man was so evil and still God was merciful. The praise and glory of salvation thus is ultimately God's.

Though we were dead in our sin, God supernaturally awakened our hearts and minds to see the truth of our condition and to repent. This is a work of divine grace as the Holy Spirit convicts hearts to respond in faith. A person might think he is alive and well in his sin, but he is spiritually dead. He needs the grace of God to see what is truly life, which is knowing Christ (John 17:3). Thus, it is by grace that we are saved because God is the initiator, enabler, and the one who empowers our salvation, giving us the grace to choose Him and even want to choose Him. A Christian can recognize that He is a result of grace because he knows that there was nothing within him that would have chosen or sought God unless God was working in his heart to seek him first and foremost. Man does seek God, but it is always by divine grace (Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7-8).

God sees, works, and exists outside of time so that He sees the future in the past. It is as good as done in God's sight that we are already seated with Him in the heavenly places, having been made alive together with Christ and raised with Him into heaven and new, eternal life. Our future inheritance is as good as done, even though we have yet to experience the fullness of it. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, implying that He is loved by the Father and, especially, that He has all power over all things, being only subject to the Father. That we are seated with God implies that we are also in a position of rule, power, and authority. Indeed, we will reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12), and forever God will be showering us with spiritual blessings from the treasury of His riches because of His great love toward us. God is able to love us like this with a love and kindness that is of such a surpassing value to anything this world can promise or offer because He loves His Son, and we are seen as perfect and holy because of the grace we have received through Him.

There is nothing inherently wonderful, good, or pure about mankind. But we who have trusted in Christ have a great inheritance coming because, and only because of, divine grace. This should lead us to praise and thank God.

8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That we are saved by grace through faith clearly indicates that we needed grace to do something that we couldn't do on our own. Being dead in our sin, we couldn't make ourselves spiritually alive unless the grace of God moved in our hearts to convict us of

sin and turn in repentance, placing our trust in Christ for forgiveness of sin. Faith is not merely a profession or intellectual assent to various propositions regarding Christ, but it is a work of God in which He transforms a person's heart to love Him and what is good rather than what is evil. He changes a person at the deepest level, indwelling him and leading him into all truth. This will be a lifetime of growth and change with failures along the way, but true saving faith is accompanied by good works which result (James 2:17).

Works do not lead to salvation, or such would be denying original sin and man's inability apart from divine grace to be spiritually discerned. Man's only hope is that God's grace will work, which it will, if he receives Christ by faith. God wants none to perish (2 Peter 3:9), and He takes no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). Thus, we can expect that God would bestow grace on all people to repent, but the issue is that many reject it. They trust their own works to save them, or they simply don't care about being saved at all. The reality is that they need the grace of God to be saved, and they need to respond in faith to the gospel of Christ. If salvation was based on merit and human performance, all of us would be doomed. Fortunately, because of God's love, it is not based on merit but upon grace. Our part is to believe the truth about what God has said about our need and Christ's remedy for it. We must respond in faith which is naturally accompanied by repentance of sin (Luke 13:5). Repentance is not a work, but it is the immediate result of saving faith by divine grace. We must believe that salvation is not of ourselves. 2 Corinthians 3:5 makes it clear that we have no adequacy in ourselves for salvation or sanctification. We are saved by grace through faith and we grow by grace through faith. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone by the work of Christ alone to the glory of God alone. Man can take no credit for his salvation, though he certainly does have a responsibility to choose whom or what he will serve (Joshua 24:15). Yet, even his choice, though not a matter of fate even though it was foreordained, will be manifested as having been wrought in the grace of God (John 3:21). Every decision for salvation is ultimately worked out by the grace of God, not the works or self-effort of man.

Salvation is not an independent experience, but a dependent one in that we are dependent upon divine grace. If we could save ourselves, then we should get the praise for this wonderful idea, transaction, and eternal promise. But, as Paul has been explaining for the entire epistle up to this point, salvation was God's plan and God's idea, even before the foundation of the world. It brings Him glory because it was because of His love. Man cannot take credit for salvation or even the concept of it. Salvation is of God, by God, and for God as all things are (Isaiah 48:11). Our entire lives are to give God glory, and the first moment that a life gives the glory to God due His name is when he responds to grace through faith in repentance. Salvation is never of ourselves or by ourselves, nor is it by our own works and merit. We choose because we were first chosen, we have faith because we received grace, and we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We have nothing to boast in except for Christ (1 Corinthians 1:31). It is an absolute mockery of God and a ridicule of the cross to suppose that we bring something good to the table that would enable us to get to heaven. That God would have to send His own Son to die for us should be evidence enough that it needed to happen. In order to be saved, it is

essential that a man recognize his sinfulness and utter need for God in order to be made holy and righteous. His salvation is based only in what God did for Him through Christ, not on some merit of his own which would give him grounds to boast, take credit, and glory in himself. God desires the glory alone, and salvation is totally by grace.

10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Man is not saved by works, but he is saved unto good works. This is where the notion of repentance comes in (Acts 17:30). Instead of doing evil things, we are to do good things by the grace of God as it overflows out of our hearts. Our salvation demonstrates that we are the work of the love, grace, and plan of God from before time. We live as testimonies to the grace and love of God because He has forgiven us and changed us, having appointed good works for us to do. God fully understands that salvation involves repentance which leads to fruitbearing, albeit fruitbearing that might be inconsistent and weak, though it need not be (2 Peter 1:3).

Believers, God's workmanship, even have good works that have been prepared beforehand by God for them to walk in. God ordained salvation to result in good works, having planned the good works even before time just as He planned salvation itself. Salvation and good works are mutually exclusive; one cannot be had without the other. This is why "cheap grace," the notion that a person is saved apart from repenting unto new life, is not Biblical. We are not saved by works, but we are saved to works. Yet these are works that are likewise a result of divine grace, not self-effort. The Christian is a fruit of divine labor, designed by Christ to go and bear fruit (John 15:16). We are God's handiwork, created in Christ to manifest His glory in and through us. Our salvation and our sanctification with its accompanying fruit is evidence that we were reengineered from the inside out by God Himself by grace through faith.

11Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands--

12remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Paul here writes to the Gentiles at the church at Ephesus, reminding them of their state before Christ. Though Paul teaches that outward circumcision is nothing and that inward circumcision of the heart is what matters (Romans 2:29), implying that some Gentiles could have been saved apart from being a Jew (Romans 2:14), there was still a sense in which the Gentiles were "far off" from the covenant promises of God. God had made a special covenant with Israel that He would be their God and they would be His people. They were a chosen nation of God because God simply decided to set His love and grace upon them (Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Psalm 33:12, Ezekiel 16). God didn't choose Israel

because of their own merit but because He loved them even though they were the least of all peoples. They were selected by God by grace to be a people that was a special treasure to God (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). This was something that was particular to the Jews and which the Gentiles had no part in, though it is true that some Gentiles (e.g. Ruth (Ruth 1:16) and Rahab (James 2:25)) were saved prior to the New Covenant (c.f. Romans 2:15). The Jews had the covenant of God (e.g. Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 11) and the promises of God (Genesis 12:1-3) for blessing, the first being condition and the second unilateral. The Gentiles had no such promises or covenants before Christ. The Jews had the rituals, the Law, the priests, the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrifices, the ark of the covenant, and so on, while the Gentiles had nothing. They were not citizens of Israel or children of the promise. Yet in Christ, they have been brought near. In the new covenant, all people can approach the presence of God directly, not going to a temple but being the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). Thus, we all have equal access to the blessing of God in Christ, Christ being the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 8:4).

14For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

15by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

16and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Christ is peace for all who receive Him, making it so that there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile because both groups in Him are one. There is no more dividing wall as there is even literally to this day in Israel. All who receive Christ are literally part of the kingdom of God. As Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In the new covenant, Christ abolished the hostility and strife between God and man and between Jews and Gentiles.

Man must be reconciled to God, and this spiritual reconciliation is the groundwork for reconciliation on the earth between men. Racism's only true end can be found in men being changed by the love of God to love others. In the family of God, we are all sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters with one another. There is no division spiritually, and there ought not to be any practically either.

Interestingly, the very thing the Jews boasted in, the Law, their covenant with God, was the thing that manifested their enmity with God and others. The Law revealed their sin, and yet they tried to earn God's favor by keeping it. They needed to obey God because of grace, not for grace. This grace then should have flowed over into how they treated foreigners, rather than scorning them as they often did (Luke 10:30-37). The ultimate need of both Jews and Gentiles is to be reconciled to God through Christ Who gave up His body on the cross so that we might be made into new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). He bore the wrath of God which we should have faced so that we could be made at peace with God (Romans 5:1). Christ has therefore made it possible for

peace to rule if He is allowed to rule in the hearts of men (Romans 12:18). In Christ, we must put on the new self, and reckon the old self dead (Colossians 3:9-10, Romans 6:6). Having been made new by the promises of the New Covenant (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6, 12:24), we can view others in a new way, loving them and being at peace with them as much as depends upon us (Romans 12:18).

**17AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;
18for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.**

Christ's life and message was one of being reconciled to God and being made at peace with God. He preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, not concerning Himself with the boundary of separation. He loved the world and came to demonstrate love to the world (John 3:16). Both Jews and Gentiles at Ephesus and everywhere have the ability to be reconciled to God in and through Christ because of God's grace. We have the same Spirit indwelling us, and we both have the same Father.

**19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
20having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
21in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
22in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

Any who were outside of Christ, Jew and Gentile alike, were not citizens of the true heavenly kingdom of God. The Jews had a citizenship in an earthly kingdom, but only those who were justified by faith were in the true heavenly kingdom. Those who are truly saved are saints in Jesus, not because of their own merits but because they have received His righteousness in God's sight. Thus, sinners who have not received Christ are the real foreigners, not just strictly the Gentiles. We who are saved are part of God's household (1 Peter 2:9), being indwelt by Christ and serving as the temple of God. The Jews had a temple which God indwelt, but now we are the temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). God wants to indwell all people, whether Jew or Gentile, if only they will receive Him by faith. He wants to extend citizenship to all people, from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and indeed (Revelation 5:9), some of all people groups will be in heaven praising God, having trusted in Christ (Revelation 7:9).

The true church is composed of people from all tribes, tongues, and nations. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the foundation, being the first to be raised from the dead to the glory of the Father. We, too, who have trusted in Him, will be granted new life as well and be raised with Him to enter heaven.

The apostles were the first, having seen Christ and preached His gospel. The prophets of the Old Testament and John the Baptist were foundational in that they prepared the way for the Lord and the advent of the New Testament church, foretelling of His coming and

challenging their listeners to repent. And there were likely prophets in early New Testament times (c.f. Ephesians 3:5) as well who taught the Word of God as God revealed it to them, which is probably what Paul has in mind here. I believe the gift and office of prophet and the office of apostle are no longer needed now that the Scriptures are complete. We have all the revelation from God that we need in His Word, and the church has been established, which the apostles were called to do.

We need to recognize that the foundation of the household of God, the saints of God past, present, and future, is the truth which Christ was and taught to the apostles and early church. This body of truth which Christ personified is the bedrock of the household of God. The church is not built upon a man but the Son of God and the Truth which He defines, and God graciously uses men to “house” His truth (Matthew 16:15-18). The church is grounded on the truth, and its purpose is to support and uphold it (1 Timothy 3:15) as we as the household of God are built up and strengthened in truth by the Word of God. As a corporate body, all believers, as we are sanctified and ultimately glorified, are being fitted into this holy house of God. This is important because it proves that there is no dividing barrier between people who are in Christ, for all of us are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Each of us are fitted together into God’s house so that it can be built up and keep growing.

Ephesians 3

**1For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--
2if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me
for you;
3that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in
brief.**

Paul had been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel which he was called by God to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). Christ revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus at which point Paul’s heart was changed, and he was commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This was the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to him for their sake. Evidently, Paul had written the Ephesians before, though the letter is not part of the canon of Scripture.

**4By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the
mystery of Christ,
5which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now
been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;
6to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body,
and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
7of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was
given to me according to the working of His power.**

Probably in the first letter Paul had explained about his apostleship and call to be a missionary to the Gentiles. Thus, referencing this letter, the Ephesians would understand

more about Paul's calling and the mystery of God bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. This was something which those before Paul and the time of the apostles did not fully understand (c.f. 1 Peter 1:10-11). But through Paul and the other apostles and prophets in the early church, this mystery was revealed and explained. This mystery Paul is referencing here specifically was that the gospel extended to the Gentiles (c.f. Acts 11:1-18). They, too, could be the chosen people of God, being joint heirs with Christ and part of the promised eternal life in Christ. People from every, tribe, tongue, and nation can be part of the body of Christ, and indeed they will be (Revelation 5:9).

Paul makes an important point about his calling and ministry. He describes himself as a minister, which means that he understands his role as a servant of the King. He is not arrogant as if he is caught up in the honor of being an apostle, but he recognizes that what he has received he has received as a gift of grace from God. He didn't deserve it or earn it, but God chose to bestow it upon Him freely. Thus, with this understanding, there is no sensible reason for him to boast because he rightly recognizes that God worked according to His power to call Paul and to use Paul. It was not by Paul's power or might or because of any inherent goodness in Paul.

**8To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,
9and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;
10so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.**

Paul views himself as the least of all the saints, being mindful that he was least deserving of the grace of God, given all that he had done against Christ and His followers. He doesn't view himself as superior to other saints because of his calling in Christ, but he views himself as a servant of all. Paul wants to "win" in terms of spiritual faithfulness (1 Corinthians 9:24), and part of doing so is to reckon oneself as the servant of all others. Then, and only then, can one become first or of high rank in the coming kingdom (Mark 9:35). Paul rightly viewed himself as last now, and he looked forward to his coming crown and honor for Christ's sake (2 Timothy 4:8). Paul's calling was by the grace of God and for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. His calling was to tell them of the wonder, glory, and unfathomable riches of Christ. He would have to show them that they needed forgiveness, but he also emphasized the glory of the life to come. There is great spiritual privilege and honor in being a child of God, and being adopted by God in Christ is good news indeed. Paul's calling was to explain to the body of Christ that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles, a purpose of God from the beginning which had not been fully understood by man up to this time. God is the creator of all things, and all men ultimately are His creation. Thus, it makes sense that He would want to reach out in love to the entire world. Even the angels were kept in the dark as to this mystery (1 Peter 1:12), and it was now the church's privilege as ministers of the gospel to be used by God to reveal this mystery to even the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies. This, as all things, was to bring glory to God by revealing His infinite wisdom, love, and perfect plan from the beginning.

11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

God had purposed from the beginning to send His Son into the world to redeem it, and He did just that. By trusting in Christ for our forgiveness and salvation, we can be confident and assured that God the Father has accepted us and that we are indeed His children. Through Christ we have the right and privilege to approach God directly in prayer with confidence that we are accepted and heard (Hebrews 4:16). Paul doesn't want the Ephesians to be discouraged because of his imprisonment and many sufferings for the sake of the gospel. His calling was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, them included. Thus, Paul's suffering was for their sake which demonstrated just how much God loved them and how much Paul loved God and them.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,

God loved the Gentiles so much that He gave Christ for them and commissioned a former persecutor of the church to preach it to them and suffer in the process. This moved Paul to bow in prayer to the Father, Who is Father of both Jew and Gentile at least in the sense that God created mankind (Luke 3:38) and more perfectly in the sense that those who receive Christ as Savior are adopted as children of God (Romans 8:15).

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

Paul prays that God would grant the Ephesians to be strengthened with the power of God through the Spirit of God in their inner persons. This would be according to His riches in glory. God is able and willing to give His children all that we need for life and godliness, and we can be strong in Him even as we are weak if we trust Him (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). It is by the Spirit's power that we can accomplish things that bear true spiritual fruit (Zechariah 4:6). Spiritual accomplishments are by the grace of God according to His work, power, and strength in and through us. Never are true spiritual gains a result of ourselves, lest we should boast in ourselves. Our boast must always be in God (Psalm 34:2), which it will be when we realize our weakness and need for His strength. We can praise God that He is there to supply us with the strength we need to do His will (Philippians 4:13).

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Paul prays that the indwelling Holy Spirit Who indeed lives in the hearts of those who have received Christ by faith would empower, influence, prompt, pervade, and govern the desires, affections, thoughts, and impulses of the believer. This request is very similar to the idea of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 in which the believer is totally yielded to the work and desires of the Spirit, being a fully useable tool in His grasp. Paul wants the faith of these believers to be rooted and grounded in love because foundational to a fruitbearing walk with Christ is a faith in His goodness and love. We must believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), and it is His kindness that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). As we continue to recognize and bask in His goodness and promises to us, we will continue to be motivated by grace to place our faith in Him to do great things, even impossible things. But all of these spiritually empowering experiences which move us away from complacency and faithlessness begin with a trusting in the goodness and love of God toward His children. Trusting in His love is that which establishes, strengthens, and upholds as a foundation. When we begin to doubt the love of God and His good heart toward us, we wrongly decide God's will and God's desires because we confine Him to the meager expectations of our own faithless hearts.

Paul wants the believers to mentally understand just how vast God's love is. He wants them to recognize, believe, and accept that God's love is so immeasurable and boundless in every direction and to every extent and in every way that it even surpasses knowledge. In other words, he wants the Ephesians to understand and know that God's love is so great that it is not even fully comprehensible. It is so great, and they must believe this fact and live in light of it. God's love is limitless and perfect, and we can never exhaust it as His children. Like Jonah, never can we escape God or His love, whether we go left, right, up, down (c.f. Psalm 139:5-7). Just as a ship would be said to be full if it had all its sailors, rowers, and soldiers, so too is the body of Christ in Christ because of the love of God. We can be filled up to His fullness, lacking nothing (James 1:4) and being equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We have everything that we need for life and godliness at all times and in all circumstances (2 Peter 1:3). God has promised to give us life to the full (John 10:10), and in Christ and His love such is indeed the case. We have boundless hope and joy because we have a God Whose love is boundless.

20Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

21to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

At this point, Paul praises God because He is able to do even vastly beyond anything which we could ask Him to do or conceive of Him doing. His love is limitless, His glory boundless, and His power endless. There is nothing He can't do, and we can't even begin to understand all that He has done, is doing, and will do. His wisdom is so great, and He

is so wonderful and glorious, indeed deserving of our praise. The wonder is that this power and abundance which God possesses in Himself is something which He delights to showcase in and through His children. The same power of God which we cannot fathom or understand because it is so great is the same power God delights to work in and through us. There is no sensible reason to rely upon ourselves and our own strength when we have the power of God in Christ working in us by His Holy Spirit. We need to rest in the boundless love of God, trust in His abundant power, and glory in His perfect nature. He alone deserves the glory today, tomorrow, and forever in His church and in His Son, Who indwells His church.

A church that displaces Christ with empty manmade doctrinal systems or grace with law will lose its first love. If church becomes only about going through the right motions, they will have lost their first love, which is what happened to the Ephesians a generation or two after this letter was written (Revelation 2:4). They lost their first love, and they needed to repent. It is no accident that Paul, being himself empowered by the Holy Spirit, was trying to keep the first things first. He wanted the Ephesians to never grow tired or unaware of the glorious love of God which surpasses our understanding. He knew that if they could remember this, then their joy would be full and they could live a life of abundance, faith, and fruit bearing. When the Christian life becomes about simply form and function rather than relationship and praise for God, we will have lost our first love. The antidote is to pray that God will teach us just how great and boundless His love is and how He demonstrates that fact to us daily. Right doctrine is foundational as is right living, but without love, God is greatly dishonored (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). He must be adored, our hearts must be influenced by His Spirit in surrender to Him and His working, and we must delight in praising the God Whom we don't fully understand. We must be in awe of our God and His unfathomable love. If the church loses its first love, it might also lose its empowering of the Spirit and blessing of God (Revelation 2:5).

Ephesians 4

1Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

2with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

3being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In light of God's love and abundant provision for godliness, Paul implores the Ephesians to walk in holiness because this is their calling as children of God. Paul describes himself as a prisoner of the Lord, and he literally was imprisoned as he wrote this epistle. Yet he may also be implying that he had fully surrendered his life and behavior to the will of God, which enabled him to fulfill his calling. It is this total obedience that he desires for the Ephesians also. In order to fulfill their calling, they must be humble, not thinking of themselves more highly than they ought (Romans 12:3). Christians are not to be consumed or preoccupied with self but with God and others. Humility recognizes its utter dependence upon God for grace to do anything of value, and it delights in seeing Him get glory and in being the servant of all. Humility does not gloat in one's own

ability, achievements, or power to influence. It rejoices in God alone Who gives the strength and fills the believer with the power to do what is right and good. Christians should also be gentle, being tender and meek. Rather than being harsh, believers should be sensitive to the needs and interests of others, even ahead of their own (Philippians 2:4-5). They should be patient, enduring difficulty, bearing with others, and not seeking to take revenge (Romans 12:19). They should be tolerant in that they hold their ground in truth and godliness, not being negatively influenced by others or condoning sin. Yet, they are not to be judgmental but rather loving and desiring to see others receive the grace of God and be restored and forgiven. They are willing to endure quirks and different personality types, and they are willing to forgive as many times as it takes. Yet never do they shrink from calling sin "sin." These characteristics are that which are indicative of godliness and love and which enable the corporate body of Christ to remain unified in the Spirit and held together in peace. Christians are to be diligent and eager about doing their part to maintain Biblical unity in the body as each individual member is encouraged and supported to be growing in godliness.

4There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

The true church of Christ is one body, Christ being the head. There is one Spirit of God which indwells the body of Christ, His church. All who come to faith in Christ have the same hope of being forgiven, being adopted as a child of God, and receiving a certain future inheritance of eternal life. The true church is made up of all who have responded to the call of God in Christ to repent and be forgiven. It has the same Spirit indwelling it, and it has the same Lord to Whom it submits. It possesses the same faith in that it adheres to the same doctrine and gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). All were buried with Christ by baptism into His death and were raised to new life in Him (Romans 6:4,6). We are one because we are all born again in Christ, and we need to live out our calling as those who are saved from bondage to sin. All Christians worship the one true God and Father Who is in charge of all things, involved in all things, and working always in the world and in history. God is very real, active, and alive, working His power and will in the world in and through His church.

7But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8Therefore it says,

**"WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."**

9(Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Every believer is gifted by God by His grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. In other words, God enables us and designs us to advance His kingdom in a particular way, and the only way we can advance it is to yield ourselves to Him so that Christ's power (Colossians 1:29) can be rendered effective in and through us. Paul uses Psalm 68:18 as analogous to how Christ conquered sin and death once and for all. As a king would lead away the captives and take the spoils from the enemy, so too did Christ defeat Satan and sin and through His resurrection power pass on the ability to reign victoriously in life over sin by His grace (c.f. Colossians 2:15). Christ ascended into heaven after He descended to earth. He demonstrated His obedience and humility by being incarnated as a man, and He then demonstrated His power and authority by ascending into heaven to be at God's right hand. He even proclaimed His victory to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:18-19), descending into the depths, before rising to the highest of heights (Philippians 2:9-11) at God's right hand. His power is now no longer confined by a mortal body, but He fills all things with all power.

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

The apostles are those who were commissioned by Christ Himself, having seen for themselves the risen Christ. This included the twelve disciples of Christ and Paul to whom Christ appeared miraculously on the Damascus Road. These alone were the apostles of Jesus Christ, being sent personally by Him (the word "apostle" means "delegate," "messenger," or "one sent forth with orders). Timothy, Barnabas, and Silvanus are referred to as apostles but as apostles of the church, not of Christ (Acts 14:4, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Romans 16:7, Philippians 2:25, 2 Corinthians 8:23). In other words, they were messengers and representatives of Christ generally and of the church but not in the particular, special sense that the original thirteen were apostles. These were commissioned to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), to receive, preach, and write the Scripture (Ephesians 3:5), and they were empowered by Christ to work special miracles, signs, and wonders (Acts 8:6-7, Hebrews 2:3-4). This special office of apostle expired with the death of the thirteen, though there is a sense in which we are all messengers of Christ. Yet there are clearly no special apostles alive today with special apostolic power (Hebrews 2:3-4).

There were certain men in the early church who occupied the office of prophet. These taught direct revelation from God to the church for its edification and instruction (Acts 11:21-28), and sometimes they instructed based upon Scripture already received (Acts 13:1). Any who prophesied needed to be judged by other prophets for validity (1 Corinthians 14:32), and their teaching needed to be in line with the Scripture already given and in regard to what the apostles were teaching (1 Corinthians 14:37). Prophets were responsible for laying the foundation of the church along with the apostles until the Scripture was completed (Ephesians 2:20). After the foundation was laid by these godly men, then the elders (pastors) were to shepherd the flock and teach them the Word of God. There were also to be evangelists who, though not giving new revelation or called to work miracles, were to preach the gospel. Timothy was an elder, a teacher of the Word, and an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). Those who shepherded the flock were called to

care for the sheep (1 Peter 5:2), preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-2), and witness (2 Timothy 4:5).

12for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The purpose of the church is to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them all that Christ has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20). The purpose of the pastors, teachers, and evangelists is to equip the saints to serve God and others and to be built up in Christ. This involves learning the Scriptures, being versed in sound doctrine, and being able to communicate the gospel to others accurately. We serve others many times by encouraging them or counseling them with the Scripture, and we must know it in order to be stabilized and strengthened ourselves and in order to be able to have worthwhile things to say to someone else in their time of need. As pastors teach us God's Word and we all grow together in sound doctrine, we can be unified. If false teaching enters the flock, then division and destruction will result. Obedience to God's Word as we learn a right understanding of it is the only hope of true unity. We cannot be mature and grow to be like Christ if we do not know the Word, if we are not being taught the Word, or if we are being given worldly substitutes. The church can and will grow to maturity if pastors teach the Word of God, enabling and encouraging believers to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2) and to serve others (Galatians 6:10). If we do not grow to maturity, we will be very vulnerable to deception, pride, and the condemnation of the devil. We won't lose our salvation, but we will not do well in terms of fulfilling our calling (Hebrews 6:1-8).

14As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

16from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

It is imperative for every Christian to grow to maturity, which takes time, service, and accurate, faithful teaching of God's Word. We are not to remain children, but we are to get beyond the milk to the meat. We are to press on beyond the elemental teachings (Hebrews 6:1) and get on to the deeper truths about Christ, His will, and His ways. We should not be tossed here and there as we read some false teaching or hear a new idea or form of worldly wisdom disguised as Biblical truth. We should be able to identify the error, and we will only be able to do this if we have been trained in righteousness according to the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Wisdom is from Christ (Colossians 2:3), and He will enable us to sense error if we are sensitive to Him and humble (John 16:13). There are many out there who deceive and are extremely cunning, and many

scheme so as to find ways to lead the church astray, all doing the work of the devil. Christians are not to fall victim to these things, and they will be able to identify errors if they know the Word are draw near to the heart of Christ. They will be able not only to identify truth when they hear it, but they will be able to speak it themselves so as to continue its propagation. They will not do it with ill motives or for selfish gain but in love because they adore Christ and care about the needs of others. They will truly believe that the Bible has the answers and that it is the truth which sets people free (John 8:31-32). As the truth is taught from the pulpit and shared in the body, Christians will grow to maturity in Christ.

Christ is the head of the body, and Christians are to do what the head desires. Each part of the body matters and has a purpose. It is essential that all parts work properly in order for the body to function optimally. No joint is insignificant because God works through the body as a whole, not giving preference to any one part. Love must govern all things that the body does and is because its head is love (1 John 4:7-8). (c.f. 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8)

17So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,
18being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;
19and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Paul says that believers must walk worthy, fulfilling their calling, meaning that we don't walk after the flesh but rather after the Spirit. Believers can fall, be deceived, and not grow to maturity. This is why it is so important that pastors teach the Word and that we all grow so that we can serve and not be led astray. Unbelievers live according to the desires of their hearts, which are evil (Jeremiah 17:9). Their hearts are stubborn against God, being unwilling to open up to receive His forgiveness and respond to His authority. Their hardening keeps them in darkness and ignorance, being fools when they think they are wise. They do not have eternal life, but they are dead, deserving of hell. This is because they have allowed themselves to be apathetic to God and to His commands, choosing rather to indulge sensual pleasures of impurity according to lust and greed. They are consumed with self and their own pleasure, and they do not love God or others. They have of their own volition given themselves over to deeper and deeper evil and slavery to sin.

20But you did not learn Christ in this way,
21if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,
22that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,
23and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
24and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Paul does not want believers to live as unbelievers in immorality and evil. The Ephesians understood that they needed to walk after Christ when they first came to Christ, and they need to remain steadfast in this commitment. If they have indeed heard the truth about the gospel and Christ and if they have been indeed learning His Word, then it is imperative that they lay aside their old selves in the sense that they do not live according to their former lusts any longer. They are to lay aside and abandon their former way of living. When they do this, they live in light of the new creation that they are in Christ and by faith reckon themselves to be new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old way is a way of corruption, lust, and deceit, and believers must reckon their old selves dead and gone, having been crucified with Christ (Romans 6:4, 6, Galatians 2:20). They must then put on the new self, which is already on, by reckoning it to indeed be on (Colossians 3:9-10). They need to think new thoughts as the Spirit transforms them (Romans 12:1-2), and they need to let the truth of the Word of God dwell in them richly (Colossians 3:16). The new self is created in Christ and in holiness and righteousness. Believers are new and have the capacity by faith to live holy, and this is what Paul desires the Ephesians to do. As believers learn the Word and conform their lives to it, they will be sanctified (John 17:17).

25Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

26BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not give the devil an opportunity.

28He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

29Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Paul addresses four very practical areas of sin and subsequent sanctification. First, he commands the Ephesians not to lie but to speak truth, especially given that believers are all part of the same body. It makes no sense for one part of the body not to help the other, let alone to deceive it. Second, he commands the believers not to let anger give way to sin. There is a place for being angry at unrighteousness, but anger turns to sin when it becomes vengeance or hate. Reconciliation and forgiveness must be sought quickly, lest things spiral out of control as it did for Cain who then killed Abel. To let anger fester and to not deal with it Biblically is to give the devil room to expand it and open the door to worse things. Third, believers are not to steal from others but to work so that they earn money. Then they will be able to provide for themselves and their own and give to those in need. Fourth, believers are not to say or think any unwholesome words or thoughts. The tongue can do great damage, and it needs to be bridled (James 1:26). Words spoken should build up others and encourage them in righteousness. Words should be used to meet needs and give grace to those who hear. Words should not destroy another, and they should not be defiling or corrupt. The speech of the Christian should be decisively different from that of the world, cutting the vulgarity, crude joking,

and profanity. It shouldn't tear down but uplift according to truth. Words can only edify if they are consistent with Scripture.

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Any time we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit, offending God and bringing Him great sorrow. He has sealed us as His own, making our redemption sure, and we need to give Him reverence, yielding to His prompting and leading. So that we don't grieve Him, we must put away bitterness, anger, wrath, clamor, slander, and malice. These are all variations of anger which seeks to do ill to another person. We should not wish evil or do evil to another, but we should rather be kind, gentle, tender, and willing to forgive. Rather than being hostile and seeking a fight, we should put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own. God has forgiven us, and we need to extend that forgiveness to others. We are not to hold grudges or take revenge, but we are to do what we can to live peaceably with all people (Romans 12:18).

Ephesians 5

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Paul desires the Ephesians to be like Christ in all that they are, do, think, and say. They are children of God, beloved by Him, and it only makes sense for them to obey Him, respect Him, and do as He wishes. They should conduct themselves in love, letting it be a defining mark (John 13:34-35). Loving as Christ loved is how Christians are to be known as we put the interests of others ahead of our own and show them kindness which they don't earn or deserve. Christ loved us sacrificially, selflessly, and freely even though we didn't deserve it, and we should do the same toward others as children of God. Christ's death on the cross was out of love for God and mankind, and it demonstrated that He was willing to do whatever God wanted in order to please Him, being a sacrifice and offering which was a fragrant aroma to God. We are to follow His example, laying down our lives so that Christ can fill them and make us useable to His glory. We cannot be useable if we are defiling ourselves in idolatry, immorality, impurity, or greed and covetousness. We are to be so free of any hint of sexual immorality and all kinds of impurity that we make no provision for the flesh or give others grounds to stumble or question our commitment to Christ. We are saints, and there is certain behavior which is

to characterize us and differentiate us from the world. The world engages in speaking obscenities and talking foolishly about meaningless, unedifying, and impure things. Rather than participate in their vulgarities and dirty jokes, we should speak only wholesome words which edify and encourage, and we should give God thanks. The tongue is for praising God, not for defiling the body.

5For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7Therefore do not be partakers with them;

8for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

Whatever God's Word teaches us we can be sure about, and God's Word is very clear that those who live in their sins and reject the forgiveness of Christ will be sentenced to eternal damnation in the lake of fire. Those whose lives are characterized by practicing sin rather than practicing righteousness resulting from faith by the grace of God will go to hell (1 John 3:9). This includes those who live in sexual immorality, idolatry, impurity, and greed, which Paul just described as being indicative of the world rather than children of God. Yet holy saints can still choose to live like the world, and Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians is to purify themselves of sin by confessing it to God, choosing rather to walk after the Light and in the Light. We are not to be partakers with those who do evil by engaging in their evil deeds. We are to love them and share the gospel with them, but we cannot be like them. God's wrath abides upon those who live in darkness and walk after it, but those who are God's children have been saved from His wrath by the blood of Christ. Thus, we should live like it. Grace is not license to sin but the power to be free from slavery to sin as we become slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:18). We are born again into the Light, and the Light of Christ is to be showcased through our weak vessels, thereby demonstrating to the world that we are children of Light and that the Light is true (Matthew 5:16).

9(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

10trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

11Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

12for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Those who have the Light in them will have fruit that consists of goodness, righteousness, and truth rather than evil and sin. Good trees bear good fruit, even if imperfectly or not as proficiently as Christ would prefer. Children of Light will have good works as evidence, and they are to grow in them as they learn and become more and more like Christ, being pleasing to God in all things. Our ambition should always be to do and be what pleases our Lord Who redeemed us from having to face His wrath. Walking as children of Light involves us scrutinizing Christ through His Word so that we

come to know Him and let Him live out His will and ways in our hearts and lives. We must study Christ and His Word, diligently longing to be more like Him.

Darkness only produces bad fruit which does not possess any eternal value. Walking in darkness cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit, and those who walk in Light are to expose the deeds of darkness for being the waste and sin that they are. And righteousness and grace does expose evil and greed as the light of Christ shines into the lives of those in darkness. They may not like what they see, but at least they will see the truth as to their own disgrace, dishonor, and filthiness of their public and secret evil acts.

13But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

14For this reason it says,

**"Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you."**

In the physical world, the light allows all things to be seen as what has been hidden is brought to light. In the spiritual world, the Light of Christ shines into a dark world, exposing the deeds of darkness, and calling to the world to respond in repentance and faith so that the lost can be found and the dead in sin can become alive in Christ.

15Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

16making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

17So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

19speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Given that the Light of Christ is to shine forth to the world not only through the creation, the Scripture, and the conscience but through us, the church, we had better be careful that we aren't living in darkness lest we fail to be used of God to help someone in darkness see their own evil deeds. We need to be wise as to how we live, bearing fruit that lasts and glorifying God. The world lives unwisely, living for today's pleasure rather than eternity's promise, but believer should be different, knowing that what we await is far better than anything this world has to offer. The world is evil and so our time on the earth is spent in an evil place. Satan is at work, and evil is on the increase until Christ comes again. In light of our identity in Christ and the coming judgment, we need to be faithful in regard to the time we have to do ministry and evangelize. God only gives us so much time, and life is so short, speeding by so quickly like a vapor is here and then gone (James 4:14). We must be faithful today and make the most of our time. In order to do this and have wisdom, we must know what God wants us to do each day, obeying His

Word and being led of the Spirit. We must obey God's Word, living in a way honoring to Him, and following through on the tasks which He has given us to do in this life.

Drunkenness wastes time and takes us away from the will of God. It compromises our witness, and it is sin. Rather, we ought to be filled with the Spirit, letting His influence overtake us to the extent that His desires and power overflows through us unto worship of God and effective service for Christ's sake. Rather than be controlled by substances which dull our senses, minds, and desires to worship God, we should be filled with understanding, wisdom, and a desire to praise God by being filled with the Spirit. The Spirit will lead us to sing to God, praising Him with our voices in song with hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs. Whether with music or without, the issue is whether or not our hearts are making melody to the Lord as we praise Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). True worship involves the desires of our hearts being caught up with the praise and glory of God as we honor Him for Who He is and what He has done according to the truth of His Word and as the Spirit fills our hearts. We can praise God by singing from the Psalms, by singing about sound doctrine, and by writing new songs (Psalm 33:3) to the Lord as we walk after the Spirit.

At all times we should thank God for all things, both good and bad, difficult and easy, knowing that God is kind and sovereign over all things. This gives proper credit to the Father Who is in charge over all, and it is only through Christ our Lord that we have the right and ability to approach God the Father in prayer. But it is the Father Whom we are to thank, being mindful of His total control and power. We must acknowledge Him in all of our ways (Proverbs 3:5-6).

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

There is a sense in which all believers are to be subject to one another. The Greek word for "subject" was used in a military sense to describe being under command or under authority. In a nonmilitary sense, it implied voluntarily giving in and carrying a burden. Thus, the idea is that Christians are to voluntarily seek the welfare of others ahead of their own (Philippians 2:4-5). They are to willingly become servants of others for the sake of honoring Christ, Who became the servant of all as He suffered as a servant for the sins of all men on the cross (Matthew 20:28). He bore our shame and took the pain for our benefit, and we are to be willing to follow in His example, laying down our lives so that we can love others and give them preference. This doesn't make us doormats which get walked all over as if we must neglect ourselves, for others are commanded to love us in the same way as we love them. Thus, all believers treat other believers preferentially, respectfully, and with honor, and all get their needs met in addition to the joy of having been able to honor Christ in service. Even if others fail to meet our needs, we can trust God as we honor Him by obeying Him in following His example of subjecting ourselves to others. We are not to be consumed with our desires and needs only, but a sign of a true believer is a care and priority of looking out for the needs of others, sacrificing our own preferences and privileges so as to give freely what we have freely and graciously received from the hand of God (Matthew 10:8). Christ served us by giving us the ultimate demonstration of love, and we are to honor Him Who bought us with a price as

we imitate His example by being willing to go out of our way to demonstrate love to others.

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Paul explains that a specific instance of subjection is found in the marriage relationship. Both husband and wife should be subject to one another in that they love each other, serve one another, and seek the interests of one another ahead of their own. Yet, it is the wife who specifically must subject herself to her husband in everything. This does not mean that she cannot think for herself, for she is the suitable helper (Genesis 2:18) of her husband who should give him counsel and help him to grow. The idea is that rather than set her own agenda and pull her husband along with her ambitions, she is to follow the lead of her husband as he sets the direction for them as a married couple.

The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. The church should have no qualms about submitting to Christ as its head because we as the church know that Christ will only do us good and that He loves us perfectly. In fact, there is no safer or better place than to trust Him with our lives and submit to His direction and authority for our lives. His leadership is a shelter and a place of rest and peace (Psalm 91:1). It should be the same in marriage as the godly husband provides a place of safety, shelter, and dignity for his wife. He does not demean her or treat her as having lesser value or worth, but he showers his love upon her as if she is the most important thing in the world to him. Christ adores all of His children, and the godly husband will adore his wife in the same way such that he will do all that is in his power to protect her, lead her, empower her to excellence in her God-given roles and responsibilities, and let her be free to be a woman. The husband is not a vicious tyrant who imposes his will and desires upon his wife, but he listens and treats her with gentleness, dignity, and affection. Just as the church gladly submits to Christ as we know how much He loves us, so too is the wife to submit to the husband as she is confident of his love and that he will only do her good all of his days as he leads the family and is there to protect her and honor her.

The wife is to choose to subject herself to her husband in terms of the roles in marriage as to the Lord. In submitting to her husband, she is actually submitting to Christ because she is obeying and honoring Christ. As Christians we look to Christ for leadership, guidance, wisdom, direction, provision, protection, and care, among other things, and the wife is to be able to look to her husband for these things, though ultimately her leading and protection is from God. Hopefully, it is the case that God can speak and direct through the wisdom of her godly husband.

The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Again, the model and illustration for understanding how the dynamics of husband and wife work out practically in marriage is Christ's relationship with His church, which He loves. Christ is

the head of the church, meaning that He is supreme, the authority, and the master. He is Lord. The husband is the head of the wife, meaning that He is the final authority in the home. This does not mean that he can order the wife around like a slave or that he should be on some power trip. After all, he is still commanded to be subject to her also by being a servant to her in love. The issue is that the husband and wife are one, and there are not two heads, just as Christ is the only head of the church. If both husband and wife try to be heads, then the marriage harmony will collapse. God ordained that man would lead and be the head while the woman would be the helpmeet who would subject herself to the man in respect, yielding herself to his loving, caring authority and protection. This is an extraordinary delicate balance, but it works beautifully when both are willing to put the other ahead of themselves. The wife will be fulfilled as she rests in the leadership of her husband, and the husband will be fulfilled as He honors Christ by being willing to take responsibility for the direction of his family. The wife will appreciate seeing strength and confidence in Christ in her husband, and he will appreciate her showing him respect and admiration for his care as he leads the family. The husband must love his wife, and the wife must respect her husband. It is not that one leads and the other blindly follows, but the idea that Christ is after is a togetherness of mind and a oneness of heart and desire as they seek God's will and honor together. God has ordained different roles in marriage, each fitting to His design for man and woman. As man does what he was made to do and the woman does what she was made to do, there is harmony and unity, and both rejoice. Fearful, cowardly husbands are a turn off to a godly wife, and domineering women frustrate and discourage a godly man. Somehow, by the grace of God, husbands must lead and women must submit. It requires a miracle of God for this to work, but that is just the point. Christians can make this work because of the grace of God, and when it works, it is beautiful, wonderful, and makes us want to praise God for His genius. If self-centeredness gets in the way, conflict will arise. There must be must patience, flexibility, and a willingness to learn how to best fit the roles as marriage goes on. The husband will learn about the needs and desires of his wife, and she will learn about his. Both will then see better how they need to conform with God's standards and how that makes both better off as well as the marriage itself more enjoyable.

We should notice also that the reason Christ has been elevated by the Father to the position of head over the body, the church, is because He first submitted Himself to the Father in giving up His life for the church. A godly husband thus understands what it means to put the interests of his wife ahead of his own, and he will lead her and let her rest in his strength in Christ because he loves her and knows that this is best for her. She will submit to his leadership because she respects Christ, and she will gladly respect and submit to a husband in whom she can confidently rest, trust, and rely.

The wives are to be subject to their husbands in everything. God is not saying that women are to be subject to all men in everything. He is speaking only of the marriage relationship, and in that relationship, the wife must be sure that she respects her husband's leadership in all areas, not rebelling in some. The church is not allowed to obey in some areas and then harbor areas of sin and rebellion against Christ. In the same way, the wife must let her husband lead in all areas of life, finances, family, church participation, children's activities, etc. Yet the husband because he loves his wife will be

sure to listen to her and work together with her to do what is best for the family. Just as we delight in God and He gives us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4), the wife should delight in her husband (and he in her), and she can trust that he will do the best for her and the family such that she finds what she truly wants. His leadership is not selfish but always for the welfare of his wife ahead of his own. Her submission to his decisions allows him to lead without resentment or bitterness toward his wife. He is able to work with her as she shares her heart with him rather than having to rule by pulling rank, so to speak. It is imperative that both spouses get on the same page as decisions are made. If God is leading both husband and wife, which He is if they are walking with Him, then both can expect to be led in the same way.

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

26so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

27that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

Paul gives specific directions to the husband to love his wife to the extent that Christ loves His church, even being willing to give up His own life for the church. Thus, there is to be no bound to the husband's love just as Christ's love has no bound toward the church, being even beyond our comprehension as to its greatness and extent. The husband should be willing to do anything, even if it meant giving up his life, for the wellbeing of his wife. She should be able to have absolute confidence that her husband will only do her good and that his heart toward her is good. She must know that his love is sure such that nothing can make him stop loving her. He is not to get back at her if she does something to hurt him by holding back his love and affection, but he is to go to her in love and seek reconciliation. It is kindness that leads to repentance, even in marriage. Grudges or records of wrong cannot be kept and used as ammunition in an argument. Things shouldn't even have to escalate to an argument, but affection, gentleness, and a listening ear should always characterize communication and the relationship.

Christ's purpose was to save the church, to sanctify the church, which He is presently doing in the lives of believers, and then ultimately to glorify the church. Sanctification is to result in a church free from sin and refined into the likeness of Christ's example and holiness, free from any spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Christ is working in the hearts and lives of Christians to iron out sin patterns and remove all that is evil and of the flesh. This is a process, but we can trust Him, someway and somehow, in His infinite wisdom, to get the job done so that we can be glorified. The church has been cleansed in His blood once and for all, but practically we still need the Word of God to examine our hearts and teach us how to live as Christ in this life by grace through faith. This is what Christ is doing in His church, and it is what the husband is to be doing for his wife. He is to through word, deed, example, and every means available to him, help his wife to grow in Christ and be conformed with the Word of God. He will not be able to do this unless he is walking after the Spirit with his whole heart. God is not harsh with His children, and he is not to be harsh or impatient with his wife. God bore with Jonah, and a godly

husband is merciful toward his wife as she is with him when he needs to change. But it is God's design that he puts ultimate responsibility for the sanctification of the wife upon the husband. This is consistent given that he put the ultimate blame of the fall of man into sin upon the first man, Adam. God holds the husband accountable for how he leads the home, and his life and witness has great ramifications for the wife and the children. This is not to minimize the wife's role, for it is equally important and valuable. It is only to say that God holds the man ultimately responsible for the family, for such is the accountability for the leader. His calling within the marriage is to do what he can so that both he and his wife and his children honor God in all things, being conformed with the Word of God.

28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

30 because we are members of His body.

31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

This verse is not teaching that we are to love ourselves such that we are consumed with ourselves and our own esteem. The consistent teaching of the Bible and this passage is to esteem others more highly than ourselves. Paul is not saying to the husband to be just as consumed with his wife as he is with himself, for he is not to be consumed with himself. What Paul is saying is that the husband and wife are one flesh, so that when he loves his wife, he is actually loving himself as well. When the wife loves her husband, she is truly doing the best thing for herself as well because his body is hers and hers his. The husband and wife are one flesh. We are not to be consumed with ourselves; neither are we to hate ourselves, for self-hatred is another form of being focused on self rather than others. The message from Scripture is that we are to delight in the welfare of our spouse, and in so doing, we are taking care of ourselves as well. Christ nourishes and cares for the church, and the normal, common thing for humans to do is to take care of their own bodies, feeding them, grooming them, exercising them, and so on. We look after our own bodies because they need looking after, not because we gloat in ourselves. If we do, we have a pride problem. The issue is that the plain and obvious reality is that people care about their own bodies, and they nourish and care for them. We are Christ's body, and He nourishes us with His Word and cares for us in His grace and providence. The wife is the husband's body, so when he cares for his wife, it is as if he is caring for himself. This is good because just as Christ cares for the church, His body, the husband should care for his wife, his body. The idea that when one hurts, the other hurts, and when one rejoices, the other rejoices is really important here. As one grows in the Lord, the other will be challenged to do so. It just makes no sense for a wife or husband to treat the other poorly, for such is damaging to themselves. They are one, and the best thing to do for themselves is to love the other. Thus, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 to emphasize that the husband and wife are one flesh, one body, and one entity in God's sight. Spiritually,

there is a melding when a man takes a wife, and they must live as one, giving preference to one another in love.

**32This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.
33Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.**

When Scripture speaks of mysteries, it is speaking of things conceived in the mind of God that are not yet fully revealed to us. They exist or will exist, for God has planned them. Marriage, according to God's divine insight and plan, is a picture of Christ's union with the church. There will be a marriage feast of the Lamb at the close of the age (Revelation 19:9), and we, Christ's bride, will be there to meet our Groom, Christ Himself. The details of this overwhelm our feeble minds, and we are not supposed to fully understand what this entails. We are, however, to believe it. It is a great mystery, that of Christ and the church, and we only have a slight insight into it. We know that it exists, and we know that our earthly marriages are to follow the example of Christ and His love for His bride, the church. The church is to respect and submit to Christ, and the wife is to submit to her husband. Christ loves the church with the greatest love ever known, and the husband is to imitate that love toward his wife. Yet how much more is hidden in that great mystery, we will have to wait until later to understand. God has given us enough for the present time to steward as we are to lead as husbands, submit as wives, prefer the other above ourselves, and love each other.

Paul sums up his commands in this passage by saying that husbands are to love their wives, being mindful that they are their own bodies given that they are one. Husbands can be neglectful of the needs of their wives, living as independent bachelors even though married and sleeping in the same bed under the same roof. The wife needs to be involved in the life of the husband and understand what he is doing, thinking, and experiencing. Otherwise, she feels distant. As the church, we want to have God's mind and be sure of His heart, and thus we go to His Word to remember what He has told us. So, too, the wife needs to be able to regularly commune with her husband, and he must give her these times and opportunities. She is his body just as we are Christ's body. One flesh is meant to be lived as one life, not two. Secondly, Paul summarizes his command to the wives to respect their husbands. Husbands are not as needy for affection as their wives are. However, they do need to know that their wives admire them, respect them, and appreciate what they do for them and for the family. They want to know that the wife is pleased with how they are leading and that she is thankful that they are. They want to know that they are treating their wives right, and they want to be encouraged and affirmed by their wives unto excellence in the Lord. They need to know that she is walking with them into wherever the Lord leads them. This submission is the ultimate respect just as involving the wife in the entirety of the husband's life (time, energy, attention, direction, etc.) is the ultimate show of love for the wife.

The foundation of a great marriage is Christ and living as the one which he has made husband and wife to be.

Ephesians 6

**1Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
2HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise),
3SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.**

Paul continues to deal with family matters, speaking now to the children. They are to obey their parents, submitting to them in all things, unless, of course, they tell them to go against Scripture. It is dishonoring to a parent for their children to not respect them. Parents should train their children to listen to them, and children should willingly obey them. Obedience to parents is right, as in upright, righteous, godly, acceptable, and pleasing to God. In Exodus 20:12, as part of the Ten Commandments, God commands the children of Israel to honor their father and mother. God was making a covenant with Israel, and it is interesting that He involved the children in the covenant. Children are not irrelevant, extras, or tag-alongs, but they matter, they have dignity, and they can make a difference. They have an obligation to God and a responsibility to Him and to their parents. This commandment has a promise attached to it that if the children honor their parents that things will go well with them and they will live long on the earth. In the original context, the promise pertains to the people of Israel remaining long in the land of promise (see Exodus 20:12), but Paul through the direction of the Holy Spirit modifies it here to have a universal application for general blessing, health, and long life. It is not that long life is a guarantee if a person obeys their parents, but it is setting up a general principle that it is best for individuals, families, and societies if children obey their parents. Children who refuse to submit to authorities end up in trouble, on the street, on abusive substances, dead, or in prison. Rebellion leads to harm for the individual, the family, and society. If a society wants to endure and an individual wants to make wise choices for his own general benefit, then he needs to learn submission beginning with obeying his parents. This is so important that listed with the characteristics indicative of the last days is that children will become disobedient to parents (2 Timothy 3:2). God takes children seriously because He loves them and desires them to come to Him. He hates it when others lead them astray (Matthew 18:6), and He delights when godly people, such as parents, lead them in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). But children have their own will and responsibility before God, and they must accept that fact and obey. This will be best for them and for those around them. Children who learn early to obey their parents will be able to quickly learn to obey God as well.

4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Though certainly the principle of not provoking children to anger applies to both parents, it is directed at fathers specifically. It seems that fathers in general are more prone to exasperate their children as children look to them for encouragement and affirmation more than they do mothers. Children generally run to mom for comfort and affection whereas they tend to look to dad to see if he approves of them and what they do. Thus,

fathers play a particularly important role of encouraging their children and giving them confidence in the love of their earthly father as they obey and are free to be themselves. This leads to a view of God the Father as One Who adores them, encourages them, supports them, and rightly leads them. Fathers can easily exasperate their children and cause them to feel like giving up, that they are no good, that they are not loveable, or that their father is not always unconditionally loving or trustworthy. This is very dangerous because the father figure needs to be one that the child feels safe with and can trust to care for and protect them, not tease them or provoke them. God doesn't tease His children as if He delights in seeing us struggle or suffer, but He does all that He can to enable us to enjoy Him and the world and calling which He has given us. Children should feel safe to enjoy themselves and their fathers rather than fearing a tease, provocation, insult, or abandonment. Fathers should nourish their children to grow to maturity in Christ, which they will do as they guide them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. God causes all things to work for our good (Romans 8:28), and He delights to give good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). Fathers should treat their children the same way, delighting in doing them good always and doing what they can so that the best possible things happen for their children according to the principles of God's Word.

The ultimate goal of child training is for the child to grow to a place of maturity in Jesus which involves knowing God's Word well and having learned to walk after the Spirit rather than indulge the desires of the flesh. There is a training in holiness through discipline and through instruction, the first encouraging obedience to the Lord and the second showing how to obey. The father must know God and the Bible so that he is able to communicate the eternal truths about God to his children. The children should be able to look to him for spiritual guidance and insight into the Word of God.

To let a child live in rebellion and not be corrected and reproved is to not love them as a father ought. Our God disciplines us because He loves us (Hebrews 12:6), and earthly fathers need to discipline their children. Secondly, they must teach them God's Word and ways, demonstrating Christ through their own example, because the issue at stake is the child's heart and mind, not just mere outward conforming behavior.

5Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

6not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

7With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

8knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

The Bible does not condone slavery as in demeaning a human being, treating them as of lesser worth and value, or in allowing a master to abusively treat a slave. The word for slave could also be translated as servant or attendant. So whether a relationship is employee-employer, president-cabinet, master-servant, or any other relationship where a person is under the authority of another, it is imperative that those under authority obey

their authorities as long as the commands of the authority do not require them to violate God's Word. In such instances, we must always submit to our ultimate Authority.

Servants are to be subject to masters according to the flesh, implying that the relationship is merely circumstantial, not spiritual or indicative of basic human worth. No person has a right to be master of another in that he or she should be able take away their freedom and set themselves up as God in their lives. God has ordained government, authority structure in family, and authority structure in the church. There will be authorities, and it is important for us all to learn to obey them as long as we don't violate God's Word. It is not right for the authorities to manipulate, abuse, micromanage, insult, or act in any other demeaning way. But the responsibility of the servant is to obey the master with fear and trembling, not being afraid of abuse, for such is not condoned by the Bible, but reverently and respectfully honoring the place God has given them as one's authority. To respect a God-ordained authority is to respect God Himself, and we are always to fear and tremble before God. Those in authority must remember that those under their authority deserve love, care, justice, and to be treated as one equal in worth and dignity. They are in authority because God has allowed them to be in such a place, not because they are inherently better or more valuable than somebody else.

Service is to be sincere and from the heart, being mindful that we are ultimately serving God in our service (Colossians 3:17, 23). God will reward us accordingly, and so we need to serve Him as we serve man with all of our hearts. We are not to give lipservice, saying we will obey and then not obeying, or eyeservice, looking busy and submissive when in reality we are lazy and rebellious at heart. Many act respectful to their authorities when they are being observed, but behind their backs they speak ill of them and rebel. God's call is to do our work under authority as if we are doing it to Christ as slaves of Him. We fulfill God's will as we honor our God-ordained authorities, and this pleases God. Rather than being bitter and resentful, we are to serve with good will, being respectful to our authorities and being mindful that we are serving Christ in all that we do. He is our ultimate Boss, and we must always live as a willing servant of Him. We will be recompensed fairly by Him one day, but we must be faithful now to our earthly authorities. Whether in authority or under authority, whether the master or the slave, all will be judged by the final authority of Jesus Christ, so all should live in light of His authority, doing all things with all of our hearts unto the glory of Christ (Colossians 3:23).

9And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Those who have authority over others are to be respectful of the needs and rights of their servants, employees, attendants, etc. They should not "lord it over them" (Matthew 20:25-26) as if they can flaunt their position as if they are inherently a superior person than their servants. They should not abuse or mistreat their servants, and they should be mindful that Jesus is their Boss as well. He is watching, and He will recompense them for how they treat their servants. They should not threaten their servants as if motivation by cruelty is to be desired. God is vehemently against such inhumane treatment of people

made in His image. God is impartial, and ultimately justice will be served because He is Himself just. He loves all people the same, and so masters should treat their servants as those equally loved by God, as with dignity, and as with equal value before God. It is not right to boss around another creation of God, but masters should treat their slaves as those whom God loves and as God would treat them, fairly, with kindness, with grace, and with compassion.

We will always have to deal with authority structures and systems on earth, some better than others, and those in authority have a responsibility before God just as those who are under authority have. Each must respect and love the other and treat them with courtesy, kindness, love, fairness, and compassion. How each one lives should be in light of Christ and reverence for Him, always leading or serving as to His glory and according to His example. Christ was the ultimate Master, but He was also the ultimate Servant. Masters could learn a lot from how Jesus treated others, and servants should serve as He served His authority, His Father, being always submissive, obedient, and respectful.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

As Paul brings this letter to a close, he desires the Ephesians to walk worthy of their calling by living in victory over sin and the devil. They must know how to resist and win the battles against the devil so that they can persevere in godliness and endurance. They need to recognize and believe that their strength and might comes from the Lord. Satan is stronger than mortal men, but Jesus in redeemed men is far stronger than the devil. In fact, if we by

Christ's strength resist the devil, he will flee, guaranteed (James 4:7). And God is always able and willing to provide a way out of temptation as it comes our way (1 Corinthians 10:13). We will always be able to withstand and endure Satan's attacks, no matter how long or short, because God is faithful. He alone is our confidence and our strength. With Christ we can do all things (Philippians 4:13) which includes resisting sin and temptation.

In order to resist, we must put on the full armor of God. It is the armor of God which will enable us to stand firm against the tricks, wiles, schemes, and deceptions of the devil. It is not we ourselves who will withstand, but it is Christ Who is Himself our armor. Our strength is found in Him as we believe in His Word and promises to us. We must put on Christ. As Romans 13:14 says, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." Putting on Jesus means reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. It means believing that we don't have to give into sin and trusting God that Satan will always lie to us. It means relying up the truth of God's Word that we don't have to give in to sin, no matter what we feel like or how tired we are. It

means trusting in the Lord with all of our hearts and leaning not on our own understanding. It means resisting by exercising our will according to the strength which the Spirit supplies to resist the lusts of the flesh. It means not putting ourselves in a vulnerable position where the flesh could be fed. We are to meditate and reflect on God's Word, feeding ourselves on the Bread of Life (John 6:48).

Our struggle each and every day is ultimately against Satan and his minions. It is not ultimately against our feelings, our memory, other people, or our circumstances. Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the devil, a powerful, dark, spiritual foe and his forces of wickedness in the heavenly realm. We don't see him, though we might sense him in our spirit as he attacks us, tempts us, or leads us into despair and discouragement. The Holy Spirit will often alert us that we are in a dangerous place, about to be attacked or already being attacked. He points us to be alert and put on the armor of God in Christ so that we can stand firm and not give in to sin. There is spiritual warfare which goes on, and there is an entire hierarchy of evil forces. Satan is the boss of darkness, and there are rulers, powers, and forces under his command. Of course, Satan is under God's authority, though God permits him in this present age to do evil and lead men astray. He allows us to battle by His strength so that He might receive the glory as we walk in victory in Jesus. Though we cannot see the spiritual world, we need to remember and believe that it does indeed exist. Evangelism, for example, is not just a matter of winning an intellectual battle, but it is ultimately a matter of releasing a captive of the devil. We don't need to look for a demon behind every event or feeling, but we should recognize that God is at work. We shouldn't be consumed with the devil and his plans and scheming, but we should rest in the sovereignty of God. We should be looking for God to work, praying for His intervention and direction, and looking to Him for victory. We know Satan is behind temptation and evil, and we need to focus on Jesus, keeping our eyes fixed on Him (Hebrews 12:1-2, Isaiah 26:3), so that we can win.

The bottom line that Paul is trying to communicate here is that we must take up the spiritual armor of Christ because our enemy is not earthly but spiritual. Our spiritual and earthly victory will thus come from winning the spiritual war behind the earthly war. Victory is not in us but in Christ in us so that He gets the glory, not us. He is spiritual, and we, too have a spiritual component. As we win the battle by faith in Christ, we defeat the spiritual enemy and advance the kingdom of God on earth. We must not forget that we are in a spiritual battle daily and that the only way the kingdom of God advances in the hearts of men is by faith and according to ultimate spiritual victory. This reminds us of our need and dependence upon Christ as we realize that our intellect, strategies, and hard work are not enough to win left to themselves. They need to be infused with the power of God as we are filled with the Spirit of God.

14Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,

Paul describes specific ways we can put on Christ as we by faith put on the armor of God. Doing this will enable us to stand firm practically. We are to gird our loins with truth, essentially putting on a belt to keep things orderly and ready for battle. The loose

flowing clothing and robes of ancient times needed to be girded around the midsection so that the person could be ready to run without tripping or getting held back by the wind, for example. Putting on the belt of truth thus enables us as Christians to be efficient and effective in our Christian lives. If we don't get sidetracked by lies but walk in truth, we will continue to live in freedom and victory. We will be armed and ready to fight. But if lies invade the truth of God's Word and we start to doubt the Bible and believe the lies, then we will grow weak and vulnerable, struggling to stand firm when temptation comes. The soldier of Christ must be grounded in truth, and he should pray that any lies get revealed and exposed. The worst is if a person not only believes the lies but begins to live a pattern of lies. This person can get into great deception, error, and hypocrisy such that the devil will be having a field day even if the person has deceived himself into thinking he is living victoriously. Lies must be purged from the Christian for true freedom and fruit-bearing to be experienced.

The breastplate of righteousness guards the heart. The idea is that all that is in the heart, the desires and affections, is to be directed toward holy things and righteousness. We are to be desiring good and not evil, rejoicing with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). If the breastplate is removed, we can easily start lusting for sin and being led astray by wrong desires. We will lose our healthy desires for God, for ministry, for sacrifice, and for service, preferring rather to have temporary pleasures of sin. The more we follow false desires, the more difficult it will be to determine what God desires of us. Above all else, we must guard our hearts lest we be consumed by sin and deception (Proverbs 4:23). If we delight in God, He will give us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4). Thus, wrong desires imply a disdain of God and His commands and a delighting in the devil and his ways. Right desires, on the other hand, are accompanied by righteousness. Wrong desires and behavior must be repented of and rectified so that God's will can be known and followed. The situation God desires is for believers to so delight in Him that even their desires are His will for their lives. If we want this abundant life of knowing and doing God's will and enjoying it, we must put on the breastplate of righteousness by faith in Christ, remembering that His ways are always the most fulfilling.

15and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;

16in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The next piece of armor is our shoes. We need to be ready to sprint to a person with the gospel or to be nimble and quick to dodge an attack of the enemy. We are always to be ready to share the gospel with people, having our hearts ready and our minds prepared to be able to communicate the word of Christ which can lead to faith (Romans 10:17). The soldier of Christ is expecting resistance from the enemy when God opens a door for the gospel. When he puts a Bible in his hand and goes to the lost, he expects a challenge and a fight from the devil. He expects to encounter hard hearts and blind minds. But he is ready and eager to go and do battle with the devil by faith in Christ because he is prepared. He knows that the gospel is the only hope for peace for the hearer, and he is willing to go to them with the message. Thus, the person who is standing firm against

temptation is not merely holding his ground, but he is laboring to advance the kingdom by preaching the gospel. We have the greater power within us in Christ, and when we learn to fight by His strength rather than our own, we will be more eager to intentionally engage the enemy with the going forth of God's Word.

We are also to take up the shield of faith because with it we can extinguish the flaming missiles of the evil one. Satan will launch temptation at us, and he, if God allows, can also bring calamity into our lives, even afflicting us personally as the minister of the devil did to Paul, tormenting him (2 Corinthians 12:7). Satan has a lot of options when it comes to oppressing the soldier of the cross, and he will use whichever ones he thinks will take us down the best. Yet we know that God will not give us more than we can endure by His strength, so we can keep winning by living in holiness even if our world feels like it is falling apart. No matter what comes our way, we can win if we keep believing God's Word and His promises to us. If we let our guard down by lowering our shield, the enemy will fire his missiles right at us. Our undoing is when we stop believing. We can wave our sword all around to win the battles by sharing the Word of God, but we will sustain heavy damage and not be able to endure because we have started to doubt God's power and goodness. We must always believe and walk by faith, rather than sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). We cannot lose hope, but we must keep believing that God can work and accomplish even beyond what we can ask or imagine. When we believe God's Word, Satan can fire as many temptations and discouragements our way as he possibly can, and we can block them all. Satan knows this. He knows that it is possible for him to combat us with everything he's got, and for us to sustain no damage whatsoever. Thus, he will do everything he can to get us to lower our shield by ceasing to believe in God's love, power, and providence such that we live in fear, doubt, and cowardice. Satan loves it when Christians doubt God's Word, and thus he labors intensely to challenge it any way he can. Christians who don't believe God still does great things are easy targets for the devil because they have lowered their shields. We must keep our faith strong as we rest in the bountiful and abundant promises of God.

17And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The helmet guards our minds so that we don't get led astray by the deceptive thoughts that Satan brings our way. Sometimes hideous things will come into our mind, and we will wonder where they came from. These are temptations, and we haven't sinned until we start dwelling on them. When Satan puts wrong thoughts into our minds, we must take them captive unto obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). This demolishes Satan's attempts at creating strongholds in our minds by getting us to dwell on evil thoughts which lead to evil behavior and a lack of growth and good behavior. These strongholds must be removed by faith and confession if we want to be victorious. The best situation is to not let the thoughts take hold by resisting them immediately and thinking on that which is good, right, pure, and noble (Philippians 4:8). The helmet is a helmet of salvation, meaning that our defense is not our rationalizing ability or intellectual prowess but faith in Christ. We are not to negotiate with the devil or entertain him. Jesus didn't when He was tempted. He merely quoted a Scripture and then moved on (Matthew 4:1-

11). Eventually after three attempts, the devil fled, which he always does. He hates hearing God's Word, and he knows he cannot win against a person who has his shield raised in faith. As Christians we are new creations in Christ, children of God. The same power with which God raised Christ from the dead is the same power which is at work in us to the glory of God. If we can remember who we are in Christ, no longer slaves to sin but of righteousness, then we can present our members, including our minds, as instruments of righteousness. We can resist Satan's attempts at influencing our thought lives negatively by resting in what we have become in Christ. We must keep believing that it is better this way, which it most certainly is, and we must not go to where we always regret going once we go there. We must think on Christ, not laboring in self-effort of mental discipline, but simply resting in the truth of our freedom in Jesus. We just need to by faith think on Scripture and believe it. Faith is the victory.

18With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
19and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,
20for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Given the reality that we are people at war with the devil and his forces, we must be praying for one another. We must plead with God for strength and faith to resist and stand firm. We must pray that Christians will learn how to walk in victory by faith. We must be on the alert ourselves, not falling into sin and doubt, so that we can pray rightly and according to God's will for others. If we have sin in our hearts that goes unconfessed, God does not hear our prayers (Psalm 66:18). Thus, our sin impacts our ability to intercede for others. We must stand firm so that we can pray for others to do so as well.

We are to pray at all times, in the Spirit, and for all the saints. It is impossible for each individual to be literally praying constantly, but the command to the church as a whole is to do their best so that prayers are being offered around the clock. Prayer should also be in the Spirit, meaning our hearts need to be pure, we need to pray in faith, and we need to pray perseveringly according to God's will. Prayer is not ordering God to do our bidding, nor is it a time to impress God with our words or emotions. It is a time to yield to the Spirit, and pray to God as He gives utterance. We are not to pray just because but as He leads us (Romans 8:26-27). Finally, we are to pray for all the saints, at our local church for sure and around the world as best we can. Some we will pray for specifically, but often times we will pray in generalities, which is Biblical. Christ said, for example, to pray that God would raise up workers for His harvest, which is worldwide (Matthew 9:38). We need to pray what Scripture tells us to pray for, and we need to pray for people in Jesus around the world.

Paul recognized his need for prayer and his dependence upon the Holy Spirit. He also recognized his need for other Christians by asking them to pray for him. He didn't live his life on a spiritual pedestal or island, but he joined his heart and mind with the church

around the world. He wanted them all praying for him, and he prayed for them. He asked for boldness that he might speak as the Spirit led him to speak as he preached the gospel of Christ. He needed the work of Christ to have boldness, and he put no confidence in his flesh. We, like Paul, so benefit from the prayers of others, and we need to be willing to ask for prayer. We all need prayer all the time. It need not be an inconvenience, but it should be a way of life. Given Satan's aggressive attacks, it only makes sense.

21But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.

22I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

Paul was sending Tychicus, a faithful laborer with him (Acts 20:4, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12), to Ephesus to communicate with the brethren there about his circumstances and well-being. He explains to them that Tychicus is a beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord so that those who receive him will receive him gladly and with trust and confidence. Paul sent him so that he could comfort their hearts as they heard about Paul and his companions and what God was doing in their hearts and through their lives. The communication's ultimate purpose was for edification in the Lord.

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

24Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

Paul wishes the brethren peace and love with faith which is from God and Christ. We can only have peace with God through Christ, and we only can enjoy the peace of God through Christ. We can only love God and others if we are in Christ, and we can only please God by faith, which even itself is a gracious working of God in our hearts. So Paul's desire is for the Christians to live as they are called and enabled by Christ to love, be at peace, and walk by faith. We all need the grace of God, and we are dependent upon it to be saved and sanctified. We will also be glorified because of God's grace which will keep us in His love which has no bounds. All who have come to love Christ, having received Him as their Lord and Savior, are controlled by love (2 Corinthians 5:14). In fact, their love for God, though they might get deceived, stumble, or rebel (thus the need to put on the armor and stand firm), is sure. It is incorruptible, perpetual, and enduring forever because the promises of God endure forever. God will keep His children, and none, not even the devil, can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39). Our love is forever because God's love to His children is forever. By His grace we are saved, sanctified, and glorified.

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