

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understand the idea of God's wish, His desire, which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

To the saints that are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus- "At Ephesus" is omitted by some manuscripts, supporting the idea that this is more of a circular letter. But we can also detect specific references to the situation at Ephesus. So it may be that the letter was indeed written specifically to Ephesus, but also used as a circular letter of a more general nature- hence the additional address to "the faithful in Christ Jesus". That term may however

be some technical term which referred to the eldership; in which case we can note that the letter was firstly addressed to the whole church, and only secondarily to the leadership.

1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*- How could Paul wish grace to them, seeing it is an abstract concept and not a feeling or experience like "peace"? So often *charis* refers to the gift of the Spirit, which is given at baptism and yet is poured out repeatedly throughout the life of a believer. The rest of the letter has so much to say about this that we could conclude that he is wishing them to be filled with the gift of the Spirit; for *charis* means both 'gift' and 'grace'.

1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*- He wishes us to be like Him, to have *His* Spirit. In this sense, through having the spirit of Jesus, He comes and lives in the hearts of those who accept Him (Rom. 8:1-26; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20). There is a resultant joy in the heart of the convert after baptism, as a result of the Lord's work (1 Thess. 1:6). To this end, He blesses us with all the varied blessings of His Spirit (Eph. 1:3 Gk.). Paul opens 1 Corinthians with similar statements, but goes on to say that the Corinthians were not "spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1); the blessing of the Spirit must be made use of. We are by status in Heaven with the Lord Jesus, in the heavenlies- but we must live according to that status, thinking of Heavenly things and not earthly preoccupations.

1:4 *In that He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love*- "In that..." connects our having been chosen from the beginning with the blessing of the Spirit (:2). And in fact we were chosen not just from the beginning but from *before* that. At some point in infinity in the 'past', we were known and chosen. This is even more awesome. Romans 8 makes the same connection; our being foreknown and called was by grace, the gift of the Spirit. The very idea of our calling, predestination and choosing is the parade example of grace; for no works could be done by us which affect those things. And yet Romans 8 goes on to reason that the Spirit has been given to transform us into what we are counted as by status in Christ; His righteousness has been imputed to us, but we are to be transformed by the Spirit into that righteousness in reality. "Without blemish" is of course the language of the unblemished Passover lamb, the Lord Jesus. We were chosen so that the work of the Spirit might transform us into His personality and character, which is counted to us by imputed righteousness.

Pre-eminently, our love of the brotherhood will be the basis upon which we find acceptance, and in this lies the reason why the life of love is a living out of an acceptance before the Lord now. If we live in love, we are right now holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). "Before Him" is the language of judgment day (Mt. 25:32; Lk. 21:36; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5); and being holy and blameless before Him is exactly how we will be at the judgment seat (Jude 24). Yet right now, he who lives in love, a love unpretended and unfeigned, lives in the blamelessness and holiness of his Lord, whose righteousness is imputed to him. Paul so loved his Thessalonian brethren that he joyed "for your sakes before our God" (1 Thess. 3:9). "Before our God" is very much the language of judgment day; and he had earlier reflected: "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye *are* [right now] our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19,20). They were in this life his joy, as he lived out his life "before our God" and they would be again in the day of judgment.

Not only are paragraph and chapter breaks sometimes misleading, verse breaks can be too. Inserting punctuation into translation of Hebrew and Greek texts is very difficult. Thus Eph. 1:4,5 in the AV reads: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us". Shift the colon and another emphasis is apparent: "...that we should be holy and without blame before him: in love having predestinated us". When stuck with a

‘difficult’ verse (and they all are in some ways!), don’t be afraid to try re-jigging the punctuation a bit. The love and grace of God is shown so clearly in the way we were "foreordained" or predestinated to be His children, when others were not. This was and is all of grace, for no works had been done by us to warrant this calling. The initiative was His.

1:5 *Having foreordained us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will-* The idea of adoption is also used in Romans 8, and is in the context of the gift of the Spirit. By being "in Christ", we have His righteousness imputed to us; but the Spirit works within us to make us in reality how and what we are counted as by status. Hence Rom. 8:15 speaks of the Spirit of Christ as "the spirit of adoption". Those who receive the adoption of sons therefore have the Spirit of God's Son sent forth into their hearts, by which they relate to God as Jesus did: "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:5,6). And here in Eph. 1 the context is the same; for 1:3 has spoken of the blessings of the Spirit received by believers, and the whole process of adoption results in the praise of His grace, His *charis* or "gift"- that of the Spirit (:6). All this was according to His "will", which might seem axiomatic until we allow Romans 8 to fill out the idea. Our choosing to be given the Spirit was His choice, His will- and not our own. This therefore is the parade example of His grace.

An understanding of predestination helps us towards true humility and appreciation of grace; see on :4. This is the very context in which Paul introduces the idea in Romans; he wished his readers to appreciate grace by reflecting upon how predestination involves something far over and above anything we could ‘do’ or ‘be’ in our own rights. Paul speaks here of predestination as a sign of God’s grace- and thus we are “predestinated... to the praise of the glory of His grace”. Predestination brings with it an appreciation of grace, and real praise for it. Predestination by grace doesn’t motivate to lethargy and fatalism- if it’s properly understood. When the Lord speaks of how we have been chosen, above and beyond any effort on our part, He goes on to teach that exactly because of this, we have a responsibility to produce fruit, to pray, to love one another (Jn. 15:16,17). Despite predestination, there are countless thousands of freewill decisions for us to make each day. Try to bear that in mind some mornings as you wake up. Whatever situation we’re in, life takes on an excitement and meaning and challenge. The simple fact of predestination, of having been chosen by grace, should radically inspire us in every one of those freewill decisions. The true Biblical idea of predestination mustn’t be confused with non-Biblical ones. The Romans, Greeks, Egyptians etc. all believed that they had been elected by the gods, predestined to be the special race that alone had true connection with the divine... but they assumed this predestination was because of their natural superiority. Biblical predestination is radically different- that the weak are chosen and the strong rejected, not because they are smart, beautiful, hard working, successful, lucky... but exactly because they are weak and just who they are. This is the grace of true predestination. And it’s so wonderful that nobody can be passive to it. On this very basis, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their differences because their names were written in the book of life (Phil. 4:2,3). That book was written from the foundation of the world, and the fact our names are written in it is a reference to the concept of predestination. This reality means that in practice we simply shouldn’t be at loggerheads with others who share in that same grace of predestination!

1:6- see on Lk. 1:28.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved- As noted on :5, our calling was by God's will, not ours. The grace or gift of the Spirit is available to transform us into the image of the Christ in whom we are by faith and baptism. We are counted as Him, with His righteousness imputed to us. Our predestination to this state

is again His grace. The issues of 'And what about all the others who weren't called?' remain with us, but we are invited to focus instead on praising Him for His grace toward us. We thankfully receive the lifebelt thrown to us, rather than wondering why others weren't thrown one. We are "made accepted", or literally, 'graced', by being in Christ [NEV "bestowed on us"]. All who wish to enter into Him are clothed with Him, and so the operation of grace through the Spirit is enabled.

1:7- see on Acts 20:28.

In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace- Salvation and all the wonderful processes which are a part of it are enabled by being "in Christ". This is a status we have to decide to enter, of our own freewill. Clearly baptism is "into Christ", and that surely is why the act of baptism by immersion of an adult is as it is- to provide an opportunity for us to wilfully demonstrate we of ourselves wish to consciously become in Him. We have "redemption" right now in that we have forgiveness of sins (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30 say likewise); but "redemption" comes to its final term in "the redemption of the body" at the last day (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14), "the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). This means that our experience of forgiveness of sins today is the foretaste and guarantee of the final redemption to be given at the last day. If we wonder about our eternal salvation, we need to ask ourselves whether we have known forgiveness now. We should be able to taste that forgiveness; Peter did, and on that basis insisted that he was a personal witness that the Lord Jesus was really in Heaven mediating forgiveness to us. These wondrous things are indeed according to the riches of His grace. To hear all this but turn away from it is indeed to despise the riches of His grace (Rom. 2:4). Paul therefore will pray the Ephesians will perceive these riches of grace (Eph. 1:18). Those riches can be tasted right now; but at the last day, He will lavish the riches of grace upon us in the redemption of our bodies into eternal life (Eph. 2:7). The present experience of the riches of grace is in the receipt of the gift of the Spirit in our minds (Eph. 3:8). To deny these riches is really to despise those riches, no matter how politely worded is our theology in doing so. These riches are described in Col. 1:27; 2:2 as being of Christ in us, the trust we have of our future glorification; and the riches of the full assurance of understanding- that by grace, we really will live eternally in His Kingdom. The experience of the Spirit, of forgiveness, of Christ in us, is the earnest of the possession (:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5), the full assurance of salvation (Col. 2:2).

1:8 *Which He lavished on us in all wisdom and prudence-* The Spirit gifts of wisdom and prudence are lavished upon us in that we have had the Gospel revealed to us (:9). There may be a reference to the miraculous gift of wisdom in the 1st century, but for us in our age we have wisdom lavished upon us in knowing the Christ who is the full wisdom of God.

God has been extravagant with His grace. And in dealing with those whom we consider to be hard, spiteful and unreasonable towards us in the brotherhood, we have the ideal opportunity to reflect such grace. It hurt God, to an extent we cannot fathom, to lavish that grace upon us in the death of the cross. And of course it must hurt us to show it to others. In the same way as we seem unable to focus our attention for very long on the ultimate issues of life, so we find it difficult to believe the extent of God's grace. He is extravagant with His grace- God "lavishes" grace upon us. The covenant God made with Abraham was similar in style to covenants made between men at that time; and yet there was a glaring difference. Abraham was not required to do anything or take upon himself any obligations. Circumcision [cp. baptism] was to remember that this covenant of grace had been made. It isn't part of the covenant [thus we are under this same new, Abrahamic covenant, but don't require circumcision]. Perhaps this was why Yahweh but not Abraham passed between the pieces,

whereas usually both parties would do so. The promises to Abraham are pure, pure grace, a lavishing of grace.

1:9 *Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in him*- The Gospel is 'made known to us'; the emphasis is upon His action. It is not our Bible reading which revealed it to us, but rather His initiative in revealing it to us. This was part of His will; and we noted on :5 that the repeated references to God's will are another way of saying that we were called to the Gospel not by our works nor initiative, but by His will, His predestination. That revelation of the Gospel to us was planned "in Christ" in God's plan which was before time and continues to beyond time (:10). The moment or process through which we were called had therefore been waiting for infinite time to come about, and shall have eternal consequence, beyond time. Our preaching of the Gospel therefore has eternal moment for each person who hears the call from us; words fail to express the significance of that work. The alleviation of human suffering is never to be ignored nor devalued, but the preaching of the Gospel is of far greater moment when viewed in this perspective.

1:10- see on Col. 1:20.

In a plan which runs to the fullness of the times: To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth- God's purpose with each of us existed *before* [and not just *from*] the foundation of the world (:4), and His purpose with us runs to the fullness of the *kairos*, time itself. This is the impression of absolute infinity, within the limitation of words to describe it. Our eternity, to infinity and beyond, is "in Christ"; the AV adds at the end of this sentence "even in Him". We become "in Christ" by faith and baptism into Him now; and we shall eternally exist in Him. The whole atmosphere of our lives must therefore be of Him; for in this sense we can live now the life which shall be eternally. "All things", quite literally, both persons and spiritual ideas, all of God's spirituality, believers and Angels, shall all be summed up in that one unique man, Christ- and shall eternally be so.

1:11- see on Mt. 25:34.

In whom also we were made His heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who does all things after the counsel of His will- We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other. In infinite time and space, we are what He has as His very own, what He longs for and has planned for over infinite time. This helps us better understand the significance He places on our extension of His purpose to others by evangelism; and the deep anger He has at causing any to stumble out of that grand purpose He has for them. We are to constantly ask ourselves: 'Will this in any way cause anyone to stumble from this marvellous grace personally planned for them?'. This grand purpose is not simply according to God's will, which would be axiomatic, but "after *the counsel of His will*". That "counsel" is a reference to the Gospel and His word to man. Paul addressed the Ephesian elders with a reference to how he had entirely declared to them "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). This suggests that Ephesians may have been a follow up letter to those elders, and then it was adapted for more general usage to all the faithful (:1). This kind of thing would be typical of responsible missionary work; I have several times written letters to back up such face to face meetings in missionary contexts, and then reused the material in a more general form. Paul seems to have done the same, under Divine inspiration.

1:12 *So that we who had first hoped in Christ should be for the praise of His glory*- The next verse "In whom you also believed / hoped" could suggest that the "we" here refers to Paul and his missionary team. But "first hoped", *proelpizo*, carries the sense of "to hope in advance of other confirmation" (Strong). Having written and implied so much about God's predestination of us, and the outworking of His will in choosing us, Paul may be balancing

that by saying that we have to also show initiative. Faith is in a sense a leap in the dark. No amount of clever apologetic arguments can ever take that away from what it means to believe / hope in Christ. Most of the apologetic arguments in any case refer to God, the Bible, the creation record etc.- and not to faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is spoken of here as hope, *elpizo*, a solid expectation and assurance- that He shall save us eternally. And no apologetic arguments can give you that. This is a leap which must be taken. But the idea of "to hope in advance of other confirmation" begs the question: 'What confirmation, then, comes after we have taken this leap of faith and hoped in Christ?'. The next verse answers this- "In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise". Human belief / hope in Christ is indeed confirmed from God's side. The promised Holy Spirit confirms and seals that faith.

Thus we "have obtained an inheritance" through being "in Christ". This is just another way of expressing the great truth of Gal. 3:27-29- that through baptism into Christ, we receive the promise of the inheritance promised to Abraham. But Paul continues in Eph. 1:12: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in [Gk. 'into'- through baptism] Christ". The fact we are in Christ by baptism and thus have the Abrahamic promises leads to praise of God's grace. Yet we will only achieve this if we firmly grasp the real, pointed relevance of the promises to us; that we who are baptized are each one truly and absolutely in Christ, and the promises apply to *me* personally.

1:13 *In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*- This sealing is the confirmation of our trust / solid hope that we really will be saved in Christ; see on :12. Our trust / belief / hope in "the word of the truth" doesn't refer to our having figured out a true set of theological propositions called "the truth". Our solid faith and hope in Christ is related to "the truth"- we consider the word of the Gospel as "the truth", we take it as truth. And the greatest personal truth for each believer is that we have heard "the gospel of salvation", we really shall be eternally saved. And we are "sealed", confirmed in our faith, by the gift of the Spirit (see on :12). The "promise" of the Spirit surely refers to the promise of the Comforter within us in Jn. 14-16, and this in turn is alluded to in Gal. 3:14, which speaks of our receipt of "the promise of the Spirit through faith". Thus the gift of the Spirit at baptism is a promise to all who shall believe at all times, and not just in the first century (Acts 2:39).

At our baptism we became "in Christ". Through that act we obeyed all the Lord's invitations to believe "in Him", or as the Greek means, to believe *into* Him. We believed *into* Him after we heard the Gospel, by baptism. We are now connected with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; we are treated by God as if we are His Son, and therefore the Spirit of His Son is given to us, to make us in reality as we are by status.

1:14 *Which is a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession, for the praise of His glory*- This "guarantee" is the "earnest" spoken of in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5- the gift of the Spirit in our hearts. As explained on :12, we take the step of faith in hoping in Christ, in believing that really this word of salvation is ultimate truth for us (:13; we "first hoped", *proelpizo*, "to hope in advance of other confirmation" (:12). And that confirmation that we shall really be saved, as we first believed we shall be, is in the gift of the Spirit. The New Testament promises "all joy and peace through believing" the good news of salvation in God's Kingdom; and this of itself implies that we have some confirmation of that future salvation. For otherwise we can hardly rejoice and feel peaceful in such a hope. And that confirmation is in the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is the sign God owns us; He possesses us by and with the Spirit, and this thereby guarantees that we shall be finally redeemed by Him as His very own at the last day. But we must let that Spirit work and function; for the Corinthians were given the same Spirit, but were "not spiritual" and fell away (1 Cor. 3:1).

1:15 *For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you and the love which you show toward all the saints-* Paul felt warmly towards all others who had really believed in Jesus as their Saviour and were rejoicing in sure hope of salvation because of the confirmation they had received from the Spirit (see on :12-14). This is indeed the 'basis of our fellowship' rather than some intellectual commonality on some theological issues. That faith and hope elicits love; hence faith, hope and love indeed go together in Paul's thinking. We take the step of faith in response to God's grace in calling us; we have a sure hope in salvation, confirmed by the gift of the Spirit; and the wonder and joy of it all has to be shown forth quite naturally in love. We are given fellow believers as a particular outlet for that love; hence the reference to "the love... toward all the saints".

Paul heard of the spiritual development of the Ephesians (1:15-19), therefore he prayed that God would grant them more knowledge and understanding (:16,17). The dynamic in this Divine confirmation of their freewill effort was God's Spirit power. Paul repeats the prayer in Eph. 3:14-21: "...be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that... (ye) may be able to comprehend... to know... to be filled with all the fullness of God". It is thus by God's Spirit acting on our "inner man" that this greater comprehension of our glorious calling is achieved. He tells them later to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23), alluding to the Ezekiel passages which speak not only of Israel making themselves a new heart / spirit / mind, but of *God* giving this to them (Ez. 18:11; 36:26), in confirmation of their efforts. There are examples galore of God acting on the minds of men to give them a certain attitude which they would not otherwise have had (consider how He gave Saul another heart, or gave Israel favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they lent to them, Ex. 12:36).

1:16 *Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers-* If all the wonderful things of :11-15 are true, then we can only constantly give thanks that those we have preached to shall really be eternally saved. Only if the wonder of that slips, will we find ourselves demotivated in our prayer life.

One practical caveat needs to be mentioned in the context of praying for others. It is all too easy to slip into the habit (and slipping into bad prayer habits surely dogs every prayerful man) of reeling off a list of names each night, something like "Dear Father, be with David, and please be with the children, and with Sister Smith, and with Karen, and with...". There's nothing in itself wrong with this. But over time, it can become a kind of incantation, with us fearful that this evening we let one of those names slip. Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father. This is a high standard to keep up. It is through this constant prayer that we are in God's tabernacle presence and in sacrificial relationship with Him.

Compare the following passages:

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Is. 62:6,7)

with

"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:15-17).

The ideas of praying without ceasing and making mention occur in both passages. Surely Paul had the Isaiah passage in mind. It seems that he saw the ecclesia as the spiritual Zion. In the same way as Zion's watchmen were exhorted to pray for her without ceasing until the Kingdom is established there, so Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of his brethren. The implication is surely that once a certain level of spirituality had been achieved, then the Lord will return to establish His Kingdom. When the harvest is ripe, then the sickle is put in. Jn. 17:23 speaks of how the church will "be perfected into one" (RV), as if this process is ongoing and comes to a finality at the Lord's return. This is an urgent imperative to unity amongst us- and yet as these [apparently] "last days" wear on, we become increasingly *disunited*. This ought to be a true worry to us.

1:17- see on Jn. 6:27.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; so that you may have- Paul has explained in :12-15 that the believers are given the Spirit in confirmation of the hope they had in Christ for eternal salvation. But Paul wants them to perceive that Spirit, and to really feel and experience the guarantee of final salvation which it offers. The Corinthians likewise were given the gift of the Spirit on conversion, but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). They failed to let the Spirit transform them. So Paul prays that his converts would be given an appreciation of the solid hope of salvation which they had. "The Father of glory" refers to how God's glory will be revealed at the final salvation of His people (Mt. 16:27); and Paul therefore asks the Father of glory to open the eyes of the believers to the glory which awaits them (:18). The giving of the Spirit is incremental; for they had been given the Spirit (:13), but Paul prays that the Spirit will be given them to open their eyes further to the wonder of their future salvation. The prayers of third parties, therefore, can potentially influence the spirituality of those they pray for. We are not left to just work out our own salvation; the prayers of others can play a part in it. And seeing that is the case, we are to constantly be in prayer for each other.

1:18 *The eyes of your mind enlightened, that you may appreciate what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints-* See on :17. The Ephesians already had the Spirit, the guarantee of their future salvation; but Paul wanted them to perceive the utter wonder of it all. The Spirit therefore works on the human mind, opening our perceptions and appreciation. To limit it to miraculous manifestations in the first century is to seriously miss out on a major Biblical theme. And again we note that our prayer for others can potentially influence their perceptions and mental attitudes. The enlightening is by the gift of the Spirit (:17); proof enough that the promised Spirit gift is essentially an internal, mental operation rather than external miraculous gifts. "Enlightenment" is associated with being partakers in the Holy Spirit and tasting the Heavenly gift [i.e. the Spirit] in Heb. 6:4. And Heb. 10:32 speaks as if this "enlightenment" was a standard part of the Christian path ("... after you were enlightened..."). The same word for "enlightened" is found in Jn. 1:9- the Lord Jesus is the light of our world and enlightens every man who comes into that world. Once we take the step in faith of entering His world, then the gift of the Spirit enlightens us. He is therefore not passively sitting in Heaven awaiting the time of His return; He is busy enlightening believers, and He does this through the operation of His Spirit.

Our eyes have been enlightened, now we see (Eph. 1:18; 5:8; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). And yet in other ways we are blind spiritually. We see through a glass "darkly" (Gk. 'enigmatically'; 1 Cor. 13:12). The things of the Spirit are largely enigmas to us. Therefore Paul prays that his Ephesians would have "the eyes of their understanding" progressively enlightened, even though they had already been turned from darkness to light (Eph. 1:17,18). The disciples had been turned from darkness to light, but the Lord rebuked them for their blindness in not expecting His resurrection.

1:19 *And what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might-* The same Spirit power which resurrected the Lord Jesus (:20) is at work internally within us. Rom. 8:11 says the same about the Spirit gift that is now within us: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you". Paul knows that they have heard the theory of the Spirit gift and that they have received it, but he wants them to perceive how hugely powerful is this gift. I find myself praying this same prayer, both for myself and for my brethren.

"His power *toward* us" uses *eis*, which can as well be rendered "in" or "within". The huge power, *hyper* and *mega* [NEV "exceeding greatness"], is working within us, which is exactly where we need empowerment. It is the energy [*energeia*, "working"] of His mighty force [*ischus*, "might"]. These are all powerful words. The energy of this force within us is only limited by our acceptance of it and actual desire to change.

1:20- see on Eph. 3:9,10.

Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and had him sit at His right hand in heaven- See on :19. The same force internally at work in transforming us was at work in the resurrection of the Lord (Rom. 8:11). The Lord's resurrection thus becomes a pattern for the breaking forth of new spiritual life within us. In spiritual terms, we too are raised from the dead and exalted to heavenly places in Christ. Verse 3 has used the same phrase, in stating that we are now in "heavenly places" through the work and blessing of the Spirit. And 2:6 will repeat this.

The Jews strongly believed that Satan had authority over the old / current age. Their writings speak of the rulers, powers, authorities, dominions etc. of this present age as all being within the supposed system of Satan and his various demons / Angels in Heaven. In Eph. 1:20–22 Paul says that Christ is now "above every ruler (*archê*), authority (*exousia*), power (*dunamis*) and dominion (*kuriotês*) and any name that can be named not only in this age but the age to come... All things have been put in subjection under his feet". Paul's teaching that no spiritual being can oppose the exalted Christ. He's using the very terms used in the Jewish writings for the rulers, powers etc. of Satan's supposed system. So when in 2 Cor. 4:4 Paul speaks of Satan as "the god of this age", he's not necessarily claiming that this is now the case – rather is he merely quoting from the well known Jewish belief about this.

1:21 *Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come-* Just as the Lord Jesus is far above all human governments and dominions, so the persecuted believers in Ephesus should remember that whilst not 'above the law', they were spiritually in a sphere far above all the authorities who were persecuting them. "Far above" translates yet another superlative; *hyperano* is literally 'above the upper things'. And Ephesians 1 is full of such *hyper* and *mega* words, mixed with powerful adjectives; all seeking to demonstrate the huge force available to us and operative within us. The terms for rule, authority, power, dominion and names could allude to the Judaist tendency to elevate the worship of Angels, and to consider some "names to be named" as greater even than Messiah. Recall how the Lord had to demonstrate that David considered Messiah to be his "lord" (Lk. 20:44), because the Jews considered the "son of David" to be less than David, and certainly inferior to Moses. This would explain why the name of the risen Lord Jesus is to be understood as greater than any name in the world which is to come, i.e. the Kingdom age.

1:22 *And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to us to be head over all things in the church-* The Lord's exaltation means that we are to be subject to Him. The Lord

Jesus as the head of the body is going to as it were fill His body with His Spirit and direction. For the context here is of the transforming gift of the Spirit to those who are "in" the body of Christ.

The body of Christ, the ecclesia, is one form of the personal self-revelation of the person of the Lord Jesus. We don't only and solely receive His self-revelation through accepting dogma or doctrine. It comes to us also through the way He mediates His personality to us, His self-revelation, through His Spirit in His body. His fullness is to be found in the church, His body- He fills "all [believers / members of the church] in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). I take this to mean that the fullness of His personal character, person, spirit, truth... is to be found in His body on earth, i.e. the community of believers. Each of them manifest a different aspect of Him. This is the Biblical "unity of the spirit"- whereby the body of Jesus reveals Him consistently, as a unity, thus binding together all who share that same one spirit of Christ. This is the way to unity- not enforcing intellectual assent to dogmatic propositions.

All things were put under the Lord's feet because of His exaltation (Eph. 1:22); but now we see not yet all things put under Him (Heb. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). The "all things" matches with Col. 1:18 speaking of the Lord being placed over the church. We are the "all things". The great commission has the same thought sequence- because of the Lord's exaltation, therefore we must go and tell all men and bring them into subjection to the exalted Christ. In prospect His body is "all in all" (Eph. 1:23), but the "all in all" phase will only be realized in practice at the end of the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:28). It is for us to grasp the height of His exaltation and the fact that it means that potentially, all men, all of existence, is under Him. And then we respond to this by going out and seeking to bring all men under Him.

1:23 *Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all*- See on :22. The 'filling' of the Lord's body is by His Spirit; the gift of His Spirit "in the inner man" is what enables Him to fill His body with all God's fullness (Eph. 3:16,19). We note the connection between the Spirit gift and being filled in Eph. 4:10; 5:18.

There is a clear connection between this idea of the fullness of God, and Ex. 34:6, where God proclaims His Name to be "Yahweh, a God *full* of compassion", grace and His other characteristics (see R.V.). So by bearing God's Name, we have His fullness counted to us; and the filling of the Spirit makes us in practice what we are by status. As Christ had the fullness of God dwelling in Him in a bodily form (Col. 2:9), so the church, as the body of Christ, *is* (Christ's) body, the fullness of him (God) that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). So you see the intensity of our unity; we *are* the very body of Christ, He exists in and through us (although of course He still has a separate personality). Likewise, the *fullness* of God is in Christ and thereby in us. We are not just one part of God's interest, our salvation is not just one of His many hobbies, as it were. He only has one beloved Son; He was human and born on this earth for *our* salvation. The fullness of God, even though we scarcely begin to comprehend it, dwelt fully in Christ, and is counted to us. We really should have a sense of wonder, real wonder, at the greatness of our calling. See on Eph. 3:19.

The church is "His body, the fullness of Him (God) that fills all in all". Thus we are "*the*" fullness of God and Christ. "We beheld His glory... full of grace and truth (alluding to Ex. 34)... and of His fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:14,16). The word "fills" in Eph. 1:23 is the same as 'complete' in Col. 2:9,10: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are *complete* ["filled"] in Him". Christ is filled with God's fullness of the righteous attributes of glory, and in Christ we are also filled by the Spirit of Christ. Seeing that we are the body of Christ it follows that the ecclesia *in toto* manifests the fulness of Christ's and therefore God's glory, through each of us manifesting a slightly different aspect of God's

glorious character to perfection. Thus Peter reasons that the quicker the ecclesia spiritually develops, manifesting those attributes, the earlier Christ can return (2 Pet. 3:11-15). See on Phil. 1:11.

The body of Christ is His "fullness" through which He fills us all. I take this to mean that each member of the body of Christ manifests something unique about Jesus, so that between us, we show all of Christ to the world- e.g. one may reveal His patience, another His zeal, etc. By limiting our definition of the body of Christ, we limit our perception and experience of Him; and thus we limit the extent we are filled with His fullness, if we refuse to accept that which every member of the body supplies to us, in order that we might grow up in Him (Eph. 4:16). God will be "all in all" through the full expression of His Name. But Eph. 1:23 says that right now, all the fullness of God fills "all in all" in the church; in other words we should now be experiencing something of that total unity which will then be physically manifest throughout all creation.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *You once were dead in the trespasses and sins-* We were spiritually dead and have now been resurrected, in spiritual terms, made alive in Christ (:5). This is indeed an allusion to baptism, but the connection is to the preceding argument in 1:19,20- that the same Spirit which raised the Lord Jesus is mightily at work within us, internally transforming us into His image (as taught in Rom. 8:11). There is an allusion here to the LXX of Is. 57:4, and we shall find allusions to that part of Isaiah throughout this section : :1= 57:4; :12 "no hope"= 56:10; :2=57:5; :14=57:19; :5=57:10 (RV) ;:19 = 56:1; :6 = 57:15; :21 = 56:7; :12 = 56:7; :19 =56:6 (RV) ;:22 = 57:15. The Isaiah references are to the possibility of revival at the time of the restoration from Babylon, and also at the time of Hezekiah. The returned exiles could have entered the new covenant and received the working of the Spirit to transform them into God's new people, according to Jer. 31 and Ezekiel 34-37. But they refused. And so the new covenant community, those baptized into Jesus and partaking in the new covenant, therefore have the same promises of Spirit-led restoration and transformation. Judah dead in sins without hope could indeed have been revived by the Spirit; but they preferred to remain in spiritually dead Babylon. And so the promises were fulfilled but with a somewhat altered focus- in that they were transferred to those who were baptized into the Lord Jesus in New Testament / covenant times.

2:2 *In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, according to the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience-* The transformation of the believer from dead in sins to alive in Christ is by his Spirit. But this Spirit is antithetical to the spirit of the world, whereby sin and selfishness are the spirit which shapes all thought and action.

"The prince of the power of the air" is one of the references in Ephesians which specifically refers to problems in the Ephesus area. This clearly alludes to the mythological concepts of Zoroaster – the kind of thing which Paul's readers once believed. Paul says that they once lived under "the prince of the power of the air". In the same verse, Paul defines this as "the spirit (attitude of mind) that... works" in the natural man. Previously they had believed in the pagan concept of a heavenly spirit-prince; now Paul makes the point that actually the power which they were formally subject to was that of their own evil mind. Thus the pagan idea is alluded to and spoken of, without specifically rebuking it, whilst showing the truth concerning sin.

But Paul re-casts the "prince of the air" as essentially referring to the life of the flesh, and thereby makes his specific allusion to a local problem in Asia relevant to all believers (see on :1). "Walking" (i.e. living) according to the prince of the power of the air, is defined in :3 as living according to the lust of our fleshly mind. The "lusts of our flesh" come from within us (Mk. 7:21–23; James 1:14) not from anything outside of us. "The prince" is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience". The spirit frequently refers to an attitude of mind (e.g. Dt. 2:30; Prov. 25:28; Is. 54:6; 61:3; Ez. 18:31; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 2:40; 2 Cor. 2:13; 12:18; Eph. 4:23). This is confirmed by :3 – such peoples' lives are controlled by "fulfilling the lusts of our flesh (which come from our heart – James 1:14), fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind". Fleshly people do not allow their lives to be controlled by a physical "prince" outside of them, but by following their fleshly desires which are internal to their minds. A physical being cannot exist as a "spirit" in the sense of an intangible essence. A spirit does not have flesh and bones, i.e. a physical body (Lk. 24:39); therefore because "the prince" is a "spirit", this must be a figurative expression, rather than referring to a physical being. The "spirit" or attitude of mind is a figurative prince, as sin is a figurative paymaster (Rom. 6:23). This passage (and :11) speaks of their former Gentile lives. 1 Pet. 4:3 speaks of life before conversion as: "In the time past we wrought the will of the Gentiles... we walked in *lusts*". Their own flesh was their "prince". Thus walking according to the prince of the air is parallel with walking in the flesh (:11). The more common antithesis to walking in spirit is walking after the *flesh* – here termed "the course of this world". George Lamsa, a native speaker of Aramaic, understands "the prince of the power of the air" to be the dynamic equivalent of the Arabic / Aramaic *resh shultana*, which he claims would've been understood as meaning simply 'the head of the government', with no intended reference to the literal air (George Lamsa, *New Testament Light* (San Francisco: Harper & Row) p. 24). So the allusion could be to how they had lived under Roman or Jewish spiritual domination, which they were now liberated from in Christ.

Athanasius argued that the death of Jesus cleansed the air where the demons / fallen angels now live, and therefore physically opened up a way for [supposed] immortal souls to find a way into Heaven (See Nathan K. Ng, *The Spirituality of Athanasius* (Bern: Lang, 2000)). Not only was all this unBiblical, it reflects a literalism which reduces God to a being hopelessly bound by physicality. In short, this kind of thinking arose from a basic lack of faith in God as the Almighty, who doesn't need to build bridges over problems which men have created for Him in their own minds. It should be noted that the idea of saying "Bless you!" when someone sneezes derives from Athanasius' idea that demons can become so small that they enter a person from the literal air. This is what happens if we insist that the Devil was thrown out of heaven and some of his angels are still in the literal air – it's literalism gone wrong.

Verse 1 defines the "you" as the believers who had formerly been dead in sins. Verses 2 and 3 then express the reason for this in four parallel ways:

- (a) "...you walked according to the course of this world"
- (b) "...according to the prince of the power of the air"
- (c) "...the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience"
- (d) "...were by nature the children of wrath".

The "whole world lays in wickedness (1 Jn. 5:19). "The children of disobedience" show this by their lives "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (vv. 1,3). Thus "the prince of the power of the air" is re-cast as our evil, fleshly

mind, i.e. the real Devil. There are many links between Ephesians and Colossians. One of the clearest is between these verses and Colossians 3:3–7. Colossians 3:3 speaks of us having died to sin as Ephesians 2:1 does. Verses 5–7 amplify what are “the lusts of the flesh” which “the children of disobedience” fulfil: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which you also walked some time, when you walked in them”. These things of v. 5 are “the works of the flesh” mentioned in Galatians 5:19. These things come from within us, not from anything outside (Mk. 7:21–23). Therefore the prince of the power of the air, which causes these things, is again redefined as our evil desires.

2:3 Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by our natural condition destined to be children of God’s wrath, even as the others- See on :2. The contrast drawn in this section is between how believers were before baptism, and the status they are now in. The “we” here are different to “the others”, the world generally. Our status as being the children of wrath has now been changed, as we no longer live in the lusts of our flesh. So it would be wrong to think that “children of wrath” refers to some natural condition we are born into by nature and can only get out of by ceasing to be human. “Children of...” is a Hebraism that doesn't refer to natural birth as children. The children of peace or of a town mean the people associated with that thing or place. So “children of wrath” doesn't mean we are born into a situation where God is as it were mad with us. The wrath of God is not upon every fetus conceived or baby born. His wrath refers to His condemnation of sin actually committed in thought or deed. But we are not now related to that, since we are now in Christ with His status and righteousness counted to us. We are not sinners by nature; for all we posit about human nature we state about the Lord Jesus, who was of our nature, and was all the same holy and undefiled before God in His life.

We don’t sense enough, perhaps, that this world is not just passively disinterested in God. All outside of Christ are active enemies towards Him, subjects of God’s wrath (Eph. 2:3,15). This isn’t how we tend to see the world around us. But to the first century believer, it was clearly so. The greatness of the gulf that divides was clearly felt. Our world is (overall) more tolerant than it has ever been; but let’s not forget that the ruling powers are ‘satan’, an embodiment of the flesh. All around is subtly articulated enmity against true spirituality and the cause of Christ. The more we see that, the more we will realise how close we are to each other who are the other side of the great divide, “in Christ” along with us. What differences of emphasis and personality there may be between us we will more naturally overlook. The world is therefore seen by God as actively sinful. For the man who does not accept salvation in Christ, “the wrath of God *abideth* on him” (Jn. 3:36)- it isn't lifted. We are therefore subject to the wrath of God until baptism (Eph. 2:3). It doesn't seem or feel like this. And yet God experiences this sense of anger with sin, albeit unexpressed to human eyes. But it need not “abide” on us, we need not remain by nature the children of wrath- for we can come into Christ. The theme of God's wrath is not to be overlooked nor subconsciously dismissed. And we are to follow the amazing logic in these verses- that it is God who saves us from God's wrath. God saves us from God; and so we have a window into His internal conflict between the pole of His necessary hatred of sin, and yet on the other pole, His amazing love and desire to save sinners. His love is “in Christ” as Paul makes clear- and nothing shall separate we who believe from that love of God for us which is in Christ. It was worked out in that “God so [in this

way] loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" that we should not perish but live for ever (Jn. 3:16). God's love is not, therefore, a vague general fuzzy feeling towards the world. It is focused in His saving purpose in His Son's death. If we spurn that, we remain under His wrath. Job several times basically asks God to not be so intense, to give him a break, to not have these extremes of wrath at one end and amazing grace at the other. But this is how He is, and our relationship with Him is likewise to be passionate and intense.

'Salvation' implies saving from something; we are saved from sin, from death, and from the wrath of God. For the wrath of God is real, and ends in total death for sinners. It could not be further from the truth that the Old Testament reveals an angry God in contrast to the New Testament. Consider the teaching of the New Testament alone: "flee from the wrath to come... he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness... [you] treasure up unto yourself wrath on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God... being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him... avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto God's wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord... For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience... to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (Mt. 3:7; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 5:9; 12:19; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10). Revelation speaks repeatedly of the outpouring of God's wrath at the last day (Rev. 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15 "They said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?... Your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged... The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation... cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God... the seven last plagues... in them is filled up the wrath of God... seven golden vials full of the wrath of God... pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth... the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath... the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God").

2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, for the sake of His great love with which He loved us- God's great love is exhibited in the manner in which He intervened in our lives whilst we were still sinners (:5). He didn't notice our righteousness and respond accordingly. His love was and is the way He takes the initiative to intervene and call. And this is the love we are to emulate in all areas of life; from radical forgiveness of the impenitent to grace in family squabbles to taking the initiative to present the call of God's grace to those in the world who were not even looking for it. The same word for "riches" is used in Rom. 2:4 of how God's rich mercy is shown in Him leading us to repentance; taking the initiative to call the impenitent and unrighteous. But that wealth of mercy can be "despised" if we refuse to respond. Romans goes on to speak of the "riches" of grace manifest in God's sovereign calling of us, when not all have been called (Rom. 9:23; 11:12,33). God's intervention in our lives is His grace and the richness of His mercy; that He simply wants *me* to be saved. All the endless questions about "And what about all the others?" remain as they do, with various possible responses; but they are not to take us away from the riches of His mercy in calling us. In this sense, love is taking the initiative, intervention by grace and not in response to goodness. And we are to reflect it. "We are saved from wrath through Him", Paul elsewhere writes; and more specifically, through the cross. This was "His great love

with which He loved us". God loved the world in this way, "so loved", in that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16). The love of God is "in Christ".

2:5 Even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved!)- See on :4. We were made alive when we were dead. A dead person can do nothing. In this God's grace is revealed in connection with our salvation. The reference is to baptism, but 'making alive' is also speaking of the way in which God's Spirit is the vehicle for His grace in provoking new spiritual life and enlivening us spiritually. It is the Lord Jesus through His Spirit who makes us alive (Jn. 5:21; 6:63). We must choose to be baptized, we are not merely manipulated, but on the other hand, it is also His Spirit which made us alive. Hence Rom. 6 says that we were buried with Him in baptism. A dead man cannot bury himself. The force of the figure of burial is that this was done to us. It is the Spirit of Jesus in us right now which makes us alive and shall be the same principle by which are mortal bodies are changed to immortal at the last day (Rom. 8:11). The Lord Jesus is a Spirit which makes alive (1 Cor. 15:53), right now, and not only at the last day. It is the Spirit which 'makes us alive' (2 Cor. 3:6 s.w.). As made clear in Romans 8, so here- the enlivening work of the Spirit is what gives us life spiritually, and is the parade example of God's grace. But the Spirit doesn't just zap an unbeliever and make them believe regardless. We who were dead in sins were "quickened together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5 AV). If we believe in Christ Jesus' resurrection, we will therefore repent, confess our sins and know His forgiveness. Thus believing in His raising and making confession of sin are bracketed together in Rom. 10:9,10, as both being essential in gaining salvation.

2:6 And raised us up with him; and in Christ Jesus, has made us sit with him in the heavens- Again the initiative and power is with Him. We were raised up, just as we were buried with Him in baptism (see on :5). Burial and resurrection require these things to be done to us. Baptism is therefore a submission to His process. The two stages of resurrection are laboured; we were made alive with Him (:5), and raised up with Him. And just as He is in Heaven as a result of the ascension, so are we, in spiritual terms. All that is true of Him becomes true of us if we are "in Christ Jesus". The term "Christ [Messiah] Jesus" may be a reminder that the Jewish Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth- another hint that as in every church founded by Paul, there was Jewish opposition to his work, and so he addresses Gentiles in terms appropriate to Judaism.

Our difficulty in believing 'we will be there' is perhaps related to our difficulty in believing that in prospect, we 'are there' right now, through being "in Christ". This most basic truth, that we are "in Christ" through baptism, carries with it very challenging implications. We are well familiar with Paul's reasoning in Romans 6, that through being immersed in water at baptism, we share in the Lord's death and resurrection. As He rose from the dead, so we rise from the waters of baptism. But what happened to Him next? He ascended to Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God in glory. And each of those stages is true of us right now. We are now in 'the heavenlies'; and not only so, but we *sit together* there with Christ. And He now sits upon His throne of glory. Even now we in a sense sit with Him in His Heavenly throne, even though in another sense this is a future thing we await (Lk. 22:30; Rev. 3:21). No wonder Paul goes on to make a profound comment: "That in the ages to come [the aions of future eternity], He might show [Gk.- to indicate by words or act] the exceeding riches of his grace [which was shown through] his kindness toward us through Christ". Throughout the ages of eternity, God will

demonstrate how pure and wonderful His grace was to us in the few brief years of this life- in that, He will demonstrate, He counted us *right now in our mortality* as having resurrected, ascended to Heaven, and reigning / sitting with Christ in glory. The wonder of what we are experiencing now, the height of our present position, is something that will be marvelled at throughout eternity as an expression of God's grace and kindness. And we will be the eternally living witnesses to it. And we can start that witness right now.

So often does Paul speak of life "in Christ". We become "in Christ" by entering into the body of Christ by baptism; yet the "body of Christ" refers to the body of believers. A fair case can be made for interpreting Paul's phrase "in Christ" as very often having some reference to life in the community of believers. "In Christ" appears to be often a shorthand way of saying "in the body of Christ". It's because we are of "the same body" that we are sharers in all that is "in Christ" - whatever is true of Him becomes true of us. If He is the seed of Abraham, then so we are we, etc. (Eph. 3:6; Gal. 3:27-29). Salvation was "given *us* in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:9) as a community, just as Israel were saved as a body, "the body of Moses", when they were baptized at the Red Sea. This is why we usually read about "you" plural as being "in Christ", rather than of an individual alone being "in Christ". *We* were created "in Christ" (Eph. 2:10); "*all you* that are in Christ" (1 Pet. 5:14); *you* are now *all* made near "in Christ" (Eph. 2:13); *we* are in heavenly places "*together... in Christ*" (Eph. 2:6); *all* God's children are gathered *together in one* "in Christ" (Eph. 1:10; Gal. 3:28). God's whole purpose is "in Christ" (Eph. 3:11); His plan to save us was through our joining a community, the body of Christ, headed up in the person of Jesus. It can't really be so, therefore, that a believer can live "in Christ" with no association with the rest of the body of Christ. This is how important fellowship is

2:7 His intention was that throughout the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus- This is mind-blowing. We will spend eternity being "shown" the riches of His grace and kindness which we have right now received in Christ. We begin that journey of eternal appreciation right now. The tragedy is that this is His "intention" because so many fail to want to understand it. We note "intention"; for God will never force. His passionate desire is to lavish His grace upon us eternally; but many ignore or resist His love. The "will" of God should be read more as His "intention", rather than a determinate force which shall make itself come true one way or another in the life of a person. That is the way of Islam, but it is not the God revealed in Christ.

Just as God must've 'thought out' His wonderful plan of lavishing grace upon us [for 'the word' existed first and then 'became flesh'], we too will need to take time to think out our plans for showing grace to others. Eph. 2:5-8 speaks of God working with us now, so that He can lavish His grace upon us for eternity. This is what He is all about. And it's what we should be all about; taking a Divine joy in forgiving, being generous, caring, showing grace. God simply loves lavishing grace; there is no response to human goodness as deserving it. And so our showing of grace should be likewise. Being kind and gracious for the sake of it, rather than as some calculated response to behaviour.

2:8 For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift from God- This is grace indeed. In the same way as repentance is given as a gift of the Spirit (Acts 3:25,26), so is faith. As noted on :5, we were made alive whilst we were dead, when we could do nothing. Faith in this grace is also

a gift. It was God's psychological intervention in our lives and thinking which gave it to us, a setting up of situation and circumstance which resulted in our believing.

But this is not to say that human response is totally not required. If we believe and grasp the wonder of it all, we cannot be passive. Time and again, faith and works are bracketed together. Abraham was justified by faith, Paul argues in Romans; and by works, says James. Even within Genesis, his faith was counted for righteousness in Gen. 15:6; but Gen. 22:15-18 stress that because he had "done this thing" and been obedient, thereby was he justified. The Centurion meekly said to the Lord: "I am not worthy... neither thought I myself worthy"; but his *faith*, not his humility [as we might have expected] was commended by the Lord. That faith brought forth humility; just as John's letters see faith and love as parallel. The woman who washed the Lord's feet was likewise commended for her 'faith', although her actions were surely acts of devotion. But the Lord's analysis cut through to the essence that lay behind them: faith. There is a beauty to all this, in that salvation is by faith that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). And therefore Hab. 2:4 says that living by faith is the antithesis of being proud. The life of faith, trusting thereby in grace, is a life of humility. All the fruits of the Spirit thereby come together. In this sense, salvation is not by works. But if we can comprehend something of the purity of that grace, of God's willingness to save us regardless of our works; then we will *believe* it. And if we believe it, we will live a life of active and humble *working* for the Lord, not that we might be saved, but in thankful faith and gratitude for the magnitude of our experience of a grace, the height and depth of which, unfathomed, no man knows. We will "live", i.e. work through life, by faith (Hab. 2:4). If we truly accept God's ways, then we will walk in them; to not walk in them is to reject them (Ez. 5:6). This ultimately is the importance of doctrine.

2:9 *It is not of works, that no one should boast*- As noted on :8, faith cannot be passive; it will issue in works. Salvation is not "of works" but works are not irrelevant. But those works are not the basis of our salvation. And Paul emphasizes this. For both Judaism and paganism considered works as the basis for salvation. The good news of salvation without works is unique to true Christianity. The connections with Romans continue here, in that boasting was associated with Jewish boasting in legalistic obedience (Rom. 2:17,23). Our boasting instead is in our sure hope of salvation by grace through the cross of the Lord Jesus. Seeing Paul would boast in nothing but the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14), we are to read his other references to glorying only in the Lord [Jesus] as meaning specifically glorying in His victorious death for me (1 Cor. 1:31; Phil. 3:3). We boast not in our works, but in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), a word which refers to both moral and physical weakness. And so we also boast in nothing but the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14), and thereby we boast in sure Hope of the glory of God, boasting "in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (s.w. Rom. 5:2,11). This idea of glorying / boasting is thus a common theme with Paul. This is the life of glory and victory- in Him, and not of ourselves, boasting that our lack of achievement, our weakness, our failure, has been met in Him who was crucified in weakness, so that we may be "weak in Him".

2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them*- Having said that salvation is not by works, we are told that the worker is God, the potter as it were working on us the clay. Baptism into Christ is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), which means that through the Spirit, He will be working on us with hopes and expectations of our

response to His grace in specific ways. Man is never better than when working at what is clearly his calling and empowered by God in doing so. He is the worker, but we are to walk in good works- again the idea is of surrender to Him. Those good works are something we "walk in". Not a few flashes of devotion but a way of life, working for Him. We need to pray that God will reveal to us what are those specific works which He has prepared for us to do- and make them the thrust of our lives. For it's unlikely that His intention and hope was that we should get qualified, climb the career ladder, improve our homes, go up the ladder of cars, holiday homes and expensive gadgets... and die in a comfortable nursing home leaving what was left over to our kids or someone else as a kind of short cut towards that same sad life we thought we did so well in. The only other time the Greek word for "workmanship" occurs is in the enigmatic Rom. 1:20- and I have noted so far many connections with the early chapters of Romans. There we learn that God's invisible principles are made known to the Gentile world by "the things that are made". Those "things" are "His workmanship"- us. Entry into Christ, therefore, is a beginning and not an end. Nor is it merely an assent to the correctness of a set of theological truths. Rather is it an opening of ourselves to His workmanship upon us, and working for Him.

"Beforehand prepared" suggests we were prepared for the performing of our good works from a specific beginning point. And that surely was at 'the beginning'. Our entire genetic history, the nature of our early childhood experiences and surrounding family, was prepared so that we would be born with the wiring required to do the works intended. To turn away from those works, through disinterest, laziness, willful lack of perception, self absorption... is to waste so much. We on our side must be prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21); "be eagerly ready [s.w. prepared] unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1). We are to abound in good works (s.w.) because of God's abounding grace to us (2 Cor. 9:8). The good works are therefore a way of life and not some occasional good charitable deeds. We will be 'established' in this life of good works (2 Thess. 2:17); we are to "follow every good work" (1 Tim. 5:10), a strange phrase until we understand that the good works were prepared for us ahead of time, and we are to follow after them. We are to be on the look out, prepared, for those good works.

We were "beforehand prepared to glory" (Rom. 2:10, the only other usage of the Greek word). We were intended for salvation, the Kingdom and our place at the Messianic wedding banquet were "prepared" (a related word; Mt. 22:4; 25:34). But not all shall be saved, because they have wasted God's intention and not responded to it. We note the word "intention" in :7. By sitting at the Lord's table now we show our willingness to go along with His intention that we shall sit there eternally. We note the usage of the same word, repeatedly, about how the last supper [breaking of bread] was "prepared" ("Where will you have us *prepare* for you the Passover to eat?... he will show you a large upper room *prepared* and ready; there *prepare* it for us. And the disciples went into the city and found as he had said to them. And they *prepared* the Passover", Mk. 14:12,15,16). The first breaking of bread was prepared for them ahead of time [just as our good works were "beforehand prepared"], although they had to prepare it. This all speaks of how our place at the final Messianic banquet is prepared for us, but we must accept the invitation; and we show that by sitting at the banquet now.

2:11 *Wherefore remember, that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by those called Circumcision (which is in the flesh and made with hands)-* The reference to circumcision as being "made with hands" connects with the preceding statement that we are not saved by works [what is done with hands] but

we are instead the work of God (:10). Instead of circumcision of the flesh, done with human hands, we have God working upon our most intimate and personal inner being by His transforming Spirit. The connection is again to Romans: "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:29). In this sense "we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

This sounds as if the audience of "Ephesians" was Gentile. There were also Jews in the church at Ephesus. But there are good reasons to think that this letter was not specifically written to the church at Ephesus. It lacks any visible connection with the events there. I tend to agree with the take of William Barclay: "We believe that Ephesians was not in fact written to any one church, but was a circular letter to all Paul's Asian churches. Let us look again at Col.4:16. He writes: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church at Laodicea; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea." Paul does not say that the Colossians must read the epistle to Laodicea; they must read the epistle from Laodicea. It is as if Paul said: "There is a letter circulating; at the present moment it has reached Laodicea; when it is sent on to you from Laodicea be sure to read it." That sounds very like as if there was a letter circulating among the Asian churches... and we believe that letter was Ephesians". This would explain the lack of personal greetings in the letter. There is some evidence that the letter was originally called the epistle to the Laodiceans. This would mean that Eph. 1:1 "to the saints that are at Ephesus" simply refers to the circular letter being sent to them at this point. The strong similarities with Colossians suggest that that letter was reworked by Paul, under inspiration, into this circular general letter which we have as 'Ephesians'.

2:12 *You were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and living without God in the world-* This is clear evidence that not all religious roads lead to the true God. Apart from Christ, we have no hope and are without [relationship with] God. Separation or [Gk.] distance from Christ is parallel with alienation from the community of "Israel", the people of God. Paul will go on to demonstrate that therefore connection with Christ is connection with the community of believers. The covenants of promise are clearly understood by Paul as being the basis of the Christian Gospel. For the promises to Abraham are presented by him in Romans as being the foundation of the new covenant or testament. The "hope" in Christ is therefore the hope of Israel, salvation in the Messiah Jesus. How hard it would be for Roman citizens, or those who aspired to it, to realize that the highest honour was to be part of "the commonwealth of Israel", that pokey, undeveloped, despised corner of the great Roman empire. And the call of Christ to middle class modern citizens is just as radical.

2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ-* The allusion is to Is. 57:19 LXX: "Peace upon peace [Biblical "peace" often refers to forgiveness and peace with God] to them that are far off, and to them that are nigh: and the Lord has said, I will heal them". Judaism spoke of Gentile converts as coming near when they became proselytes. The idea of being made near continues the thought of :12, that we were once separate, at a distance, from both the Lord Jesus and from the community of God's people. Being made near therefore speaks not only of connection with the Lord Jesus, but also with the community of "Israel", God's people, who are in Him.

2:14 *For he himself is our peace*- "Peace" continues the allusion to Is. 57:19 (see on :13). The Lord Jesus was our peace in the sense He is the source of our peace, our peace offering. The enmity ["hostility"] is the 'alienation' from the community of Israel spoken of in :12, physically manifest in the stone dividing wall between the court of the Gentiles and the temple proper. The first century unity between Jew and Gentile must have been especially impressive. Philo records of Jamnia: "There lived a mixed population, the majority of them Jews but the rest a number of foreigners who had nested there as vermin from neighbouring territories". And there are many other such references to the bitter hatred between them. This "enmity" (AV) between them was taken away for those who were in Christ (Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). It must have made a startling and arresting witness. And yet sadly, it didn't continue; the old tensions and feelings rent apart that unity. The issues facing the body of Christ today are not simply Jew : Gentile tensions; there are enmities and oppositions between groups and persons which are only resolvable by common membership in the body of Christ.

The offerer put his hand on the head of the animal, thereby associating himself with it. In a sense, the animal therefore represented the offerer. But it had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 3:1), and to produce a "sweet savour" when burnt (Lev. 3:16). But how are we to offer ourselves as an unblemished sacrifice? We are surely each aware of our desperate sinfulness. The answer is in the fact that the language of the peace offering sacrifice is applied to Jesus. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), our peace offering by metonymy (in the same way as Christ was made "sin" for us, i.e. a sin offering). He is the unblemished animal (1 Pet. 1:19), and if we are in Christ, we too will be counted as being without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27). We ought to know whether we are in Christ. If we are, we will be seen by God as just as pure as He is. See on Eph. 5:2. We thereby become mediators of peace to all manner of divided groups and persons.

Who has made us one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility- Our peace with God is manifest in peace between us and others, at least on our side. The dividing wall refers to the various walls in the temple. William Barclay summarizes: "The Temple consisted of a series of courts, each one a little higher than the one that went before, with the Temple itself in the inmost of the courts. First there was the Court of the Gentiles; then the Court of the Women; then the Court of the Israelites; then the Court of the Priests; and finally the Holy Place itself". The division between Jew and Gentile, between men and women, priests and non-priests [for now we are all priests] has been taken down. Because the wall between God and man, His holiness and our unholiness, has been taken down in Christ. But by saying "in Christ", I mean specifically through sustained meditation upon what the cross achieved. For it is He as the sacrificed peace offering which creates this peace; :13 is specific that we are made near, no longer divided, by the Lord's blood. It was in His flesh, His crucified body, that the enmity was taken away (:15). His flesh made peace (:15)- the offering of His flesh was the peace offering. We note as often in Paul's writings that the ideas of the Lord's body and blood occur in close proximity; possibly because his writings were based upon sermons first preached at breaking of bread meetings. This is why it is nothing less than tragic that the bread and wine which commemorates that victory has become the cause of division rather than unity.

2:15- see on Lk. 11:22; Heb. 2:14.

Having abolished in the flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of the two one new man, making peace- The source of alienation between Jew and Gentile was the Law, but the thought here goes far beyond that. It was human sin, transgression of God's commandments, which created alienation between God and man. This too has been removed, with the result that connection with the Father and Son is likewise connection between all others who are in Christ, i.e. the community of God's people, "Israel". But that unity has to be felt and expressed by us in practice. Hence Paul uses the fact that we are all "in Christ" as the basis of His appeal for true unity amongst the believers- with all the patience, forbearing etc. which this involves. By baptism into Christ, we are baptized into the same body of Christ as many others (Rom. 12:5). Therefore we "sit together... in Christ" (Eph. 2:6; 1:10). He has made in Himself one new man, so making peace between all those in Him (Eph. 2:15). This is why division between those in Christ is ultimately an impossibility. Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:10).

The body of Christ *is* Christ; the members of that body between them reflect every aspect of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:15,16). We may each be given a different aspect to reflect, and groups of believers in different historical periods may have been focused on different aspects, but the end result is that at the second coming, the body of believers will have reflected Christ fully. We were redeemed in one body by the cross; and *therefore*, Paul reasons, we are "*fellowcitizens* with [*all*] the saints, and of [*all*] the household of God... in whom *all* the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded *together* for an habitation of God" (Eph. 2:16-22). Christ died for all of us in the one body, and therefore we who benefit from this are built up *together* into a temple in which God will eternally dwell. To refuse fellowship to other stones of the temple is surely a denial that they are part of that one body which was redeemed by the cross. He died to make us all one, to abolish all that humanly might keep us apart, "for to make in himself one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:13-15). To uphold division and disharmony within the "one new man" is well nigh a blasphemy against the body and blood of the Lord. From the Lord's pierced side came His bride, after the pattern of Eve from Adam, through the blood (memorial meeting?) and water (baptism?). The creation of the one body was a direct result of His death. The Greek word for "fellowship", *koinonia*, is used outside the New Testament to refer to peoples' joint sharing of a common property. We are "in fellowship" with each other by reason of our relation to a greater whole in which we have a part. And that 'property', the greater whole, is the person and work of the Lord Jesus- for our fellowship is "in Him". This background of the word shows that it's inappropriate to claim to have 'withdrawn fellowship' from anyone who is in Christ. They are joint sharers in Christ just as much as we are- so we cannot tell them that they don't share *koinonia* with us. To say that is to judge either them or ourselves to be not sharing in Christ- and according to the Lord's plain teaching, any such judgment will lead to our condemnation. It is the Lord's body, His work, and He invites who He wishes to have *koinonia* in Him. It's not for us to claim that *we* have withdrawn fellowship from anyone who has *koinonia* in Him.

2:16 *And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby having slain the enmity-* The enmity between God and man has been dealt with in Christ, and this means that likewise the natural enmity between persons has likewise been ended for all those in Christ. Reconciliation with our separated brethren

therefore can be achieved; because potentially the enmity is slain, we are already reconciled in one body by the cross. It's for us to live this out in practice. We can move away from the tribal, jungle mentality that 'my enemy's friend is my enemy' - if we see and believe how God loves them too as His dear children. The Lord Jesus reconciled all true believers unto God "in one body by the cross". All who are reconciled by the Lord's sacrifice are therefore in the one body, and therefore we have a duty to fellowship with others in the one body. If we refuse to do this, we in some way attempt to nullify the aim of the cross. He died in the way that He did in order that the love which He had showed might be manifested between us (Jn. 17:26). To break apart the body is to undo the work of the cross.

2:17 And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near- He could remind the Ephesians that Christ personally "came and preached peace to you" after His resurrection, when it was in fact Paul who did this, motivated as he was by the resurrection of Christ. Paul, like us, was therefore the manifestation of the Lord Jesus when he preached Him. As the Lord is the light of the world, so we are the light of the world. All that is true of Him becomes true of those "in Christ" and we are to act accordingly. Those considered by Judaism 'far' [Gentiles] and 'near' [Jews] all needed the good news of peace preached to them. The idea of the Lord Jesus coming and preaching to people is found also in 1 Pet. 3:19 (see note there). The language of going, coming or moving is often used in relation to the preaching of a person – e.g. Mt. 9:13: "*but go* and learn what that means". The Lord didn't intend that they literally went away somewhere. Likewise Dan. 12:4 and Hab. 2:2 bid those who understand God's word to "run" – not literally, but in response to the word preached. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so – but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time.

2:18 For through him we have our joint access in one Spirit to the Father- The extent of our peace with God is that we have access to the Father in the Spirit. There is only one Spirit- not one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. 1 Pet. 3:18 has a connected idea; and we noted on :17 that 1 Pet. 3:19 is connected also to this passage: "Christ once suffered for sins... that He might bring us [s.w. "have access"] to God [on account of having been] put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit". We too have been made alive with Him by the Spirit (see on :5). "To the Father" , *pros* the Father, is a phrase used about the status and place of the ascended Lord Jesus now (Jn. 13:1,3; 14:12,28; 16:10,16,28; 17:11; 20:17; 1 Jn. 2:1). Those references in John are largely in the context of the Comforter, the gift of the Spirit, enabling us to be *pros* the Father as the Lord Jesus now is. Or as Ephesians 2 has put it, we died, rose and ascended to Heaven with the Lord Jesus if we are in Him. This access to God is for both Jew and Gentile. We are both brought to the same place, in the Father's presence in Heaven, by the work of the Spirit which we received because we are in Christ. This of itself should unite us in our earthly relationships. Paul goes on to say that he prays *pros* the Father (Eph. 3:14).

2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and pilgrims, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God- We who were "strangers" have

been accepted; and this in practice should motivate us to accept "strangers" (Mt. 25:35,38 s.w.). The Lord's crucifixion led to "strangers" being able to be buried within Jerusalem (Mt. 27:7 s.w.). In a sense we are "strangers and pilgrims" to the surrounding world (Heb. 11:13). But not to God. In first century society, there was a strong sense of identity based upon geographical origin. To sacrifice this for the sake of an abstract association with the citizenship of God's people, "Israel" (:12), was no small thing. And it is no less radical for us- to exchange our sense of identity and social security for association with the still immature community of "Israel". Paul again urges them to see their connection with God as a connection also with His family.

The Romans allowed the existence of the autonomous *politaea*, the city-state, so long as within its religion it featured the worship of the Emperor. And yet the NT writers speak of the ecclesia as a city which is independent, defiantly devoted to the worship of the one and only true God (Eph. 2:19; 3:20; Heb. 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21). The writers must have nervously penned those inspired words, knowing the problems it would create. The Spirit of God could have chosen not to so directly challenge this world; and yet there is a chasmic difference between the community of God and the surrounding world, which the New Testament unashamedly triumphs in. The whole basis of this radical separation is the fact that Christ died for us. He died to unite us who believe in what the NT terms "*the unity*", without seeking to further define it (Jn. 11:52; 17:23; Eph. 1:10; 2:14; 4:3). We were reconciled to each other as well as to God "in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). His death unites us in that standing before His cross, all our pettiness disappears, and we are impressed again with the reality that if He so laid down His life for us, so we must lay down our lives for the brethren (1 Jn. 3:16). It really and truly is a case of one for all, and all for one.

2:20 *Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone*- The reference is surely to the New Testament prophets whose inspired utterances formed the New Testament documents, which were the foundation of the new temple of God's people. The Heavenly Jerusalem of the closing visions of Revelation likewise features the apostles as the foundation stones. What was then all so abstract will be turned to visual reality when the Lord returns, and reveals how things really are from God's viewpoint. We are "being built", rather like we are the workmanship of God (:10). The metaphor requires us to allow ourselves to be shaped and put into place within God's wider plan for saving a community. His building is done through other builders (1 Cor. 3:10,12) and through our response to the word of grace which builds us up (Acts 20:32 s.w.). In that sense we build ourselves up (Jude 20) through allowing His building of us.

2:21 *In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord*- The equivalent in Colossians is the statement that we are "grounded and built up in Him" (Col. 2:7). The whole process of preparation, which is what building is largely about, involves being used in cooperation with the other materials in the building. So much of His work with us therefore involves our association and dovetailing with others; and this is exactly the aspect of His work which leads so many to give up. This is exactly why the frictions which are part of church life are all so necessary. To opt out by pushing off into splendid isolation, whilst professing to maintain our faith in Christ, is to miss the purpose of His work with us; and risks us being left out of the final total building. This is not to say we should not quit abusive churches and church situations, but the essence of "being fitted together" must not be ignored. This same word is only used again in 4:16, where in a different metaphor, we are the body parts which cannot exist separately to each other, but are all fitted

together by God's operation in order to function. Solomon built the temple of stone already prepared (1 Kings 6:7); Christ is the builder of the spiritual temple, in which the stones should fit together without strife (Eph. 2:21 alludes to 1 Kings 6:7).

2:22 *In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*- The repeated "in whom" (:21) again suggests that "in Christ" is a terms which often has reference to our collective experience with others who are in His body. As noted on :21, the metaphor emphasizes how we are built "together". The Spirit of God dwells in the assembled temple, and not just in isolated individuals who want nothing to do with the building as a whole. The churches to whom Paul was writing were extremely immature; yet he never once advocates separating from them. Nor does the Lord in His letters to the churches. And it is the perceived immaturity of others in the church which is the main reason why believers push off into isolation. Such impatience and quitting of the building site, as it were, should not be glorified as 'standing up for the Truth'. It is nothing of the sort- just being cranky and selfish, and failing to perceive God's work through the Spirit. God is now dwelling within us, individually and collectively, by the Spirit; but this is in anticipation of how He shall do so eternally. To be without the Spirit now means we shall not be eternally inhabited by it.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3

3:1 *For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles*- The "cause" is that in the preceding verse, 2:22. There, Paul has taught that God is working through His Spirit so that He may indwell His people through the Spirit. When he finishes his parenthesis, he continues praying "For this cause..." that the Spirit will dwell in them richly (:14-19). He wishes to comfort them that his imprisonment was not wasted- it was for "the cause" of the revealed mystery- that Jews and Gentiles are going to be saved, and life for ever. This "mystery" had been hidden [which is what 'mystery' means, not something incomprehensible]. It was now, in the new testament and by the Gospel preachers, revealed. Not "as" it had been revealed in the Old Testament. It was revealed there- there are many statements about the final acceptance of Gentiles and indeed there is an Old Testament doctrine of eternal life. But the simple truths that whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved, shall live eternally, shall have all sin forgiven... these are the truths stated in the New Testament, far clearer than they were revealed in the Old. Paul's talk of a revealed mystery matches John's language of "truth". The simple truth is that we shall be forgiven and live eternally, through the work of the Lord Jesus. And so Paul doesn't want his converts to think that his imprisonment for preaching these things is somehow in vain.

Understanding the way Paul breaks off into another theme and then resumes is the key to understanding some of the more difficult passages in his writings. Here we have a huge bracketed section, as it were: "For this cause I, Paul [*the prisoner of Jesus Christ...*]"; and then there is a parenthesis of 13 verses, until then he resumes: *For this cause I bow my knees*" (Eph. 3:1,14). There are other examples in his letters: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare [*his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say*] at this time his righteousness" (Rom. 3:25,26). "But if I live in the flesh [*this is the fruit of my labour... nevertheless to abide in the flesh*] (this) is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22-24).

"The prisoner" suggests Paul wrote to them from prison in Rome. He feels that his imprisonment was for the sake of the Gentiles receiving the Gospel. And so it was; for it was Jewish fury and jealousy over this issue which led them to get him imprisoned. But we recall that he was sent to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews. So much could

3:2- See on Eph. 4:7.

If indeed you have heard- This doesn't mean that they had not heard of the fact that Paul by God's grace was sharing with the Gentiles the news of salvation. He means rather 'If you have really appreciated', and he will go on in :16-19 to pray that they will be helped by the Spirit towards such an appreciation. 1 Pet. 2:3 has a similar idea: "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious". There was no doubt that they had heard that the Lord was gracious. It was a question of appreciation.

Of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you- Paul surely alludes to how he was the especially commissioned apostle to the Gentiles, with the role of taking God's grace to them. "Dispensation" means 'stewardship'. This may conjure up issues of people with spare cash or in decision making positions. But the truth is that we have all been given God's grace, and are stewards of that grace, as Peter states explicitly in 1 Pet. 4:10: "as each has received a gift, minister it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God". It is in our power to forgive, to share the grace of the Gospel with others. And this knowledge of the Gospel is our power in this world, and our responsibility.

3:3 *As I wrote before in few words: How by revelation was the mystery made known to me-* Perhaps Paul had written a brief, unpreserved letter to the Ephesians before. Or maybe the reference is to Galatians, where he explains that he received the ideas concerning grace to the Gentiles by revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself, and not from men.

God's ways are described as a secret, a mystery; the Hebrew word used in this connection means 'A confidential plan revealed to intimate friends'; and yet they are revealed to the true believers (Am. 3:7-8; Jer. 23: 18,22 AV mg.; Ps. 25:14; Eph. 3:3-6). Therefore the congregation of true believers is called "the secret assembly of the saints"(Ps. 89:7 Heb.).

3:4 *Whereby, as you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ-* This is not boasting as to how much Paul understands; rather he wants them to perceive his understanding and share it as their own. He will go on to pray, as he has done earlier, that their eyes will be opened by the Spirit to perceive the mystery of Christ (1:18; 3:18). His prayers for their enlightenment would therefore mesh with their own reading or hearing of his words to them. The gift of the Spirit to perceive therefore opened their eyes to the real import of the written words; just as the Ethiopian commented that he could not understand the word he was reading without extra help.

3:5 *This 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-* The "other generations" could equally be rendered "other ages", as if Paul recognized the Jewish division of human history into ages. The inclusion of the Gentiles is stated in the Old Testament, both directly and obliquely. But the obvious truth had not been "made known" or "revealed". Just as we noted on :4 that the Spirit would give the Ephesians understanding of the written word so that they 'got it', likewise Paul is saying that all those Old Testament references (which he himself brings to our attention in his

letters) needed "the Spirit" to reveal their (now) obvious meaning. And the Lord worked through the apostles and New Testament prophets to make that revelation- through His Spirit. This is yet more evidence that man does not face off against God over an open Bible alone; the Spirit reveals the meaning at the right time.

3:6 That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel- This is "the mystery of Christ" of :4. "The Gospel" had already been revealed to Abraham, in the form of the promises which clearly implied the acceptance of the Gentiles into His seed (Gal. 3:8). But as noted on :5, this (now) obvious truth had to be revealed by the Spirit. The words on paper required an interpretation which was given by the Spirit at the right time. The delay in revealing this truth was surely because the body of Christ was not then in existence, and His work and sacrifice had not then been completed. And seeing He had genuine freewill, there was the possibility He could have failed. In this we see the thrill of victory when he finally dies perfect and morally triumphant, and the endless wonder and significance of His resurrection.

3:7 Of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of His power- All preaching work is to be done as a servant, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, the servant of all. Being *made* a servant recalls Paul's language about how the Lord Jesus throughout His life and supremely in his death was "made a servant" (Phil. 2:7). Paul made himself a servant of all (1 Cor. 9:19), and yet here he says he was "made a servant" according to God's powerful working. God's game plan with us is to humble us, make us slaves- and insofar as we willingly seek to go along with that plan, He will work with us as we with Him. "His power" in that sense is perfected in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). "The working of His power" is a phrase Paul uses about God's work in each and every believer through the Spirit given to us (Eph. 1:19; 4:16), a "working" or [Gk.] 'energy' released within each of us through our baptismal association with the Lord's resurrection (Col. 2:12). Paul was not therefore a special case; we each have the same power working in us to achieve and enable the Lord's intended mission for each of us. It is only our dysfunction which doesn't allow it to operate fully.

3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ- Twice (also in :7) Paul marvels at the grace we have received in order to share the Gospel with others. Preaching is not therefore a mere duty, to be performed in the spirit of glum witness to a disinterested world. It is a wonderful grace given that we should have the honour of inviting others to eternity. Whenever Paul talks about preaching, he talks of humility. In one of his earliest letters, Paul stresses that he felt like the least of the apostles, he honestly felt they were all better than he was (1 Cor. 15:9). However, he reminisces that in his earlier self-assurance, he had once considered himself as not inferior to "the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). Some years later, he wrote to the Ephesians that he felt "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). This was no Uriah Heep, fawning humility. He really felt that he was the worst, the weakest, of all the thousands of believers scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean at that time. As he later faced his death, he wrote to Timothy here that he was "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), the worst sinner in the world, and that Christ's grace to him should therefore serve as an inspiration to every other believer, *in that* none had sinned as grievously as he had done. Paul coins a word here to emphasize his humble status in contrast to the honour of being a preacher: "less than the least" (*elachistotero*). He was a preacher despite the fact he was chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); only through mercy / forgiveness had he received the commission he had (2 Cor. 4:1).

Paul felt he was "less than the least" of all saints, that he would be the least in the Kingdom (Eph. 3:8). He uses a closely related word to that used by John when he spoke of how he must "decrease" (Jn. 3:30). It was as if he felt like John at his most 'decreased', in prison fearing death; and remember that Paul wrote Ephesians from prison too. But John was weak in prison; he doubted (momentarily) whether Jesus was the Messiah, "him that should come" (Lk. 7:19). Yet Paul seems to allude to this when he says that "he that shall come will come" (Heb. 10:37)- as if to say 'John, my hero, you had your weak moments too, but I've tried to learn the lesson from them'.

3:9 *And to make all men see what is the intention of this mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things-* To 'make see' is the same word used in 1:18, where Paul prays for the eyes of the believers to be "enlightened". The "all men" therefore particularly has in view those who have already believed (see on Mt. 20:27); he wishes both Jew and Gentile believers to perceive the wonder of the unity which God's program has in mind for us. He will go on in 3:18,19 to pray that the believers will be empowered by the Spirit to comprehend and know the wonder of the Gospel and its implications in personal relationships. All this prayer and concern about realizing the implications of the Gospel is proof enough that the Christian life is not simply knowing or preserving a set of doctrines. That alone will not save. We need the Spirit to open our eyes to the implications of these things. The comment that "God created all things" may be a reference to the new creation of believers (2 Cor. 5:17; AV adds "by Jesus Christ"); but it may be simply making the point that all things literally were created in order to merely provide a backdrop for God's essential intention- the "fellowship" (AV, NEV "intention") between persons in Christ. The fact the church is riven with so many inter-personal tensions is sadly a reflection of the way that we have missed the point of the Gospel, and remained on the level of technical knowledge of propositions rather than allowing the Spirit to enlighten us as to the implications in practice. These things were "hid in God" in the sense that they could only be actualized by the Lord Jesus, His work and sacrifice. But in Him and through the members of His faithful body, they are now revealed.

3:10- see on Gal. 6:6.

The intention was that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places- We note the idea of "intention" (as in :9). God will not force His way upon those who refuse Him, and even with those of us who accept His way, He bears with our dysfunctions- which mean that His ideal intentions remain not fully achieved in this life. We waste so much potential by our slowness and obtuse dysfunction in spiritual matters. The wisdom of God was seen by Paul as being His plan to save and unite all men, Jew and Gentile, within His Son (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2:7). That wisdom is given to us by the Spirit (1:17); it is ours for the asking (James 1:5). The unity of Jew and Gentile in the church is the context here, and that was to be the public exhibition of God's manifold wisdom. We can read "the rulers and authorities" as referring simply to the rulers of this world; for 'the heavens' can Biblically refer to those in authority over the masses on 'earth'. The church at Ephesus had been born within a background of conflict with the rulers of this world; and the unity between Jew and Gentile in the church was intended to witness to them of God's manifold wisdom. The church is the body of Christ; He is manifest only through us. We are Him, in that sense. Our bodies are members of His body (1 Cor. 6:15). All that we do, in word and deed, is in the Name of the Lord Jesus- i.e. as representing Him whose Name we called upon ourselves in baptism (Col. 3:17). We are the words of His epistle to both the world

and the brotherhood; He has no other face or legs or arms than us (2 Cor. 3:3). We can thereby limit Him if our disunity fails to manifest His wisdom as intended.

But Paul was a Jew writing to those influenced by Judaism. It could be that "principalities and powers" (AV) could refer to Angels, which were a major aspect of Jewish thought in the first century. In this case it would appear that the Angels learn and increase their knowledge from watching our response to the Gospel. "Principalities and powers" is a phrase apposite to the Angels and it is clearly used regarding the Angels who gave the Law in Col 2:15. In this case Eph. 3:9,10 could be read like this: "To make all (both Angels and Christians- AV "men" is not in the original) see what is the fellowship of the mystery (that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved), which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God (and therefore from the Angels too)... to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the ecclesia the manifold wisdom of God". We share the heavenlies with the Angels- and in any case, why cannot 'the heavenlies' refer to literal Heaven also in a sense? As Christ was resurrected and ascended to literal Heaven, the Heavenlies of Eph. 1:20, so we are baptized and spiritually ascend to Heaven straight afterwards (Eph. 1:20). An Angelic interpretation would avoid the difficult that the human principalities and powers to whom the mystery was made known would not accept that mystery, according to 1 Cor. 2:7,8,14: "We speak the wisdom of God (cp. Eph. 1 "the manifold wisdom of God") in a mystery (cp. "the mystery... which hath been hid" in Eph. 1)... which none of the princes of this world knew (principalities and powers!)... the natural man (i. e. the princes of this world) receives not the things of the Spirit of God (the "mystery" of :7), for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned". Because Angels control world rulers, "principalities and powers" could perhaps refer both to them and the Angels behind them.

3:11 *According to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord-* I noted earlier that God's purpose with us in Christ was not simply hatched from the beginning of this present world; but from eternity, from before time- and it shall continue beyond time, for eternity. The unity in Christ, this fellowship between the redeemed which the cross enabled, had been God's original intention; how tragic, therefore, is our disunity within the church. The mystery of His will, His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself from not merely 'the beginning' but from eternity, was that "in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). Thus the unity of the redeemed is not just an incidental product of our redemption and unity in Christ; it was the essential intention and goal of God from before the beginning of the world, and was only revealed through the unity achieved by the cross (Eph. 3:9,10). This was His "eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:11). These passages in Ephesians need meditation; for it is easy to underestimate the tremendous emphasis given to how the mysterious unity of the body of believers, *together* glorifying His Name, was so *fundamentally* and *eternally* God's main purpose. And so Paul marvelled that *he* had been chosen to plainly reveal this, God's finest and most essential mystery, to all men; for it was not revealed at all in the OT, nor even (at least, not directly) by the Lord Jesus. And we may likewise marvel that we have a living part in it. That I, the little boy with glasses from the council estate behind Grove Park railway station in an anonymous South London suburb... was known from eternity by God, to live for eternity in unity with the rest of His people... And you too. What a tragedy it is when a person steps out of that purpose, opts out because of some petty argument with others, or is thrust out of it

because they didn't get this or that right or messed up or fellowshiped this one or that one, or got maxed out on earning more money to buy that dream house or car ... and what a glory, an honour, to be able to extend a place in that eternal purpose to those around us.

3:12 *In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him-* The "boldness" with which we come before the "throne of grace" right now, is the "boldness" with which we will come before that same throne at the final day of judgment (Heb. 4:16; Eph. 3:12 cp. 1 Jn. 4:17). Faith in the Lord Jesus therefore produces this boldness and confidence; faith in Him therefore means believing, trusting in Him, that He has saved us and shall do so at the last day. Faith in Him doesn't simply mean believing He once existed, for about everyone from atheist Communist to Judaist to Muslim believes that much. Nor does it refer to a mere knowledge of some propositions about Him. It is trust that really, He has and will save us eternally, and on account of Him we have a place in God's eternal purpose which was always in Him (:11). Prayer therefore will be with such confidence- not confidence that we shall absolutely receive the requests made in the terms in which we asked for them, but a confidence in God's presence as we speak with Him.

3:13 *Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory-* Paul urges them not to beat themselves up because he is in prison because of having preached to them. The amazing glory made possible by his preaching makes imprisonment as absolutely nothing compared to what his work had achieved. See on Phil. 4:1. We have here a strong encouragement to preach and share this amazing Gospel at all costs, for the cost is incomparable with what is achieved by it.

Our confidence in the Heavenly throne room explained in :12 should mean that nothing on earth makes us waver. They had heard and perhaps witnessed Paul's tribulations at Ephesus for them, and were aware he was in prison in Rome. He was a living exhibition of the sufferings which come from being "in Christ". And it naturally made the converts worry at what might be coming their way. Instead of fearing as a result of Paul's sufferings, they were to instead glory in them.

"Lose heart" is a phrase elsewhere translated "faint not" and it occurs in Lk. 18:1: "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint". There are so many allusions by Paul to this verse and the ensuing parable. This shows just how like us Paul was; he had his favourite parables, one or two that really stuck in his mind, just as we do. And he alluded to them! They were in his heart, to inspire and motivate him, just as the Lord intended. Paul picks up the idea of not fainting in 2 Thess. 3:13: "Brethren, be not weary (s.w. "not to faint") in well doing" . What well-doing did Paul have in mind? Attending the Sunday meetings? Being patient with some difficult sister in the ecclesia? The connection with Lk. 18:1 tells us what he had in mind: keep on praying intensely. It's no co-incidence that Paul started that section of 2 Thess. 3 (in v.1) with the exhortation: "Brethren, pray for us". And he concludes it with the same rubric: "Brethren, be not weary" (faint not), in your prayers. He knew from the parable that repeated prayer was powerful. And so he asks them to keep at it for him, because he needed it. Perhaps Paul had the same thing in mind here when he wrote to the Ephesians (3:13): "In (Christ) we have boldness and access with confidence (to God, in prayer, cp. Heb. 4:16)... *wherefore* I desire that ye faint not (s.w. Lk. 18:1) at my tribulations"; is he not implying 'You know how powerful prayer is, so don't faint in it, you know what struggles I'm having, *please* keep on praying for me, like that persistent widow in the parable'. This fits in with a

number of other passages in which Paul unashamedly begs his brethren to pray for him. In this we see his humility, his high regard for other brethren who were almost certainly weaker than him, and also the physical desperation of his daily life.

3:14- see on Eph. 1:15.

For this cause I bow my knees to the Father- This resumes the train of thought from "this cause" in :1. The intervening verses, as noted there, are a parenthesis. What we now read until the "Amen" in :21 is a unique transcript of Paul's prayer for them, said on his knees, and also mixing praise with worship; for to bow the knee is an idiom for praise as well as the prayer of request. Paul uses the same words in writing of how every knee shall bow to God at the day of judgment (Rom. 14:11); but he lived in prayer now as he would before the day of judgment. That was exactly the sense of his idea of being "confident" both in prayer now and the day of judgment in the future- see on :12. Our attitude in prayer to God now will be our attitude at the day of judgment.

3:15 *From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named*- This alludes to Adam naming everything in creation; and Paul here has in view the new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). "Every family" may be a reference to every church, especially appropriate given that most of the early churches were house churches, meeting as family. The phrase can equally be rendered "the whole family". Paul chooses to use the word *patria* to describe this new "family in heaven and earth" to which we belong in Christ. The word *patria* is defined by Strong as meaning "a group of families" that comprise a nation [s.w. Acts 3:25 "all kindreds of the earth"]. The various family units / house churches comprised the overall body of Christ, the nation of the new Israel. Eph. 3:15 takes on a new meaning in the light of the house-church nature of early Christianity. God is the *pater* [father- the head of the house] from whom every home [*patria*] in heaven and on earth is named". We're invited to see God as a family God, with us as "the household of God" (Eph. 2:19; 3:15). See on Acts 8:3; Col. 1:20. By baptism into the Name, we have His family Name named upon us. To be aware of who Yahweh is, of the characteristics outlined in Ex. 34:5-7 that comprise His Name... this must surely affect *our* behaviour, seeing we bear that Name. It is an understanding of the Name that inspires our faith in forgiveness. "Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many" (Jer. 14:7,9,21). The Name is called upon us in baptism (Jer. 14:9 = Eph. 3:15), and this is why we urge men to be baptized into the Name to wash away their sins. See on Heb. 13:15.

3:16 *That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*- This is evidence enough that the function of the Holy Spirit is within the inner man, and the gift of Spirit strengthening doesn't refer solely to the temporary miraculous gifts. And this verse is likewise evidence enough that the Spirit doesn't simply enter us through Bible reading. For Paul prays that God would give them this gift. There is a strong element of external agency here, the prayer of a third party for this working in the inner man to happen. There are many examples even in the Old Testament of God working directly upon human hearts / spirits. There is a huge wealth of spiritual strength with God- "the riches of His glory". Although we are given the Spirit at baptism, we continue to receive it, and it appears from this prayer that it can be also given in response to the prayers of third parties. John the Baptist was "strengthened in the Spirit" (Lk. 1:80), and yet "John did no miracle" (Jn. 10:41). The reference is to internal strengthening; to palm off all references to the Holy Spirit as referring to the temporary miraculous gifts is just not the correct interpretation. We are to humble ourselves under the

strengthening hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6 s.w.); His activity seeks to humble us that we might be exalted in due time. The Spirit is given at baptism, and Paul prays that that indwelling gift might give them strength. The Corinthians had received the gift, but were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). We too have the same gift but need to realize the potential. These promises of internal spiritual strengthening don't mean that we shall not sin; the only other reference to "the inner man" is when Paul laments that he delights in God's law "in the inner man" (Rom. 7:22), but still sins because he is in the flesh. We should not therefore ignore the promises of the Spirit's work because we know we are sinners and shall continue sinning throughout our mortal lives.

3:17- see on Lk. 6:48.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you would be rooted and grounded in love- It is the "spirit of Christ" which dwells in us (Rom. 8:9,11). This is the promised Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, which would dwell within us to the extent that the Lord's physical absence would be compensated for by His Spirit making His presence real to us. And the simple end result of that is, in a word, "love". Such love, both the love of Christ for us and our response in lives of love, will become our root and foundation. And if we are "rooted and grounded in love", then :18 promises that we will come to appreciate yet more "the love of Christ". There is an upward spiral of spirituality. It is the love principle which alone can give stability to our otherwise unstable existence. People do not know really how to live, how to think, how or what to be. It is having a foundation in the love principle which constantly and consistently provides the answers to our endless questions as to how to respond to all the mental and secular issues which we meet hour by hour.

3:18 *That you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-* As noted on :17, the gift of the Spirit enables us to perceive the love of the Father and Son. Rom. 5:5 says the same- "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us". Again we have in view a gift of the Spirit within our spirit, or as Ephesians terms it, "the inner man". The gift of understanding something of the dimensions of the Lord's love is not received by us in isolation; the heightened comprehension is "with all the saints".

"The love of Christ" often refers to the Lord's sacrifice. We cannot sit passively before the cross of the Lord. That "love of Christ" there passes our human knowledge, and yet our hearts can be opened, as Paul prayed, that we might know the length, breadth and height of it. The crucified Son of God was the full representation of God. The love of Christ was shown in His cross; and through the Spirit's enlightenment we can *know* the height, length, breadth of that love (Eph. 3:18,19). But this passage in Ephesians is building on Job 11:7-9: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea". The purpose of the connection is to show that through appreciating the love of Christ, unknowable to the unenlightened mind, we see the Almighty unto perfection, in a way which the Old Testament believers were unable to do. It was as high as Heaven, and what could they do? And yet it must be confessed that we do not in practice attain to such fullness of knowledge and vision. We look to the Kingdom, one of the excellencies of which will be the full grasp of the Almighty unto perfection, as manifest in the death of His Son. All we *now* know is that that cross was the fullness of God, it was "the Almighty unto perfection". But then, we shall know, we shall find it out. And yet, paradoxically, in some sense even now we can *know* "the love of Christ" [a phrase often used about the cross] that *passes* human

knowledge. Speaking of His upcoming death, the Lord warned that where he was going, the disciples could not then follow; but they would, afterwards. This doesn't necessarily mean they too were to die the death of the cross. Rather could it mean that they later would enter into what His death really meant; then they would see with some understanding, rather than run away from the vision of the cross. And for us, one of the Kingdom's riches will likewise be that we shall then understand that final climactic act the more fully. Yet we begin that discovery now.

God has more spiritual culture, for want of a better way of putting it, than to describe the love of Christ just with a string of superlative adjectives. Paul prayed that his Ephesians would be strengthened by the Spirit's working in the inner man, so that they would "be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:18,19 RV). There is a paradox here; to know something that can't be known, that passes knowledge. We can only know that love by God working on our inner man, so that we realize the experience we have of the love of Christ, and by seeing it manifested in others.

3:19 And to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God- "To truly know" doesn't mean that we know to perfection every aspect of the Lord's love. It rather means that we know His love for us as the ultimate truth. "The truth" is not so much a set of doctrinal propositions as the simple fact that the Lord loved us to the end, and we shall live eternally with Him through that love.

It is surely apparent that it would be pointless to pray for our brethren if in fact those prayers have no power at all, and if ultimately we are all responsible for our own spiritual path. There is in all this an incredible and most urgent imperative. This is why Paul bowed his knees in prayer for the Ephesians, knowing that his words could really increase and enrich the quality of their relationship with God, if not their very salvation (Eph. 3:14-19). If my prayers can influence your eternal destiny, if they can lead you from condemnation to the eternity of God's Kingdom: then I must, if I have any gram of love and care within me, dedicate myself to prayer for you. And you, likewise, for me. Prayer for others' spiritual well-being becomes no longer something which is 'tacked on' to our tired, repetitious evening prayers.

All the fullness of God dwelt in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9); "and of his fullness have all we received" (Jn. 1:16). God's fullness, the full extent of His character, dwelt in Christ, and through His Name which speaks fully of that character, that fullness of Christ is reckoned to us. And so, in line with all this, Eph. 3:19 makes the amazing statement. And it is amazing. We can *now* "be filled with *all* the fullness of God". Let's underline that, really underline it, in our hearts. We can be *filled* with *all* the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God's character. See on Eph. 1:23. We are counted righteous, counted as if we have the Lord's moral perfection; but as Romans 8 explains, the Spirit is given in order to help us become in reality what we are counted as being by status. The language of 'filling' is used about being filled with the Spirit in our inner person (Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 4:10; 5:18). It is the filling by the Spirit which reveals to us the fullness of God.

3:20 Now to Him that is able to do immeasurably above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us- This is one of several allusions to Paul's final

address to the Ephesian elders; I suggested on 1:1 that Ephesians was initially a follow up letter to that meeting:

Acts 20:19 = Eph. 4:2 "lowliness of mind"

Acts 20:27 = Eph. 1:11 "counsel", God's plan.

Acts 20:32 = Eph. 3:20 God's "ability".

Acts 20:32 = Eph. 2:20. Building upon the foundation.

Acts 20:32 = Eph. 1:14,18 "The inheritance of the saints."

Answers to prayer are described as "great and mighty things, which you know not" (Jer. 33:3)- i.e. the very nature of answered prayer is that it is above all we ask or think. It leads to a sense of wonderment with this God with whom we are in relationship. And answered prayer is indeed part and parcel of a living relationship with the Father and Son. But Paul may simply mean that the spiritual help he has just prayed for is far beyond anything the Ephesians could "ask or think" of requesting. He urges them to believe that God is indeed "able" to work the spiritual transformation he has just prayed for. And that ability is potentially within each of us; for each baptized believer has received "the power that works in us", it is a question of allowing it to operate. Again we note that the Spirit works *within* us; there is no reference to the miraculous gifts, they were an incidental, temporal external witness to the profound fact that God's Spirit power has been given into the hearts of believers and is at work there. God is at work in our hearts, in our psychology- but we must be open to this.

3:21 *To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen*- The allusion seems to be to the concluding doxology of the model prayer: "For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen". "The power" has been defined in :20 as the Spirit power which works within us. Our glorification of God is therefore due to our thankfulness for His power working within us to transform us into persons who shall live for ever and ever to His glory.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called*- It has been observed that there are 40 imperatives in Eph. 4-6, and only one in all of Eph. 1-3. As in Romans and other letters, we have a clear case of doctrinal exposition being then followed by related appeals to practical living. Walking, practically living, is related to the calling we received. That call is not simply the call to relationship with the Lord and eternal salvation. In the 'theoretical' part of the letter, Paul has reasoned that there were specific good works set up for us to do from the beginning, as part of God's foreknowledge of us. We were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); the whole of Eph. 1:4-11 speaks of our being foreknown and foreordained. And now Paul again says that we are to "walk" in good works, "worthily of the calling with which you were called". The calling came to us whilst we were dead spiritually; and a dead man doesn't hear anything. But the unique nature of the Gospel call is that it can be heard by a dead man and make him alive. The Lord called to the dead Lazarus, and Lazarus heard and came forth from the grave in obedience to that call to "come forth". We, the dead, heard the call, although we were dead... and so we were given life. But we must walk according to that call. It was because of preaching these wonderful things that Paul was in prison, and he has used the same logic in Eph. 3:13 to urge them not to worry about him being imprisoned,

because it is incomparable with the glorious things that the preaching of the Gospel has achieved. This is why he mentions that he as a "prisoner in the Lord" appeals to them to live according to the call of the Gospel.

Paul repeatedly expresses his resentment and frustration with his "bonds"; but he saw those limitations as "in the Lord". We are all frustrated by limitation of situation or health; but they are to be experienced as "unto the Lord". Living "worthily" or appropriately to our calling, of the Lord, of God, of our status as believers, is a major theme with Paul (Rom. 16:2; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12). Our lives are to be full of fruits worthy or appropriate to repentance (Mt. 3:8; and Paul repeats this teaching of John in Acts 26:20). The tendency then as now is to accept the Gospel but not to live and feel in response to that calling. Yet the way of the Spirit is to make us in practice what we are in status. Our calling was by grace- the fact we were called and others were not is a parade example of grace toward us, according to Romans 8 and 2 Tim. 1:9 (Who has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace"). Paul has already prayed that the Spirit would open their eyes to the huge implications of being a called person (1:18). We have heard the Gospel- we are called. Of that there is no question, for the call is in the Gospel of the Kingdom. This should have a huge effect upon us; we are to walk appropriate to such a calling, making our calling sure (2 Pet. 1:10).

4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with patience making allowance for each other in love- The experience of having been called from eternity, part of God's "eternal purpose", not just 'from the beginning' but from infinite past eternity, should elicit in us appropriate humility and patience. For God waited patiently for infinite time until He called us, and is so patient with us now in our brief moment of opportunity as we live out this life. Exactly because we are the elect / chosen ones, we should put on lowliness (Col. 3:12 s.w.). This is the outworking in practice of appreciating our calling and predestined place in God's purpose- humility and patient love of others. The equivalent of this verse in Colossians is the command to make allowance for each other and therefore forgive them (Col. 3:13). Forgiveness is assisted by making allowance, by considering why a person is acting as they are, rather than taking their words or actions as they stand and judging them for them, which is how natural human justice behaves.

The idea is developed in :13,14, where maturity is seen as expressed in unity, which in practice means tolerating those who are still 'children' and unstable in their beliefs and behaviour. Maturity means accepting that they are still children of God, and like us, still growing up into the full stature of the Lord Jesus- which we will only attain at His return. "Making allowance" definitely means to tolerate; and even the Lord was driven to the limit in this when He comes closest to expressing exasperation: "How long shall I suffer you [s.w. 'make allowance for']!" (Mt. 17:17; all three synoptics record this).

4:3- see on Jn. 17:23.

Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace- The patient forgiveness and making allowance for others just spoken of (:2) will in practice mean that the unity the Spirit has potentially created will be realized in practice. We have here another encouragement to live in practice what we are by status- a united community. The implication is that by dividing, by intolerance, both of practical and intellectual matters, we are going against the unity which the Spirit has potentially created; and we are thereby out of step with the Spirit. It is "peace" which is to be the bond or uniting principle; and "peace" is often a reference to peace with God through

the forgiveness achieved in the Lord Jesus. An awareness of our own experience of forgiveness is what will connect us with others who have experienced the same in Christ; mere adherence to the same set of theology will not, and evidently does not, create true spiritual unity between believers.

4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in the one hope of your calling-* Seeing there is only one Spirit and we have each received the same calling to the same hope, we are only one body. There are not different callings and different hopes. The order of things in the list of essential doctrines in Eph. 4:4-6 is marvellous: "One body" (us) comes first, and "One God" comes last. Behold here the humility of God in inspiring this teaching in this way, and the paramount importance placed on unity between believers.

Peter says that we are to "set your hope completely" on the great salvation to be given us when the Lord returns (1 Pet. 1:13). Nothing else should be our hope, we should not set our hopes on anything else- be it material wealth, relationships, houses or whatever. Paul expresses the same idea when he speaks of how there is only "one hope" (Eph. 4:4). His idea is not so much that there are various wrong hopes in a doctrinal sense. Rather is he saying like Peter that our hope is to be singularly and completely upon the grace of salvation to be brought to us at the Lord's return.

4:5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism-* It is possible to discern within the NT letters the beginnings of a body of teaching about moral behaviour. The same outline themes are discernible in Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and James;; I suggested on 1:1 that Ephesians was indeed written to the Ephesians, but it became the basis for a more general set of teachings which was employed in the early church and was repeated, verbatim at times, to the believers in Colosse:

Theme	Colossians	Ephesians	James	1 Peter
The new birth [baptism]	2:12	4:4-6	1:1 8	1:23
The things of the old life that must be left behind	3:9	4:22	1:2 1	2:1
The image of God and Jesus; the new life that must be put on	1:19	4:24	1:1 8	2:21
The theme of submission to Jesus as Lord of our lives	3:18	5:22	4:7	2:13; 5:19

Exhort				
ation to				
stand strong	4:12	6:11	4:7	5:
against				8,9
temptation /				
the 'devil'				
Watch				
and pray,	4:2	6:18	5:1	4:
endure to			6	7
the end				

4:6 *One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*- The theme here is of unity amongst the believers, and so the "all" here I would take as referring to all believers. For through the Spirit, God works through and in [within] all believers. That is a major theme of Ephesians. The "all" is surely the "each one of us" of :7, and the "men" of :8. The emphasis that "all" believers, "each one of us", have God urgently active in our hearts and lives through the Spirit was and is necessary because there will always be those in any believing community who feel they are just amongst the crowd, and God's activity is through the leadership and they are mere spectators at a show.

4:7 *But to each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*- As noted on :6, "each one of us" has been given the gift of the Spirit by the Lord Jesus, and not just the leadership or those who appear to have more spectacular usage by Him. We have all sinned, so we have all received grace, and that grace is manifest in the gift of the Spirit within each forgiven believer. This emphasis is necessary because Paul will now further speak of how the miraculous public gifts were given to some in the first century; but each of us has been given a measure or portion of the Spirit gift of Christ.

When Paul speaks of the stewardship of God's grace given to him (Eph. 3:2 RVmg.), he is alluding to the parable of the talents (see on Mt. 25:15). He saw the talents as the amount of grace shown, and for him, he knew this to amount to many talents; and he invested them, in response, through the preaching of the Gospel. And he carries on the allusion in Eph. 4:7, speaking of how unto every one of us Christ has given a gift, namely, grace. Whilst grace will produce unique response in each of us, we are bound together by the same basic experience of having been saved by grace.

4:8- see on 1 Cor. 15:28.

Wherefore He says: When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men- Ascension refers to the Lord's literal ascent to Heaven, but it is also used as a metaphor of His 'ascent' in victory over sin. What held us captive was sin, and when this was made captive by the Lord's victory on the cross, we were given gifts. The "men" are the "all men" of :6, the "each one of us" of :7. The context of Ps. 68:18 is the victory song at the Red Sea deliverance. The gifts were those taken from Egypt / sin / the world. Such gifts were not available before the victory. They therefore refer primarily to the various victories over sin which are now possible. The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were seen in Old Testament times too, so they are not the primary reference. Although the internal gifts to the "inner man" were testified to in the first century by miraculous endowments, to make the point- that God's Spirit is

now indeed given to men. Acts 2:33 speaks of how the Lord received the Spirit and gave it to men, and the Comforter passages in Jn. 14-16 speak likewise. Ps. 68:18 continues: "Yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them". The purpose of the gifts was that even the backsliding might be transformed to have God dwelling within them. And Ps. 68:19,20 define the gifts as the benefits which the Lord daily loads us with- salvation. The daily blessings are not miraculous gifts but forgiveness, and guidance towards salvation. It is these blessings with which He internally fills all in Christ (:10).

4:9 *Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?*- The ascent to receive these gifts for us required the Lord's death and burial. The victory song of Psalm 68 could only be ultimately sung because of the Lord's death "first". We find here yet another connection with the thought of Romans, this time to Rom. 10:7, where 'descending [s.w.] into the deep' is connected with the resurrection of the Lord from the dead. His three days in "the lower parts of the earth" was therefore whilst He was dead; and death, Biblically, is unconsciousness. This puts paid to all speculations about the Lord doing conscious battle in some underworld with the powers of evil. "The lower parts of the earth" is a phrase used in Ps. 63:9 and Ps. 139:15 LXX for the grave.

But many times the same Greek word for "descended" is used for the Lord's 'descent' from Heaven; He 'came down' from Heaven in the same way as the manna 'descended' from Heaven- it was sent from God, but created here on earth. In this case, we would read the height of His ascent, in spiritual terms, as a reflection of His total connection with the lowest things of earthly life. "The lower parts of the earth" would be a quotation from Is. 44:23 LXX, which uses the term to describe the lower ranks of people upon earth. This would then explain the possible connection with Jn. 3:13, "no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that descended from Heaven".

It could be that both interpretations have validity; the Lord's descent from Heaven, His sending from God, involved His descending into the grave itself. His sinless association with humanity and finally His dying the death of all men was what qualified Him to be so highly exalted.

4:10 *He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things*- It was "the same" essential Jesus who died as who ascended; in terms of personality, He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8), just as who we essentially are is who we shall eternally be. The Jesus who loved little children and was pitiful to the weak is the same Jesus with whom we have to do now, and whom we shall meet at judgment day. Likewise "that same Jesus" who was crucified is the one who is now exalted Lord in Heaven (Acts 2:36).

Paul's description of Christ 'ascending up far above all heavens' seems to be rooted in his vivid re-living and imagining of the scene in Lk. 24:51, where the record says that Christ was "parted from them, and carried up".

The risen Lord has filled "all things" with His spirituality, "the whole universe", i.e. the believers (Eph. 3:19; 4:10 NIV). This is based on God's attitude in the OT; that Israel were His people, His 'world', and the other nations were "not a people"; effectively, they weren't people, in God's eyes (Dt. 32:21). Is this Biblical evidence for a social Gospel? These words are true of all those who are out of covenant relationship with Him, including those who have fallen away. Thus Elisha told the apostate king of Israel: "Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, *I would not look toward thee, nor see thee*" (2 Kings 3:14). The 'filling'

surely refers to the filling of believers with the Holy Spirit in their hearts, leading to the fruits of the Spirit such as joy, peace etc. (Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:19; 5:18).

4:11- see on Lk. 11:22.

And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers- The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were given in the first century in order to visibly reflect the huge power of new spiritual life now given into the hearts of believers by the Lord's ascension. The fact that the miraculous manifestations of those gifts are not now possessed doesn't mean that the essential gift of the Spirit is not now received by us. And yet it is true that each member of the Lord's body not only has its unique function, but the Spirit enabling in order to fulfil those functions.

4:12 *For the perfecting of the saints, to the work of holy service, to the building up of the body of Christ-* The allusions to priestly service and building all recall the gifts of the Spirit given to enable the building of the tabernacle / sanctuary, which was representative of the people of God, the body of Christ. Therefore the more visible gifts of leadership in :11 were only given in order to prepare the congregation for acts of service themselves ("the work of holy service"). "Christianity was no slick imitation of existing ecclesiastical organisations. It made no attempt to set up a hierarchy modelled on previously existing institutions. It preferred *diakonia*, lowly service, to the grandiose ideas of the Gentiles". The "building up" of believers in the first century was partly through the Spirit gift of prophecy, whereby inspired New Testament prophets spoke relevant words from God to the newly converted illiterate believers (1 Cor. 14:3,5,12). And yet the building up of the body today is by the contribution of *every* part (Eph. 4:16,29). In the special case scenario of the first century, the miraculous Spirit gifts were given; their withdrawal doesn't mean that God's work of "building up" His people through the Spirit is over. It's just that the mode of operation has changed. "Building up of the body" refers probably not only to spiritual maturing of the members; but also through the work of evangelism, building up the body to its full size through bringing in "the full number of the Gentiles".

4:13- see on Heb. 2:10.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ- "The unity" and "the faith" each have the article and grammatically do not together mean 'the one faith'. They refer to the unity created by the one faith. And that is Paul's theme here- of unity between Jew and Gentile created by having the same one faith, which is the knowledge of the Son of God. And 'knowledge' refers to the knowing which refers to relationship, rather than knowing an identical set of theological propositions about the Son of God. It is common relationship with Him which creates unity between groups and individuals as diverse and separated as Jew and Gentile were in first century towns like Ephesus. It is that unity between persons within the church which is the sign of maturity, of having grown up into stature of the Lord Jesus, and in which His fullness will dwell. His fullness refers to the full total sum of His personality, His 'Name', in Old testament terms. Each individual believer has various parts of His total personality, and between us, the united, mature church is completely His body to the world, they are Him in total. But division amongst us precludes us on a collective level from being Him in totality.

"Until we all come" would suggest that unity within the body of Christ is something that we grow towards. The lament that 'the body of Christ is divided' is therefore absolutely to be expected. All doctrinal inadequacy and all disunity will

only be resolved when we arrive at the full measure of Christ. And that point will ultimately be at His return; the point is, that in this life we are to grow towards that. The expression "perfect man" is only found in James 3:2, where clearly the "perfect man" state is apparently unattainable in reality on the ground now: "For in many things we all make others stumble. If any does not cause stumbling by his words, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also". The same thought is in Phil. 3:14-16: "I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus [perhaps equivalent to "the fullness of Christ" here, the point when we "shall be like Him"]". Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you. For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk". Clearly 'acceptable walk' involved 'walking' whilst still less than mature, and whilst still needing further truth to be revealed to us. This is not only a comfort to us personally, but it helps us in being more inclusive and generous spirited to those who appear to us immature, morally or doctrinally. It is normal for humans to become intolerant of those who don't match their own current positions, forgetting that they too were once immature. This approach is at variance with seeking to draw a line in the sand defining 'saving truth', and excluding any beyond that line.

The body of believers is progressively educated, matured, built up, until finally at the Lord's return we are all brought to be like Christ, to know Him fully, and to "the unity of the faith". The implication would therefore be that there will never be total understanding of "the faith" in its fullness, nor will there be "unanimity" amongst us on every point as a body, until the Lord is back.

The ultimate basis of unity is going to be "the knowledge of the Son of God". I suggest that this uses 'knowledge' in the Hebraic sense of relationship. All those in relationship with Him are thereby bound together in unity. This will therefore come to its ultimate experience at His return. And we see too that 'unity' is not solely predicated upon a doctrinal statement; for there are those whose theology is good, but who do not have any 'knowledge' of Jesus in the sense of relationship with Him. The "measure" is the stature of the fullness of Christ. This, then, is the ultimate 'measure'. Paul's desire in Ephesians is for unity, and he appears here to be appropriately pointing out that this point of final maturity is to be the 'measure' by which we compare ourselves now. We are each far from that measure, and therefore, should tolerate those others who likewise visibly fall short of that measure.

The vision of eternity which we have here is similar to that earlier used in Eph. 1:23, where we have the picture of the "fullness" [s.w.] of the Lord Jesus fully filling everything in His body, which is the church. And here in Eph. 4:10 is the implication that this same fullness shall fill literally all things in heaven and earth, in the cosmos. Now we are filled with His Spirit, but not fully. And then, this lowly body shall be changed like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21), both materially and mentally. This is what eternity will be like- becoming like Him. In this sense we can have the eternal life now, in that we can begin living and being like Him in our spirit. And that spirit of life will somehow fill the cosmos. His fullness in all things. This helps us understand how all those who love the Lord's appearing, who so love Him and all He stands for and dearly wish to be like Him... shall be saved. We see so clearly that our entire focus is to be upon Him.

The equivalent in Colossians speaks of the believer being "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:10). The aim of the new creation is to produce the replication of the Lord Jesus in us- grown up into His fully mature image. This 'renewal in knowledge' speaks as here of an ever new relationship. For

knowledge in the academic sense cannot be renewed. There is nothing dynamic about knowing dry facts of interpretation, of itself. This is the renewal of the Holy Spirit which is given through the laver [baptismal bath] of regeneration (Tit. 3:5). The work of the Spirit is to make us constantly renewed in relationship with the Lord Jesus, and thereby we change into His image as our ever fresh, "newness of life" relationship with Him brings us deeper into His sphere of thought and action. In reality, this is what it is, to be a Christian.

Eph. 4:13 parallels the knowledge of the Son of God with "the unity of the faith". To know the one faith is to know Christ as a person. He *is* the essence of the one faith. Academic knowledge of a series of theological propositions in a 'statement of faith', no matter how accurate their formulation may be, is still not the same as 'knowing Christ'. To perceive those doctrines as they really are, to know the unity, the sum of the one faith, is to know Christ as a person and come to "the fullness of Christ". The *unity* of the faith thus parallels the *fullness* of Christ. Those doctrines as propositions are a means to an end; and unless that is perceived they are little worth. So very often men have argued over those propositions, and in their argument have revealed that they really 'don't get it'- they simply don't know Christ as a person. They got caught up on the means rather than perceiving the end- which is to know the Son of God.

4:14 *That we may no longer be like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine devised by the trickery, craftiness and deceitful scheming of men-* We must note, however, that the contrast is between being children, influenced so easily by every teaching and conspiracy theory from dubious teachers, not "speaking the truth in love" (:15)- and the maturity of the full, grown up stature of Christ (:13). But this means that those who are immature in this way are still counted by Paul as children, children of God- although very immature. Tolerance of the immature is in fact part of the unity Paul is seeking to inspire. But it is exactly on this point that so many who think they are mature actually show their immaturity. The toleration of others' immaturity is very much the practical aspect of a unity upon the basis of that fact that we are all "in Christ" and still growing up into Him. This is the spirit of :2 "with patience making allowance for each other in love". As in a natural family, toleration of immaturity is not to say that the entire family thereby degrades to the lowest common denominator, and that the immaturity is legitimized as normal or even mature.

The intended unity of the body around the one faith spoken of in :13 requires of course that we have the one faith, and are not therefore swayed by the false teachings of men. The crafty, deceitful schemes of men referred to suggests far more than a genuine intellectual misunderstanding of some Bible verses. The reference is surely to the campaign of the Judaizers, who schemed to destabilize the churches Paul founded. The language recalls the serpent in Eden, whom Paul in Romans and 2 Cor. 11:3 (s.w. "craftiness") has used as symbolizing the Judaizers, the great satan or adversary to his work. The teachings were "devised" as part of a "scheming of men"- clearly the reference is to a purposeful program of leading others astray, rather than an innocent misreading of Bible verses by sincere if misguided believers. Heb. 13:9 uses the same word about not being "carried about" with doctrines which take us away from the heart being stabilized by grace. It was legalism and Judaism which was the antithesis of grace.

Judah was condemned to being tossed to and fro (2 Chron. 29:8 RV; Is. 54:11); and yet the spiritually unstable also allow themselves to be tossed to and fro (Eph. 4:14; James 1:6), and thereby they effectively live out their condemnation now, ahead

of the gnashing of teeth which awaits them. The type of natural Israel being rejected in the wilderness must be instructive as to the position of those who are the "goats" of spiritual Israel.

In Eph. 4:14,15, the point is made that because we are not blown around with every wind of doctrine, therefore we deal truly in love (RVmg.). Truthfulness with each other within the one body of Christ is related to our having known and deeply believed the truth of God. The implication is also that by speaking and preaching truth, we "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ", who is "the Truth" in every way. Notice how Eph. 4 stresses the need for true doctrine because this is related to truthfulness with each other; if we are not tossed to and fro by false doctrines, then we will speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:14,15); "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus... wherefore [because of this] put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" in the one body of Christ (Eph. 4:21,25).

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head- Christ!- As noted on :14, having true doctrine is related to "speaking the truth", "dealing truly" (Eph. 4:13-15 RVmg.) with each other- as if the sensitive, heartfelt preaching of truth should result in our own truthfulness. English does not have a verb "to truth," but Paul uses such a verb when he urges the Ephesians that "'truthing' in love" they should grow in Christ in all things. We might understand this as "speaking the truth in love," but more probably we should see truth as a quality of action as well as of speech. Paul wants his converts to live the truth as well as to speak it. Real spiritual growth is only possible by a way of life that 'truths it'.

The state of perfection which we shall finally reach, hopefully in church life now but supremely in the Kingdom, is described as us (the complete church of all ages) having reached, "a perfect man... the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", having grown up into Christ, who is the head of the body (Eph. 4:13,15). We are now 'growing up into Him', we are on a journey, and the end point of it is to be fully as the Lord Jesus. This is the end point- where we spend eternity is one issue, but the essence is that we shall be like Him. We are indeed the body of Christ, but we are counted as that, the status is imputed to us; and the Spirit is at work to develop us to actually become as Him.

When Christ comes, we will each individually be made ruler over *all* that He has (Mt. 24:47), we will each individually be fully righteous, fully manifesting the Lord Jesus. There seems to be marked connection with the fact (brought out in the parable of the talents) that we will each have *all* the Master's goods, and the description in the next parable of those goods being distributed between us in this life (Mt. 24:47; 25:15). In the Kingdom we will no longer know partially, as a result of seeing parts of the whole picture; we will see face to face (1 Cor. 13:9,12 Gk.). See on Lk. 19:13.

4:16 By him all the parts of the body fit and are knit together, with every joint supplying something according to its unique purpose, thus making the body grow as it builds up itself in love- Each member of the body contributes to the overall strength and health of the body. As noted on :6 and :7, there is great emphasis on the fact that each and every believer is unique and has a role to play in the overall strengthening of others- and not just those with more visible gifts or higher profile roles. No member can say they do not need the others; the problem with 'out of church Christians' is that they are tempted to forget that they too have something to contribute. The body "makes increase of itself" and builds itself up in love, strengthened by the nourishment mediated by the other members (Eph. 4:16). There *is* therefore strength

and power from outside of ourselves within the body of Christ. Tragically, the body of believers is perceived by many sinners to be judgmental, shaming, not understanding etc., when the idea of association with the Lord's body is that we are built up and also contribute towards the building up of others. We enter the body in order that we may contribute, and not simply to take, or because we see baptism as the seal of our doctrinal assent to a set of propositions.

The builder of God's house is ultimately God, the builder of all (Heb. 11:10). We are God's building (1 Cor. 2:9). But we are also Christ's building, in that God has delegated this work to Him. And yet we build each other up (Rom. 14:19; 15:2), Paul was a master-builder (1 Cor. 3:10), and the body builds itself up (Eph. 4:16). As God has delegated the building to Christ, so He has delegated it to us. The Ephesians were built up on the foundations of the apostles' work- not that they are the foundation, for no other foundation can there be except Christ (Eph. 2:20 cp. 1 Cor. 3:11). The building up of those early brethren was on account of the work of the apostles. They were the foundation, they were 'Christ' to those brethren and converts. Hence they are called the foundation, whereas Christ is the only foundation. This is how far His work has been delegated to us. Without the work of the apostles, if they had been lazy or spiritually selfish, there would have been no Ephesus ecclesia, nor spirituality within it. Quite simply, we *are* a function of the efforts our brethren and sisters make to build us up. See on Col. 2:19.

The various parts of the one body *supply* strength to the rest of us. But the very same Greek word rendered "supply" occurs in the Phil. 1:19, about the *supply* of the spirit of Jesus Christ. How does He *supply* our need and strengthen us? Through the very human members of the one body. Which is why we so desperately need them, and to walk away from them, reasoning that they 'give nothing', is in a sense to turn away from the supply of the spirit of Jesus.

Cyprian taught that "Whatever and whatsoever kind of man he is, he is not a Christian who is not in Christ's church... he cannot have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother". And Church membership depended upon "submission to the bishop... rebellion against him is rebellion against God... the schismatic, however correct his doctrine or virtuous his life, renounces Christ and bears arms against the church". Individual spirituality and correctness of faith meant nothing; obedience to the leaders was paramount. Cyprian even went so far as to say that "the church is founded on the bishops... held together by the glue of the mutual cohesion of the bishops". This is a glaring contradiction with the Biblical emphasis upon Christ as the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and the body being held together on account of being "in Him", compacted and built up by what "every joint supplies" (Eph. 4:16). This shift from the internal, the spiritual, to the external and visible, the perception of Christianity as a human organization we belong to, has been seen in the lives of many individual Christians, churches, denominations, groups etc. over time. The warning is for us to remain disciples of the Lord Jesus, following Him as it were around Galilee, focused upon Him alone, and finding the unity with others doing the same which will naturally follow.

"The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16 NIV). In the context, Paul is demonstrating the necessity of Jew and Gentile to work together in the ecclesia; they couldn't just run parallel ecclesial lives, even though there seems to

have been temporary concessions to their humanity at the beginning. The newly baptized, Old Testament-ignorant Gentiles had something to contribute to the Bible-saturated Jewish believers; and, of course, vice versa.

4:17 Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord: You are to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind- Paul reminds them that his teaching here is a direct testimony from the Lord Jesus. A new section of practical advice now follows. The way of the flesh, be it wanton immorality or simply living in the vanity of the mind, is not as the Ephesians had been taught the Gospel of Christ before their baptisms. That basic Gospel had very practical implications (Eph. 4:17-27). And more than this. The new wine of the Gospel will destroy a man who holds it unless he changes his life (cp. the wine skin), so that it too is new. The new cloth of the Gospel will rip a man apart who doesn't change from his old clothing. Leaven is an apt symbol of the Gospel, in that it corrupts terribly *if it is left idle*. If the principles of the Truth lie dormant in our lives, they can only destroy us. The idea of 'walking' connects with the opening charge of :1, that we are to walk in a way appropriate to our calling. "The mind" is Biblically called "the spirit". Unbelievers think in vanity, and we catch ourselves spending large amounts of mental time imagining or chattering within ourselves about vain things. How we think in the mind is how we walk in practice. The receipt of God's Spirit into our spirit will therefore issue in a quite different walk. Vain thinking is a particular malaise of our online world. The inane and meaningless have been glorified.

4:18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart- The language of darkening and hardening could suggest that "the Gentiles" in :17 refer to those who have left the Lord's way. Perhaps those who left were labelled "the Gentiles" as a kind of technical term in the early church. Their "ignorance" was not natural ignorance, but the ignorance that comes from a darkening and hardening of the heart, which resulted in an alienated position. These people had stopped "feeling" and had given themselves over to immorality (:19). This is all the language of those who leave one way of life for another, rather than those who had never known the way of righteousness. Paul has prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians will be enlightened- and yet the work of the Holy Spirit in achieving this is matched by "an evil spirit from the Lord" of the type which pushed king Saul into a downward spiral, and which hardened Pharaoh's heart because he himself hardened his heart. "The life of God" would then refer to the gift of the Spirit which these people had been given at baptism, but they were now alienated from it. The life given by God is the concept used by John to describe what Paul would term the gift of the Holy Spirit; for John's writings speak of the eternal life given by God into the heart of the believers, the power to live now as we shall eternally live. The Corinthians were given the Spirit but were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1), and the burden of Paul's writings is that we are to make use of the potential of the Spirit which we have within us. Those who leave the faith are alienated from that potential life or spirit within them.

4:19 Who being past feeling gave themselves up to sensuality, to work all uncleanness with greediness- Giving oneself over is the idea found in Romans 6, yielding our members to sin. Whereas in baptism we purpose to yield ourselves to God's service and therefore walk in the way of His Spirit.. "Being past feeling" speaks of the death of conscience. And to be feared far more than death itself is the death of conscience. As noted on :18, this language refers to those who leave one way of life

for another, rather than those who had never known the way of righteousness. The Lord gave Himself over for us on the cross (s.w. 5:2,25), but in response, these people had given themselves over to pleasing the flesh. The sensuality in view was provoked by the false teachings of :14. These teachings turned God's grace into sensuality (Jude 4); the words of these false teachers allured believers into sensuality (2 Pet. 2:18). So it was not simply a case of believers falling for the temptation to live the life of the world; the false teachers were encouraging the converts to engage in the sensual practices of idol worship in the name of serving the Lord Jesus. This was the problem at Corinth and was widespread; the false teachings were attractive because they enabled believers to live the life of unbelievers whilst still thinking they were within the body of Christ.

4:20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!- When the Ephesians learnt their first principles from the mouth of Paul and other preachers, they "heard Him (Christ), and (were) taught by Him" (Eph. 4:20,21); the preacher of Christ closely manifests his Lord. Christ crucified was placarded forth before the eyes of the Galatians, when Paul preached the Gospel to them (Gal. 3:1). The Gospel message was totally Christ centered. And part of the basic Gospel was a call to deny immorality and sensuality. The Gospel of the Kingdom as taught by the Lord Himself was essentially an appeal for a way of life in practice.

4:21 Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus- Paul wonders whether they had really been taught about the moral dimensions of the Gospel when they first heard it (see on :20). The "you" refers to those whom Paul earlier calls "Gentiles" in :17; he has in view those who had left the faith (see on :17,18). But they were apparently still within the community at Ephesus to whom Paul was writing. "The truth in Jesus" referred to a way of life rather than theological truths of themselves; and Paul may mean that he wonders whether they were any longer aware of that early teaching of the Gospel which they had received. In illiterate societies there would have been a need to keep teaching the message initially preached, and perhaps that had not been done. The Lord's letter to the Ephesians in Rev. 2:1-6 commends them for having rejected false teaching; so it would seem that Paul's appeal here was heeded, but the Lord lamented their lack of love, which was going to lead to their rejection. Eph. 4:21 AV says that we are "taught by Him". The Lord "began to do and teach" things (Acts 1:1), and continues. Multiple times this word is used of the Lord's teaching people in His ministry. And that now continues. He teaches us. And He specifically says He will give us the Comforter, His teaching Spirit, to effect this. The Comforter will teach us "all things", and the "all things" are the things about Jesus (Jn. 14:26). 1 Jn. 2:27 alludes to this, saying that the anointing we have received "teaches you all things" and abides within us, in our hearts, so that we don't need any man to teach us. And any human teacher we do listen to must be judged against this teaching from the Comforter. This is why any man who does God's will through the Spirit will intuitively know if a human teaching ["doctrine", same word as 'teaching'] is of God or not (Jn. 7:17). Whoever leaves the teaching of Christ doesn't have God (2 Jn. 9). These Johannine passages use the same word for "teach" which we have in Eph. 4:21. . Paul himself says the same when he claims that he was taught the Gospel by none other than Jesus Christ and not by man (Gal. 1:12). Heb. 8:11 may have the same idea- under the new covenant, which includes the gift of the Spirit, men shall not teach their brother to "know the Lord" because all shall know Him through His direct teaching. We see here the active nature of the Lord's work now, teaching as well as mediating, forgiving and

seeking to guide our life path towards eternity with Him. He teaches us, and Paul says that thus we "learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20). He teaches us about Himself. And there's nothing better than reading the Gospel records with the Lord Himself explaining Himself to us, as an individual tutor. We are taught "Christ" (:20), or "according to the truth which is in ['which consists in'] Jesus". Those lessons, that learning, is of the final truth- which is "Christ" Himself, "Jesus". Knowing Him, being in relationship with Him, is "the truth", as John's writings make clear. Understanding these things makes us review the passages which speak of our having received a teaching / doctrine [s.w.], and needing to remain faithful to it. At first blush we may assume this teaching is from the person who taught us the Gospel. But perhaps the idea is rather than this teaching was given us by the Lord Jesus: "That form of teaching that was delivered to you... the teaching that you learned [from Jesus directly?...] holding fast the faithful word he has been taught [by Jesus?...] abide in the teaching of Christ" (Rom. 6:17; 16:17; Tit. 1:9; 2 Jn. 9). Once we are secure in this relationship, we will not be blown about by every wind of human teaching / doctrine. We will be able to easily discern teachings.

4:22 *Those things belonged to your former manner of life, which was corrupt through deceitful desires-* We must "put off the old man" (Eph. 4:22 AV); and yet "you have (already) put off the old man" (Col. 3:9), it was crucified with Christ at baptism (Rom. 6:6). Have we, or haven't we? In God's eyes we have, in that the new man has been created, and the old man died in the waters of baptism. But of course we are still in the flesh; and the old man must yet be put off. What happened at our baptism must be an ongoing process; of laying the old man to rest in death, and rising again in the newness of life. The Gospel 'instructs us to the intent that, having once and for all put away ungodliness (i.e. in baptism) and worldly lusts, we should live in a holy manner' (Tit. 2:12 Gk.). Having put these things off in baptism, we must live a life of putting them off. We are to live in practice what we are counted to be by status in Christ.

Our lusts are deceitful (Eph. 4:22), and so the Devil or 'deceiver' is an appropriate way of describing them. They are personified, and as such they can be spoken of as 'the Devil' – our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural 'man' is like – the 'very Devil'.

4:23- see on Eph. 1:15.

But you, being renewed in the spirit of your mind- The sensuality of :19 is listed as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). The key to growth was to allow the Spirit they had received to renew them. They were to "be renewed" (AV), they were to allow the process of renovation to operate. This is "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5) which began in the laver / washing of baptism. And the locality and method of that renewal was by the Spirit within their minds. Again and again it is clear that the arena of the Spirit's operation is within the mind, "the inner man" of chapter 3, and the reference is not to the external manifestations of the Spirit in miraculous gifts. It was this re-newing which could create the new man of :24. The Spirit had been given to them, as to all believers, at their baptism. But some of them were alienated from that life / Spirit of God within them. They were to allow that Spirit free course to make them new again, to form again the new man within them.

4:24 *Put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness-* The creator of the new man is God through His Spirit- see on :23. The likeness of God is the Lord Jesus, who in His perfect character was the image of God (Col. 1:15). We put on "Christ", "the new man", at baptism (Gal. 3:27), but we are to put Him on throughout our lives (Rom. 13:14). The sense of the Greek is 'be clothed

with'. Again there is the impression not of steel willed obedience but of allowing ourselves to be clothed, permitting the creative process of the Spirit to operate. "True righteousness and holiness" may be a reference to the righteousness and holiness offered by an apostate Judaism.

4:25 Therefore, putting away falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another- As noted on :15, the truth of Christ leads to our being truthful. Dishonesty, lying and gross exaggeration were very much part of Middle Eastern culture, and Paul is urging the converts to change in this. Because the intended unity earlier spoken about in this chapter can never happen when lying is part of our culture. In some cultures and situations to this day, this exhortation and implication of the truth of Christ needs particular emphasis. "Putting away" is the word that has just been used in :22 for putting off the old man; and it would seem that Paul saw telling lies as symptomatic of the old man. "Members one of another" is a reference to us as different limbs in the one body of the Lord Jesus. But Paul accepted there would be members of that body who had not put off the old man, who had not stopped lying nor stealing (:28). He urges them to act appropriately to their status as the Lord's body. Membership of the Lord's body is here spoken of as being members of one another. Our connection with Him is inextricably linked with our connection with each other. Evil practices such as disfellowship, mud campaigns etc. are a denial of this connection; our attitude to each other, immature as we may find each other to be, is our attitude to the Lord Jesus. We cannot therefore push off out of the body into splendid isolation.

We are the body of Christ. We are counted righteous because we are baptized into Him. We are counted as Him; and we are parts of His body, hands, feet, eyes, internal organs. As such, we are inextricably linked in with the other members of the body. We cannot operate in isolation from them. "We are members one of another... we are members of his body" (Eph. 4:25; 5:30). Only insofar as we belong to each other do we belong to Him. We must perceive ourselves not so much as individual believers but as members of one body, both over space and over time. Eph. 4:25 draws a practical conclusion from the one body of Christ: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: *for* we are members one of another". If we are one body, there should *therefore* be truthfulness between us. No white lying, no gross exaggeration, no gossiping, no presentation of facts in a distorted way. Why? Because "we are members one of another". If we *do* behave like this, we are really saying that we are not members of the one body. The one body is Jesus; and all that is true of Him must be true of us. He is not divided, and neither should we be, either within our own beings, or as a community.

4:26 In your anger, do not sin! Do not let the sun set while you remain angry- This is in the context of appealing for unity between the members of the Lord's body (:25). Unresolved anger with other limbs of the body is a sure way to stop that body functioning. Anger in itself is a purely natural reaction, and is seen in both God and His Son. The issue is, how to "be angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26)? God "made a path for His anger" with Egypt, by bringing plagues upon them and slaying their firstborn (Ps. 78:50 RV). Anger has to go somewhere, for otherwise it burns within us and rises up ultimately into extremely damaging and inappropriate forms of behaviour. I say 'inappropriate' because pent up anger has a way of bursting forth upon anyone in its way, who may likely be nothing to do with the cause or object of the initial anger. Anger is a form of energy, and as such it must be harnessed. Throughout the Old

Testament, we often read of God being "provoked to wrath" by human sin, and His anger burning. There's very little said about this in the New Testament; and I wonder if this is because the ultimate path which God made for His anger was in giving His Son to die for human sin, rather than endlessly seeking to punish human sin and be hurt by it. Immediately let's take an obvious lesson: don't waste your anger energy on endlessly fighting those who provoke you, but use it positively. Throw it in to some project or other for the Lord. For anger is to some extent reflective; whilst we remain horns locked with a situation, both our opponent and ourselves are feeding off each others' anger. Hence the wise advice of Prov. 22:24,25: "with a wrathful man you shall not go: lest you learn his ways". Disengage from anger situations.

In any case, we are to seek to not end any day angry. The only way to end the day without anger is to forgive- for if we make our anger dependent upon the repentance or improved behaviour of another party, then we will not be able to stop our anger. The teaching here is clearly that we have power over our own anger, and can cease it if we wish- regardless of the situation or individuals provoking the anger. The quotation "Be angry and sin not" is from Ps. 4:4 LXX- David had anger with Saul and yet rose above it, perhaps by not allowing it to cripple him because David forgave Saul. Psalm 4 continues: "commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still". It seems Paul is interpreting that as meaning that we should within ourselves decide to forgive and not be angry, and fall asleep "still" and in peace. Anger is with external issues and persons; the antidote is within our own self talk. Communing with ourselves, talking ourselves out of it.

4:27 *Give no opportunity to the Devil!*- The devil here may refer to the great enemy, sin and sinful desires within; for it is through anger and deceit of each other that sin is provoked. But so often, "the devil" or "satan" refer to a human organization or group. The Judaist 'satan' was clearly in view in :14 [see notes there]. Interpersonal frictions within the church were going to be capitalized upon by this group.

4:28 *Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, so he may have something to give to him that has need-* As noted on :25, there were members within the body of Christ who were lying and stealing. This was going to stop the development of the unity within the body which was so essential to jointly coming to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Lord Jesus. Paul's ambition for the converts is amazing. Those who stole so much that they didn't do a normal job were permitted in the church; but his belief was that they could be so transformed that they would stop doing this, get a job, and be generous to those who were in need; and grow up into the full stature of the Lord Jesus.

4:29- see on Mt. 12:33.

Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but as the need arises, speak that which is good for encouragement, that it expresses grace to those that hear you- As observed on :28, Paul's converts included some rough types- liars, those who stole so much they didn't have a day job, and those who used "corrupt speech". Paul's hope for their transformation was realistic because he believed in the huge available power of the internal gift of the Spirit. He hoped that those who once stole would work and give to the needy; and here he sees the possibility for those with foul mouths to instead come to use language that was expressing grace, reflecting the *charis* or gift of the Spirit within them, in a way which would transfer that grace to them too. Such corrupt fruit of the lips cannot grow on a good tree (Lk. 6:43 s.w.). There would either be transformation, or the corrupt tree would be cut down. But that was for the Lord to do; Paul's view of the body of Christ was that it would include such immature people. "Encouragement" is the same word used in :16 for 'building up'. Coarse language and

terminology is not going to build up the rest of the body; our words and conversation should be a reflection of our sense that we have a role to play in building up our hearers. The hearers in view are therefore other members of the Lord's body.

4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which you were sealed until the day of redemption-* We can grieve God, by not allowing the work of His Spirit to transform us. We are sealed unto salvation and kept in that path by the Spirit, but grating against that operation is grievous to God. We will not attain perfection in this life, as Paul has explained earlier in this chapter. We are being matured towards the achievement of the full image of Jesus at the last day. For now, we are imperfectly somewhere on the journey there. Perhaps this idea of 'grieving' God by our immaturity and sinfulness gives us some window onto how God views sin. He can view it through different lenses, just as we view the failures of others. The narrow lens views sin as an isolated act that leads to death. But God also sees sin through a wider lens view; within the context of the Lord's death, and our overall response to it. We are given the Spirit when we are baptized in water, we are sealed by the Spirit unto salvation, the Holy Spirit seeks to transform us into holiness. That is not to say that we cannot fall from that grace; and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And yet what of those of us, indeed all of us, who respond in some ways but defiantly resist in others? We have grieved the Holy Spirit, that's all we can say, and we leave the final judgment of others to God. Likewise in human relationships, we can see the failure of others, especially in family life, through various lenses. If we see a particular sin against us through the narrow lens, and keep on about it and what it means and what it implies, then relationship will break down. Only by seeing that failure through a wider lens will we retain relationship. And yet sin and failure do grieve God. He has emotions, for we are made in His image, and have emotions and hurt and grief at others' behaviour. The difference is that God is not victimized by His own emotions, He doesn't allow them to dominate Him, nor does He act in judgment based upon the narrow lens view.

All the bad behaviour of 19-29 is at variance with the Spirit which has been given to each believer, and which seeks to bring forth in us spiritual behaviour. But we are grieving or effectively frustrating this process if we refuse to be transformed. The gift of the Holy Spirit is in our hearts- God has "sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). This gift of the Spirit is the foretaste of our final redemption (2 Cor. 5:5). After we believed, we were given this promised gift of the Spirit (1:13). Those who lied, stole and swore were given it. But by remaining in the old life and ways, they were not allowing it to function. The allusion is to how Israel in the wilderness had been baptized in the Red Sea and yet they grieved God's Spirit (Is. 63:10) in the form of the Angel who wished to lead them to the Kingdom of God.

The "Holy Spirit" may allude to a specific Angel set apart for this purpose of strengthening us so that we might reach the Kingdom, like the wilderness Angel provided Israel with the manna (= the word of God, so the Lord Jesus reasons in Jn. 6) and every type of sustenance in order that they should get through the wilderness to the promised land. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is associated with our calling and choosing. The Angel was associated with the sealing of the believers (Rev. 7:2,3). We must not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God (cp. how Israel vexed the Holy Spirit Angel- Is. 63:10) whereby ye are sealed". Eph. 4:30 also links this grieving the Holy Spirit (referring to the Holy Spirit Angel of Is. 63:10) and abusing God's sealing of us, as if

by the unspiritual behaviour Paul is speaking of in Eph. 4 we will truly grieve or sadden the Angel who has sealed us.

4:31 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and railing be put away from you, along with all malice-* "Let..." may suggest, in the context of :30, allowing the Holy Spirit to put these things away from us. We have in :31,32 a fairly common example of how the believer is told to cease from or "put off" some behaviours or characteristics, and "put on" others. This is how the Holy Spirit works, if we allow it. The removal of the old and creation of the new, forming that 'holiness' without which no man can finally see the Lord. This is the work of the "holy" Spirit.

Again we note that all these things were going on amongst those who were members of the Lord's body, and who had received the Holy Spirit gift in their hearts. The intended growth of the body in unity unto the image of the Lord Jesus could not happen on a communal level if these attitudes remained in the hearts of the individual members. We note that they are all internal issues- which could be overcome by the Spirit of God within the human mind. It is spiritual mindedness which is the essence of Christianity.

4:32 *And be kind to each other, sensitive, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ also forgave you-* The problem was that the Ephesians were not allowing the Spirit to work in their hearts. Therefore the internal attitudes of :31 remained; Paul urges that these should be replaced by the sensitivity to others which leads to kindness and forgiveness. And we recall that those who had left the faith were "past feeling" (see on :19). It is a lack of basic empathy or sensitivity which is the root of so much bad thinking and action. Captain Gustav Gilbert was the army psychologist who worked with the Nuremberg trial defendants; he concluded: "In my work with the defendants I was searching for the nature of evil and I now think I have come close to defining it. A lack of empathy. It's the one characteristic that connects all the defendants, a genuine incapacity to feel with their fellow men. Evil, I think, is the absence of empathy". The gift of the Spirit creates sensitivity; because that same Spirit is operative in the hearts of others, and is the heart of God- who is the ultimately sensitive, seeing and knowing all things. The kindness which leads to forgiveness is the antidote to all the anger and associated issues spoken of in :31. As noted on :26, it is for us to overcome our anger by forgiving, regardless of whether there has been repentance. We are forgiven by God "in Christ"; we were granted imputed righteousness, by reason of our status in Him, rather than on the basis of our specific repentance over the millions of sins we have between God and us, whether or commission or omission.

Mt. 6:14 is surely alluded to here. The Lord Jesus said: "If you forgive, you'll be forgiven". Paul subtly changes the tenses: "You've been forgiven already, so forgive". It's as if Paul is saying: 'Think carefully about Mt. 6:14. Don't think it means 'If you do this, I'll do that for you'. No. God has forgiven you. But that forgiveness is conditional on the fact that in the future you will forgive people. If you don't, then that forgiveness you've already been given is cancelled. This is what Jesus really had in mind'. This would suggest a very close analysis of those simple words of Jesus, using all the logic and knowledge of Biblical principles which Paul had.

Paul does not say we should forgive as Christ *is forgiving* us. Our forgiveness was granted at baptism; the power of sin in our lives was overcome by baptism into Christ's death, which destroyed the devil. Therefore anyone baptized into Christ is not a servant of sin, unless they leave Christ. Of course, we know that in practice we all keep on sinning. But our spiritual man is in Christ, God looks upon *that* side of us, not

upon the devil within us. We cannot destroy the devil within us- his destruction is in death (Rom. 6:23). That natural man cannot be made subject to God's word (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:17,18; James 3:8). What God requires is a growth in the spiritual man, living in a way of life which on balance shows that the new man is more fundamentally 'us' than the old man, and a 'putting off' or disassociation from the old man, of the type we see made by Paul in Rom. 7:15-25. As God eagerly looks upon that new man within us, so we too should perceive the new man in our brethren. Too often extreme brethren look upon how bad the old man is in a brother, and how publicly he is manifested (e.g. in marital problems)- rather than assessing the new man, "the hidden man" which is surely to be found deep within all believers.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5

5:1 Therefore, as beloved children, be imitators of God- The understanding seems to be that a child will imitate the one who shows love. And experiments on babies raised in orphanages in Communist regimes observed the same- the carer perceived as showing love was imitated by the baby. The love we have been shown is in the gift of God's Son; it is the cross, therefore, which elicits imitation or (Greek) 'mimicking' of God.

5:2 And walk in love- just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us- As noted on :1, our exposure to His love is the basis for imitating it, in the form of a life lived or walked in love. In His love is the ultimate motivation to love. Do we struggle to live the life of true love, to endure people, even our brethren; are we simply tired of people, and living the life of love towards them? Does the past exist within us as a constant fountain of bitterness and regret? "Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake [the sake of His cross] hath forgiven you... walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us*" (Eph. 4:31-5:2).

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God- The peace offering was to make a sweet savour. Through His death on the cross, the Lord was this: "Christ... hath given himself for us an offering (a peace offering?) and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). If we are in Christ, then God will see us too as a sweet savour. And this is exactly what 2 Cor. 2:15 says: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ". Yet we must fellowship His sufferings if we are in Him, really fellowship them. The peace offering was to have the fat and rump "taken off hard by the backbone" (Lev. 3:9). The ruthless division of flesh and spirit within Christ (shown superbly in the way His wilderness temptations are recorded) must be seen in us too. We must ask if we are really taking off the fat hard by the backbone. Are we even prepared for the pain, the pain of self- knowledge and self denial which this will necessitate? For His love, His sacrifice, is not only counted to us but is to be ours.

5:3- see on Josh. 23:7.

But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you- as is appropriate among saints- These terms are all elsewhere used about sexual immorality, particularly in the context of cult prostitution. There was a tendency to mix Christian worship with the prostitution of the surrounding cults, just as there is for any Christian convert to mix their new faith with previous concepts of

religion. This was particularly a problem in Corinth but clearly it was also elsewhere in the first century.

We need to let passages like Eph. 5:3–5 have their full weight with us. Fornication, covetousness, all uncleanness should not be “named amongst us”, in the same way Israel were not to take even the names of the Gentile idols onto their lips (Ex. 23:13) – “but rather giving of thanks”, knowing that those who do such things will not be in the Kingdom of God. The Exodus allusion suggests that idol worship with its associated sexual vices is what is in view in this passage, rather than young couples in love 'going too far'. A thankful attitude, thinking and speaking of those things with which we will eternally have to do, is to replace thinking and talking about all the things which shall not be our eternal sphere of thought in the Kingdom age. And yet our generation faces the temptation like none before it – to privately watch and read of those things, vicariously involved in them, whilst being under the illusion that we're not actually doing them ourselves. For this is what the entertainment industry is based around.

5:4 Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor crude joking, which are not befitting saints; but rather the giving of thanks- Paul always gives an antidote, a new channel into which to channel the energy which would otherwise be expended on the forbidden action. Paul's vision for personal transformation is remarkable; he envisages those accustomed to coarse language instead using words of praise.

According to the New Testament, having a spirit of true thankfulness to God *in all things* should help swamp our tendency to sinfulness; the concept of praising God in gratitude should get such a grip on our way of thinking that the thinking of the flesh is thereby suppressed. Eph. 5:3,4 states this in so many words. It reels off a list of forbidden sexual thoughts and actions; and then the antidote is stated: "Let (them) not once be named among you... *but rather* giving of thanks". A few verses later the same medicine is prescribed; this time as the antidote to an unsaintly abuse of alcohol: "Be not drunk with wine... *but* be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms... singing and making melody in your heart... giving thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5:18-20). This is a laboured, triple emphasis on praise as being the antidote to drunkenness.

5:5 For this you know for sure, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God- Eph. 5:3-5 has some surprises for the attentive reader; the black words on white paper have an uncanny power: "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, *nor covetous man*, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ". It's easy to assume that the coveting is of a sexual nature. But frequently Paul reels off a list of spectacular sins and inserts in the list one or two issues we would consider rather common to all men and of a different order of failure. He does this to highlight the seriousness of those apparently lesser sins. The list of sexual perversions here are the sort of words we whisk past, in the relieved confidence that *they* don't apply to us. But covetousness is there listed as a carnal sin, along with sexual perversions. That's how bad it is. No one who is covetous will be in the Kingdom. And therefore it's hard for a rich man to be in the Kingdom. In fact, the Lord says, it's humanly impossible for a rich man to get there; it's only through God's gracious working to make it possible that it can happen, that a rich man will scrape into the Kingdom (Mt. 19:23-26). *Every one of us has the elements of covetousness very close to the surface.* Materialism is perhaps the direct equivalent of idol worship under the old covenant. They were to not even desire “the silver and gold that is on them... for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God... thou shalt utterly detest it; and *thou* [like

God] shalt utterly abhor it" (Dt. 7:25,26). God despises idolatry; and we also must go a step beyond merely avoiding materialism; we must despise it.

"This you know for sure" suggests that this hard line against covetousness and idolatry was known by all Christian converts as part of their instruction in the Gospel. "The Kingdom of Christ and God" is an unusual phrase, as usually "the Kingdom of God" is spoken about. Perhaps the idea is that God's Kingdom is also going to be that of Christ, and He should therefore reign as King over His people, who should be devoted to being Christ-like.

5:6- see on Mt. 24:4.

Let no one deceive you with empty words- This would be appropriate to a warning to better control the platform and not allow false teachers to deceive the congregation with vain words, words lacking in or empty of the Spirit.

For because of these things comes the anger of God upon the sons of disobedience- Those characterized by disobedience would surely refer to those who had heard the call to disobedience and refused it. The wrath of God is coming upon them in particular at judgment day. Paul may well have in view "the wrath to come" upon Israel in AD70 (Lk. 3:7; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16). In this case, "the sons of disobedience" would be the Jews, and those claiming they would not be so judged would be Judaist false teachers, who clearly were the big problem for Paul's churches.

5:7 Therefore do not associate with them!- Being "parkers" (AV) with those who are not Kingdom people is the opposite of being partakers in Christ (Heb. 3:14) and of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4); we are partakers in the promised Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:6). If we partake in Christ, then we partake in His Spirit. To partake in the spirit of the world is therefore impossible if we are partaking in His spirit. This contrast with the way of the Spirit would explain why in the AV, :9 starts talking about the Spirit as if this is in view in the context: "For the fruit of the Spirit..." (AV).

5:8 For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light- This is another example of appealing for us to live in practice who we are by status. This is why Romans progresses from talking about imputed righteousness and our status in Christ, to the language of the Spirit actually transforming us in practice into who we are by status. Although the readership were not walking as children of light, yet Paul says that there were "now light in the Lord", and no longer in darkness. He surely refers to their status rather than actuality, and appeals for them to live according to the status they have been granted by grace. Likewise he says that every believer at Thessalonica was one of "the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) when clearly there would have been some finally who were not. But they were counted that way by status.

At times it seems Paul 'unconsciously' uses a phrase from the parables, out of context, but as an indication that they were running through his mind (e.g. "children of light" in Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5 is quarried from Lk. 16:8).

5:9 For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth- Some manuscripts, followed by AV, read "the fruit of the Spirit". This may seem out of context, but I have argued on :7 that the entire argument here is an appeal for the Spirit rather than the flesh to be the dominant principle in Christian thought and behaviour. All kinds of goodness and truth are the fruit of the Spirit. A way of life is elicited by the Spirit / light. Light is not therefore merely correct understanding of some doctrinal points. Our participation in the Lord Jesus (:7) will elicit a life and thought pattern like His.

5:10 *Proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord*- "Proving" can mean 'experiencing'. I have argued on :7 and :9 that the context here is of the movement of the Spirit. The same Greek words for "proving" and "well-pleasing" / 'acceptable' are to be found in Rom. 12:2: "Do not conform to the mould of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may experience [s.w. "proving", Eph. 5:10) what is the good and acceptable [s.w. "well-pleasing", Eph. 5:10] and the perfect will of God". The renewing and transformation of the mind / spirit is the work of the Spirit gift which we accept at baptism into the Lord Jesus. Here in Ephesians Paul is asking us to allow the Spirit free course, to experience- for this is the way to transformation in practice, rather than by trying to force our flesh to change by steel willed self control.

5:11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*- "But rather reprove them" continues the theme so often seen in this section- of redirecting mental and spiritual energy from sin towards positive spirituality. Not sharing in the works of darkness is one thing; but enforcing our separation from wrong doing is of itself negative. The positive thing is to redirect that mere avoidance of sin into actually trying to save the sinners. Having written here of light and darkness (:8), perhaps Paul's mind is in Jn. 3:20, which says that the light is what reprove. If we are of the light we will naturally reprove the darkness; so this is an appeal in another form to live as light. Verse 13 will make this point explicitly- it is the light which reprove. I have argued throughout this section that Paul is urging us to live the life of the Spirit rather than the flesh; and it is by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit within us, that we reprove the world of sin (Jn. 16:8; 1 Cor. 14:24).

5:12 *For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret*- The sin of Ham in relation to Noah's drunkenness included the fact that he told his brothers about Noah's shame (Gen. 9:22). This incident seems to be alluded to by Paul when he says that it is a shame to speak of what sinners do in secret. A large amount of the communication which would be called 'gossip' includes the communication of sinful things which would be better not entering the minds of saints in any case- one tends to gossip about a neighbour's adultery rather than his lost cat. So the appeal here is to rebuke such wrong behaviour- but directly to the person responsible, and not by way of gossip. Nothing of course is ultimately done "in secret", so [as so often in the Bible], this is recorded from the mistaken perspective of the persons involved, without specific correction. The language of demons is another example.

5:13 *But all things when they are reprov'd are revealed by the light. For everything that is revealed then becomes light*- The day of judgment will be the ultimate bringing to light and manifesting of all supposedly hidden things (Mk. 4:22; 1 Cor. 4:5 s.w.). But we ahead of that time are used to reveal the hidden things; because light reveals, and we are the light of the world. But this is no call to become the Lord's forensic policemen, ever intent on uncovering the failings of others and constantly investigating vague hunches or conspiracy theories. Light reveals hidden things quite naturally; we as the light of the world by our nature and example will reveal and thereby reprove that which is in darkness. Likewise the revelation of human sin at the last day will largely be through the fact of sinners being in the personal presence of the Lord Jesus, just as happened during His ministry. His presence and personality of itself convicted people of their sins. The revelation of the hidden things in this life is so that those things revealed "then become light", i.e. that there is real change and transformation. The revelation of hidden things at the last day will be too late. And we have noted throughout this section that Paul envisages a

radical transformation now of darkness to light; he who steals now gives to the needy, the curser instead utters words of grace etc.

5:14 *Therefore it is said: Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall shine upon you-* At baptism, we were "quickened together with Christ" (Col. 2:13). But Paul wrote this to the baptized saints at Ephesus. As in Romans 6, he is asking them to live out in practice what they are by status. It is thought that Paul is quoting here from a first century baptism hymn; he is encouraging them to be as it were baptized again, spiritually, in coming to life in Christ. Note that the Ephesians were active in the outward work of the Truth (Rev. 2:2,3); but their real spiritual man was asleep. The resurrection from the dead with Christ at baptism was by the work of the Spirit; the same Spirit that resurrected Him likewise gives us internal new life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:11). That life will therefore have the Lord Jesus as the light, ever searching out our hidden things. After 'arising from the dead', the light of "Christ shall shine upon you". Paul has already prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians will be enlightened (1:18); he sees them as needing to arise with Christ and have His searching light shine upon them.

These lines are quoted from a Christian hymn sung at baptisms; Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 9.84 gives the fuller verse:

Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you,
the sun of resurrection,
begotten before the morning star,
who gives life by his very own rays.

5:15 *Therefore, look carefully how you walk, not as the unwise but as the wise-* "Carefully" is better "diligently", and is the same word used about Apollos who was "diligent" or 'careful' in his faith at Ephesus, and would have been known to the initial readership (Acts 18:25). Our way of life is not to simply left at a default position, as it is with most people. Life in Christ is to be consciously lived, examined and adjusted consciously. This is the true wisdom; the wise of this world are spiritually unwise, which thought provides yet another connection with the early chapters of Romans (Rom. 1:14,22). James 3:13 likewise defines "the wise" as those who live in practice a spiritual life.

5:16 *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil-* They should hurry up and make the changes Paul and their status in Christ require of them. In contexts regarding the evil of our surrounding world, Paul teaches us to 'redeem the time' (also Col. 4:5). This is a word classically used of the market place, in the sense of 'buying up' while the opportunity is there. But it is used of how the Lord has redeemed us (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). His redemption of us elicits a conscious redemption by us of our time, in His service. Yet the context demands that this pressing need to buy up time be understood in the light of the evil world around us. Is it not that Paul is saying 'Buy up all the opportunities to gain back time from this world', in the same spirit as he told slaves "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather" (1 Cor. 7:21)? This means we shouldn't glorify the use of time for the necessary things of the world. If we *must* spend our time in the things of the world, as the NT slaves simply had to, then God will accept this as done in His service. But we shouldn't use this gracious concession to do all we can in the life of the world, justifying it by saying it is done 'unto the Lord'. This concession, in its context, only applies to those who by force of circumstances really must spend their time in the things of the world (Eph. 6:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:31). We must

"break up our fallow ground" (Heb. 'plough the unploughed'), analyse ourselves from outside ourselves, and use our time and our "all things" to the utmost of their potential (Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12). We were created "unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); we were redeemed that we might be zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14)- not that we might drift through life playing with our hobbies and with the fascinations of our careers.

"Because the days are evil" may be a reference to the day of evil coming upon the world in AD70, which Paul expected to be the second coming of the Lord Jesus. His idea would then be that because the Lord's coming draws near, we should therefore use our time the more wisely. Col. 4:5 parallels this passage by asking us to redeem our time in the context of walking wisely towards outsiders, and perhaps the idea is that we should use our time in witnessing to them the more intensely as we see time running out for this world.

5:17 *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is-* Paul is asking baptized believers not to be foolish, but to be wise by understanding the Lord's will. The reference seems to be to the Lord's urging of those who know their Lord's will to prepare themselves for His return (Lk. 12:47). The foolish servant was getting drunk rather than serving the Lord's extended family (Lk. 12:43-45); and Paul goes on to speak of precisely those kinds of weaknesses (:18). We see here a call to seek understanding of what the Lord's will is for each of us personally, what specific service He hopes for in us and has potentially enabled; which good works He has "before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit-* Paul always offers an alternative to sinful behaviour, reflecting the Hebrew idea of 'holiness', which means both separation *from* [sin] and separation *unto* spiritual behaviour. Instead of alcoholism, being filled with hard spirits, we are to be filled with the Spirit. Remember he was writing to those already baptized, who had been given the Spirit at baptism. But we can be further filled with the Spirit, if we allow that to happen. The Greek *asotia* ["debauchery"] is literally 'not-saving'. Alcoholics can be saved; but the behaviours associated with alcoholism, as with any sin, are not the way to salvation. Filling with the Spirit is the answer to the alcoholic life, and has been witnessed many times in the transformation of alcoholics. Earlier in Ephesians we have read of being filled with God's fullness through the gift of the Spirit (Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:10). This filling will as it were displace the alcoholic life- for a whole new vista of existence is opened up. Clearly there were alcoholics in the Ephesian church, and Paul doesn't advise their excommunication, but rather urges transformation by the Spirit. Paul was keen for others to copy John the Baptist, to find in him the inspiration which he too had found. So he encourages his Ephesians not to drink wine but instead be filled with the Spirit- the very language of John (Lk. 1:15). In other words, 'Be like that Spirit-filled zealot John rather than enjoying the sloppy pleasures of this life!'

There are clear parallels between Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:18,19: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord... but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". Clearly the *Word of Christ* is equated with being "*filled with the Spirit*". This is not to create a primitive, direct connection between 'word' and 'Spirit'. The word of Christ refers to

the simple message that if we believe in Him, we shall be saved. And as a result, the Spirit of Christ fills our hearts (Gal. 4:5,8).

5:19 Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart- On :17 we detected reference to the parable of the servant who was to focus upon caring for others in the household rather than getting drunk. The opposite to the selfishness of alcohol abuse is to care for others; to be filled instead with the Spirit in order to speak to one another in spiritual terms. We noted on 4:29 and 5:4 that the antidote to swearing and blasphemy was to speak to the grace of others; it is our commitment to others which will motivate the changes required. This is exactly why we need the church, interaction with others and taking responsibility for assisting their spiritual path. And that should be precisely why we attend church or are involved with other believers- in order to contribute to them.

The Greek translated "to make melody" means 'to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument' (Strong)- evidently it's a musical term. The implication is that we should so know our own heart and spend time in communion with our own mind that we know how to rouse our own feelings in praise. Such self-knowledge is a sure antidote to fleshly thinking. So by all means get into Christian music; "speaking to yourselves (a reference to self-talk? Although it likely means 'speaking to each other') in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19 AV).

5:20 Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ- Gratitude is again cited as an antidote to the selfishness of alcoholism and other unspirituality. That gratitude is not to be occasional but "always and for everything", a worldview that is grateful for all things, praising in the heart (see on :19).

5:21 Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ- Another help against alcoholism and the life of the flesh is to see the Christ in others. We will submit to others in that they too are representatives of the Lord Jesus. The carnal mind, from which arises alcoholism and all unspirituality, is not subject to the spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:7); submission to Him means having His spirit within us, and so we will not be submissive to the mind of the flesh. 1 Cor. 15:28 suggests that all things are undergoing a progressive process of submission to the Lord Jesus, and when this is achieved, then the Lord Jesus will be enthroned fully in glory. This could mean that when the body of Christ is sufficiently submissive to Him, when spiritual fruit is ready for harvest, then He will come. And whilst the number of true believers appears to be in decline in the world, it would seem that true spirituality amongst them is on the increase. "All things" have been submitted under the Lord Jesus (1:22 s.w.), but we are to live this out in practice by submission to Him in our minds and living. Heb. 2:8 uses the same word in explaining that God has indeed "put all things in subjection under His feet... but now we see not yet all things subjected under Him".

5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord- This is a specific example of the principle of :21; we should submit to all in the Lord's body "out of reverence for Christ", because each member represents Him. Women were to see in their husbands the representation of the Lord Jesus, just as all members of the church were to see it in each other. Perhaps Paul particularly mentions the case of women because there may have been a tendency in Ephesus for women not to respect their believing husbands.

5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife and Christ is the head of the church-himself being the saviour of the body- The general principle of submission to each other in Christ, which includes men to women in Christ, doesn't mean that the woman is not to regard the believing husband as not being "the head". But Paul carefully balances against abuse of this by emphasizing that it is Christ who is Himself the saviour of all his body. The husband is not the saviour, but is of course to manifest that passion for salvation to his wife.

5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives should also be to their husbands in everything- The AV adds, following other manuscripts, "to their own husbands", as if there was a tendency for women to be subject to other men or teachers, instead of their husbands. This subjection to the husband is in response to his attempt to love the wife with the self-sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus for us all (:25). Perceiving any realistic attempt at emulating that should elicit respect and submission in that the woman perceives that the husband's game plan and intention is her salvation. These principles therefore apply only to man and woman in Christ; there is no suggestion here that males *per se* are to be submitted to by females simply by reason of their gender.

5:25- see on Gal. 2:20.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it- The Greek for "gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. We have shown elsewhere that His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships. No wonder therefore that Paul urges the wife to respond to the husband's attempt to reach this level with respect and submission.

The Lord carried our sins "*that* we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. wheals- Peter saw them) you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). The husband should love his wife, "even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body" (Eph. 5:30 RV). Jesus loved us as much as He loves Himself; He "cannot be separated from the work which He came to do" (R.R.). He saved Himself so as to save us. And this isn't just atonement theology- this is to be lived out in married life. As Christ died for us and gave up His last breath for us, so as a supreme act of the will, the husband must give up his life for his woman. And she can only but respond to this. These are high ideals. But the very height of them can transform human life in practice.

5:26 That he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word- The allusion is to the laver, the large bath in which the priests washed in order to be sanctified and able to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord's death was to purify us so that we might serve; and the thoughtful love of the husband for the wife is likewise aimed at providing her opportunities to serve. There is clearly an allusion to baptism; the Lord died so that we might be washed in baptism, so that we might be sanctified and thereby ready for His usage, prepared unto all good works (2 Tim. 2:21). This guiding of the wife into the Lord's service is part of a husband's love for his believing wife.

5:27 That he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and blameless- "To Himself" suggests that indeed beauty is in the eye of the beholder; the Lord Jesus aims through

His love, death and work with us to present the church without spot in His eyes. The final salvation of the wife is likewise to be the husband's aim. And in that process, despite the wrinkles of passing years, he will come to see his wife increasingly as "without spot". This is the very opposite direction to the thrust and direction of secular relationships, in which men tend to hanker after the young and physically unwrinkled. In Christ, there comes an increasing respect and positive view of our partners, matched by increasing respect on the part of the wife. This dynamism and growth in perception and respect ought to be the hallmark of true Christian marriage.

5:28 Thus husbands ought also to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself- This and :29 are not an appeal to selfishness, as if men ought to love their wives because actually they are loving themselves by so doing. The Lord Jesus joins together husband and wife as one flesh (:21). The husband who is willingly part of this process will therefore not separate his own agendas and aims from those of his wife. Love of the partner becomes love of self in that the two are joined as one by the Lord's process of binding the two parties together.

5:29- see on Rom. 6:19.

For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church- See on :28. There is of course self harm and self hatred especially in our mixed up world. But the idea that nobody hates themselves was common in the classical writers. Curtius, "*Corporibus nostris quoe utique non odimus*" - "We do not hate those things that pertain to our own bodies"; Seneca "*Fateor insitam nobis esse corporis nostri charitatem*" - "I confess that there is implanted in us the love of our own body". It could be that Paul is alluding to these ideas, not completely correct as they are, and building an argument upon them. The Bible is unafraid to do this, without footnoting, as it were, that there is an error in the original idea. The usage of the language of demons is typical. But another option in interpretation arises from considering that "hated" can mean 'to love less', as in Lk. 14:26. The Lord Jesus did not love us less than himself, and neither should the husband love his wife less than himself. The Lord's personal salvation was tied up in ours; as Robert Roberts put it, His death was "for Himself that it might be for us". And the husband's salvation likewise. The unity between man and woman is such that he will not separate his salvation from that of his wife. They are on the journey together. Hence "flesh" is used instead of "body" because of the allusion to God's joining of man and woman as one flesh (Gen. 2:23). Nourishing and cherishing refer to nurturing with a view to growth (Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 2:7). This nourishing is provided by the Lord to the body in the form of the Spirit, which is administered through the various members of the body (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19). And so likewise the husband should be the spiritual nourishment for his wife; but each member of the body should be likewise for the others, including the wife for the husband.

5:30 Because we are members of his body- The man represents Christ, and the woman the ecclesia. But the ecclesia, all of it, *is* the body of Christ; so in this sense husbands should love their wives "as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (5:28,29). The more we appreciate the strength and power of typology, the more we will realize the spiritual unity which there should be between brethren and sisters. The physical body of Christ is not divided- there is only one Jesus in Heaven. If brethren represent Christ and sisters typify His body, then there should be no division- either between husbands and wives, or amongst brethren and sisters within Christ's body. Thus marriage breakdowns and

internal ecclesial strife are equally wrong- they both spoil the typology presented in Eph. 5. They effectively tear Christ's body apart, as men tried to do on the cross. We say tried to" because ultimately Christ's body is indivisible- in the same way as in a sense His body was "broken" (as it is by division in the body), whilst in another sense it remained unbroken, in God's sight. Likewise, the ecclesial body in God's sight is even now not divided- we are one in Christ.

The figure of *being* somebody's body could not be more intense and personal, indeed it almost alludes to the sex act itself. You touch your own body, feel your bones beneath your flesh- that's fundamentally *you*. Whilst of course Christ does have a separate bodily existence, we are fundamentally Christ. Without us and our sin, Christ would not have come into existence, nor would He now exist. Joseph's brothers said: "He is our brother and our flesh" (Gen. 37:27). And some manuscripts here add: "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30 AV).

5:31 *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*- "For this cause" is hard to interpret. Because of what? Does Paul mean that the whole marriage and bonding process is to teach us of our personally becoming one with the Lord Jesus? The special psychological bonding which is given by God whereby two persons become one, over time, therefore points to the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual who is attached to Christ. And as there must be a leaving of the family of origin, so there is to be a leaving of previous spiritual associations. That point had to be emphasized to the new converts to whom Paul wrote, be they from paganism or Judaism.

The radical value attached to every individual in Christ is brought out especially by the New Testament teaching about family life. There were many pagan 'household codes', which basically exhorted the slaves, children and women to be subordinate to the male leaders of the family. Paul frames his family teaching in exactly the terms of these 'household codes' in order to bring out the significant differences between God's way and the way of society in this vital area. The fact Paul and Peter in their 'household codes' speak of the head of the house being submissive and having responsibilities to love, as an act of the will, was quite radical. But those male leaders had to learn that in Christ, everyone matters, and people can't be treated by their brethren as they are by society generally, as nothing and nobody, mere cogs in a machine. The *familia*, or extended family in contemporary thought, was of itself devaluing to persons. A woman married into her husband's extended family, and effectively lost so much of her uniqueness as an individual- indeed women were so often treated as faceless. But Paul teaches, on the sure foundation of Genesis, that a man should *leave* his parents and *cleave* to his wife (Eph. 5:31). This was far more radical than may now appear. The man was being taught that merely perpetuating the extended family, using the woman you received in your arranged marriage in order to continue and expand the family, was not in fact God's way. He was to *leave* that extended family mindset and personally *cleave* to his wife in love- love which was an act of the will. He was to start a new family unity; to love his *wife* rather than his extended family "as himself". Likewise fathers are told to bring their children up in the instruction of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 6:4)- when the task of training up children was left to the women, older children and slaves (especially the *paidagogos*) in the extended family. The value of persons implicit here was thus a call to be essentially creative, independent, perceiving the personal [rather collectively-imposed] value in both oneself and others in ones' family.

“God hath *tempered* the (ecclesial) body together... that there should be no schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12:24,25 AV) uses a related word as in Eph. 5:31 concerning how a man “shall be *joined* unto his wife... I speak concerning Christ and the church”. Because both man and woman ultimately represent Christ, there should be no schism between either believers, nor husbands and wives. Husbands and wives become “one flesh”. But “flesh” is almost equivalent to “body” (see Eph. 2:15,16; Col. 1:22)- their union of “one flesh” is parallel to the union of the “one body” within the ecclesia. We should all be “perfectly *joined* together (marriage language) in the same mind” (1 Cor. 1:10). Recall how “Israel *joined* himself unto Baalpeor” (Num. 25:3) in a sexual context. Hos. 9:10 comments on this as meaning that Israel “Separated themselves unto” Baalpeor. We cannot be ‘joined to’ something unless we are ‘separated from’ something else. If we are truly joined to Christ and each other, we *must* be separated from idolatry. It is impossible to experience this ‘joining’ with believers who are not ‘separated’- one cannot be ‘joined’ in intercourse to more than one person. We *cannot* serve two masters without *hating* God.

5:32 *This mystery is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church*- The idea of “mystery” has been used earlier in Ephesians concerning the strange and profound unity possible between Jew and Gentile in Christ. The idea of two becoming one has been used earlier about the unity of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ, the church. The bond between persons enabled by the Spirit is indeed a mystery which has now been exhibited in practice. This is why the Lord in Jn. 17 spoke of the unity which His sacrifice would enable as something new, unique and powerfully persuasive as a witness in this world. The connection with the language of Jew-Gentile unity is to make the point as noted on :31- that unity within the church is to be reflected between believing partners.

5:33 *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband*- The simple practical point is that the love of the husband for the wife, after the pattern of the Lord's love for the church on the cross, is to elicit respect from the wife to the husband. This addresses the female need for love and the male need for respect- and it all reflects the far higher level of the Lord's love for us and our submission towards Him.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right*- Given the predominance of slaves, children and women in the early churches, we are to imagine the house church meetings with plenty of women, nursing mothers, kids running everywhere. Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 seem to suppose that children would be present at the church gatherings and would listen attentively to what was said. But “in the Lord” may mean that this obedience is not simply because parents are parents. It could be a continuation of the theme of respect for the sake of being “in Christ” which was developed at the end of chapter 5. Believing children should obey their parents “in the Lord”; or perhaps, for the sake of the fact that they are “in the Lord”, seeing them as the manifestation of the Lord Jesus. The whole passage in 6:1-3 is a strange allusion to Jacob; “Jacob obeyed his father and his mother” (Gen. 28:7) by going to Padan Aram (actually he fled there, but the record frames it as if he did so purely out of obedience to his parents and from a desire to find a wife in the Faith). Because Jacob did this, God promised him at Bethel that it would *be well* with him (Gen. 32:9 = “that

it may be well with you", Eph. 6:3), and he too was given the Abrahamic promises of living long on the earth / land (= "the... commandment with promise", Eph. 6:2). Thus Jacob's fleeing to Padan Aram is seen by the Spirit in Paul as a righteous act of obedience to faithful parents, which resulted in him receiving the promises. And yet his flight was rooted in fear, and at the time he did not accept the promises as relevant to him, neither did he believe Yahweh was his God (Gen. 28:20). And yet the positive side of Jacob (i.e. his obedience to his parents) is seized on and held up as our example.

6:2 Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise)- See on :1. Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul.

6:3 That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth- The promise of 'long life' now means eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth. "Well" is the equivalent of the promise that "it may go well with you" (Dt. 5:16). The same Hebrew word is used of the blessing of Abraham to be received in the land of promise (Gen. 32:9,12). Again, the promises to Abraham are seen as the basis of the Christian hope (Gal. 3:8).

6:4- see on Eph. 5:31.

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord- This confirms that the parents and children in view are "in the Lord". The balance within the verse suggests that the opposite of nurturing in the Lord is to provoke them to anger, perhaps referring to anger at a later stage in the child's life. "Nurture", *paideia*, is literally 'education' or 'training'. The idea is that the Lord Jesus should educate our children; in the sense that we are to allow Him to operate through us in training them. We are to be the Lord Jesus in training our children; if we do not show them Him then we are not Him to them. We are to provide this nurture; Sunday School or church programs for kids are all very well, but the essential responsibility is with the parent. And any "admonition" is to be from the Lord, and not therefore motivated by a flash of anger or frustration.

6:5 Servants, be obedient to those that according to the flesh are your masters, with respect and fear, in singleness of your heart, as if to Christ- As with the commands about parents, children and marital partners, this would seem to apply to servants and masters within the church. As we each manifest the Lord Jesus because we are in Him, so servants should perceive the Christ in their believing masters. Seeing the Christ in others is what can so elevate and transform human relationships, including the difficult ones, such as between believing master and believing slave. The believing slave would have been sorely tempted to despise their believing masters, considering that really they should release them from slavery and shouldn't even be involved in slavery in the first place. To respect those who are not living as they might in Christ is hard indeed, but again, it is because they are "in Christ" that we can find the sort of respect for them which Paul found even for the Corinthians.

6:6 Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart- Whether or not the master was in Christ, the slave was allowed to serve them as if serving Christ. All the wonderful ideals of serving the Lord Jesus in works, such as evangelism and caring for others, would have seemed

unrealistic for those who were slaves. They had no freedom nor ownership even of their bodies. With what relief they would have read that their secular service could be accepted as service to the Lord. This is a comfort likewise today to those who are effectively in slavery, working on minimum wage and paying high rent and taxes. It can all be accepted as done unto the Lord, and therefore is not to be done as work done just when the master is watching ["eyeservice"], but knowing that the Heavenly Master is watching at all times, and we are pleasing Him and not men. Slaves could also reflect that their position and labour was "the will of God". By obeying the will of their masters, they were obeying the will of God. But we need to be aware that many masters asked their slaves to perform immoral deeds, especially sexually. Paul does not call for rebellion against such masters, which would likely have resulted in mutilation or death. And yet the Bible is clear that we should be obedient to men only insofar as we are not thereby disobedient to our Master in Heaven, Peter's example with regard to preaching being perhaps the clearest. The fact the question is not directly addressed is surely because we are to this day left with many such nuanced situations, where principles appear to be in conflict, and it is not the case that not following the highest path shall lead to the Lord's rejection.

6:7 Giving service with a good will, as if to the Lord and not to man- "Giving service" is literally 'being in bondage'. We are His slaves, and the force of that metaphor should not be lost upon us. The depth of that servitude should mean that our 'slavery' in secular things is not significant, compared to our deep sense of bondage to the Lord. He is our exclusive Lord, and so any human servitude is to be performed as unto Him.

6:8 Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, the same shall he receive in return from the Lord, whether he be slave or free- The 'receiving in return' is at judgment day; the same word is used of our 'receiving' a reward in response to life lived today. Not in this life, when the righteous often suffer for their goodness. *Every* good deed will then have its recognition. "Each one" again encourages us that we are taken notice of as individuals; the slaves, who probably rarely attended church meetings, may have felt that they were somehow insignificant to the Lord. Paul is encouraging them that every act of service performed in their secular lives- yes, every errand run and meal prepared- could be accepted as service to the Lord and would be rewarded at judgment day. Our status as slave or free will not be significant.

6:9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, and stop your threatening; knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him- "The same things" refers to the good things of :8. For masters to do good to slaves was a paradigm breaking idea in the first century world, where a slave was not considered a person but a machine. Clearly it is believing masters who are being addressed here, and some of them practiced "threatening"; quite against the spirit of their Lord who when He suffered, "threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23 s.w.). Masters were to realize that they too are in slavery- to the Lord Jesus. He will not take account of someone's social status in His judgments of people- "there is no partiality with Him" matches the comment in :8, "whether he be slave or free". Surely nobody actually said in so many words that the Lord took account of their higher social status; but in their hearts they assumed this, and so Paul directly tackles that attitude. I noted on 5:32 that Paul uses the same principles about the unity of Jew and Gentile to reason that husband and wife are to be united in Christ. Here too, "there is no partiality with [the Lord]" is used both about the unity between Jew and Gentile

(Rom. 2:11) and now here about the essential unity between master and slave in Christ. Paul is teaching far more than that masters and slaves should be civil, reasonable and tolerant towards each other; but beyond that, they were in fact united together as one in Christ. This is the result of baptism into the same Lord (Gal. 3:27-29).

6:10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might*- It is cold comfort to be told "be strong" when facing hard times. We have no strength of our own. But we are told here, in the Greek, to 'be strengthened in the Lord [Jesus]'. Here we have the two aspects brought together: human endeavour meshed with the Lord's activity. We are to be strong, but in His strength. The strength of the Lord's might clearly refers to His Spirit. We are strengthened with His might (1:19; Col. 1:11), and that strengthening is by the might of His Spirit in the inner man (3:16,20 s.w.). The strengthening envisaged is therefore internal, psychological strengthening. But we must wish for it- this will not happen against our will. We must seek to be strong in the Lord, putting on the armour (:11), and will be strengthened by this internal Spirit strengthening.

The following commands in :11-20 are not simply a random list of 'things we ought to do and be'. They are all based upon the pattern of the Lord Jesus. The things which are to be "put on" are a form of 'putting on Christ'. Clearly the breastplate of righteousness and belt are references to the Lord's righteousness imputed to us. As He wore the belt of truth (Is. 11:5), so we are to. We are to be like Him in practice. We take the sword of the Spirit which is "the word of God"- a reference more to the Lord Jesus than the book known as the Bible. We as it were extend His conquest by taking Him in our hand as we go on the offensive. That we extend His work in the world is the idea of Eph. 1:23: "The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere" (GNB). Our works are His workmanship, He works through us (Eph. 2:10). Feet shod with the Gospel means to witness like the Lord, of whom it was written "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good" (Is. 52:7). The helmet of salvation is likewise the Lord Jesus, "the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). So far in Ephesians, the point has repeatedly been made that we are "in Christ" and counted as Him. But we are to live in practice according to how God counts us in status. Rather like the beloved seeks to live up to the overly high opinion of the lover.

6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil*- Having spoken of the strengthening of the Spirit in :10, we are reminded that we must seek that strengthening; we must put on the armour. Our battle is essentially spiritual (:12), and so we need the armour of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which will empower us against temptation, but we must seek to put it on. See on :12. This section could be "a military speech of a general before leading the troops into battle". The order in which the armour and weapons is to be put on exactly matches Roman military patterns. Again we have a deconstruction of the cult of empire. Instead, we are the Lord's soldiers; but as noted on :10, we are to dress up as Him, the ultimate non-resister of evil. And the battle is against the flesh, it is spiritual and not literal; and there is no aspect of self glorification nor personal aggrandizement with territory or spoil. However, the excavation of a gladiator graveyard near Ephesus has led others to observe that this is rather a description of the dressing up of a gladiator as he goes into the arena to fight to the death. And whether or not "Ephesians" was

written solely to Ephesus, Ephesus was certainly one destination of this letter. "Put on" (:11) is apparently the term of command to the gladiators at the start of the conflict, when they were bidden dress themselves for the fight. "Be strong!" (:10) was the call to the gladiators as they went into conflict. "Receive the helmet... the sword" (:17) speaks of the gladiator being given these items by the attendant. The final reference to "undying love" (:25) alludes to the glory of the 'undying' gladiator who wins every fight. We are 'undying' in that our love is undying, and death itself will not conquer that love, for we shall be resurrected to love Him again and for ever. The footwear was to be "bound" to the feet, so what is in view is distinctly 'sandals' rather than classic military boots. Sandals were appropriate for gladiators in an arena rather than for soldiers marching off on a campaign. And yet the imagery is totally reinterpreted; these preparations for fighting are all applied to the gentle things of the spiritual life, in this case "put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace". We should always be on the lookout for opportunities to proclaim peace with God- rather than opportunities to bring down our opponent. John Thomas rightly admitted that he had spent too much of his life in wrong spirited "theological gladiatorship". Likewise "we... wrestle" (:12) can be taken as an allusion to gladiatorship rather than military warfare. And in the end, gladiators were all slain. In this case, we are called like the Lord to go forth to fight unto our death, but with ultimate victory assured. For the Christian, death in battle is the "magnificent defeat". "The day of evil" (:13) was a phrase used for the day a gladiator died in battle. But the day of defeat turns into the day when we stand in glory. Just as the Lord's death was in fact His ultimate victory. In Him, loss, defeat and death itself becomes the ultimate victory. But the focus of the passage here is on the preparation of the gladiator- putting on his belt and footwear, 'taking' his various pieces of armour and weapons. The focus is on the preparation for the fight, rather than the fight itself. Because the idea is that ultimate victory is assured, because the picture of the gladiator or soldier is in fact the picture of the Lord Jesus, who won through the defeat of death. Indeed, the lack of any reference to the fight itself is noticeable. The idea almost seems to be that this gladiator clothes himself with armour, "stands" in victory before the fight, just stands there, falls in "the evil day" but by the same token, strangely rises up to stand in final victory.

6:12 For we do not wrestle only against flesh and blood, but also against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies- The Greek for "wrestle" means literally a fight, not as in a battle, but a fight between two individuals. It alludes to the gladiator, not a soldier. At least three possible interpretations present themselves. The language is partly relevant to Angels; yet also to the Judaizers and also to the Roman authorities. Those three possibilities can mesh with each other. Paul is writing in Jewish terms to a group under the influence of Judaizers and Jewish thinking. The Old Testament presents the world as under the control of Angels, with each power group having Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven. For "spirits" see on Dan. 10:20,21. Paul sees the Christian conflict as not only against their own flesh and blood, or even against individual humans; but against systems of wickedness, both Judaist and Roman. Both groups were involved because the Jews were seeking to use Roman power and litigation to destroy the Christians, just as they had in the crucifixion of the Lord. And yet Paul frames the conflict in terms of Angels because he sees great comfort in the fact that all situations on earth are allowed by Angelic control, and God is not unaware of the earthly situation. We find this kind of approach

commonly used in Revelation. Here, the "principalities and powers" can refer therefore both to literal Angels and to those they represent in the Roman system; the wicked spirits in heavenlies can refer to Judaizers within the church as well as to their representatives in the throne room of Heaven.

As regards common misunderstanding of this passages, note that the world is under God's control, not that of evil beings in heaven (Dan. 4:32). "All power" in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Mt. 28:18) by God (Rev. 3:21; Lk. 22:29), so it cannot also be possessed by wicked beings in heaven. There can be no sinful being in Heaven itself (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10). There is much figurative language in vv. 11–17 – the armour of the Christian is figurative, as is the wrestling, seeing that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24); v. 12 should be similarly interpreted. If the "Devil" was cast out of heaven in Eden, how could he and his followers still have been in the literal heavens in Paul's time?

The same phrase "Principalities and powers" is used in Col. 2:15 concerning the Angels who gave the Law. The phrase "wiles" (:11) is only used again in 4:14 ("Lie in wait") regarding the Judaizer-devil circulating false doctrine. The rulers of the Jewish heavenlies were both literal Angels and the Judaizers whom they represented in the court of Heaven. Eph. 6:13 warns of a forthcoming battle: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day"- the spiritual battle between the Law of Moses and that of Christ which is detailed in Rev. 12. Paul could see that in the final conflict against the Judaizers, he would need courage to speak out as he should: "Pray... for me... that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel" (v. 19)- a phrase often used in connection with Gentiles and Jews having equal standing with God through Christ.

The Greek for "wrestle" in Eph. 6:12 is the same word as "cast out" in Rev. 12. The battle of the Christians then was not to cast out men- "we wrestle not against flesh and blood". This is a real difficulty for any 'explanation of difficult passages' that tries to make this refer to human rulers alone. It was the Jewish devil that needed casting out, and the Angel principalities and powers which co-ordinated it. There is no doubt that "principalities and powers" does also refer to Jewish and Roman authorities (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Mt. 7:29 etc.). This is to be expected once we understand that the devil and satan of the New Testament often refers to both Jewish and Roman systems and the Angels behind them. Remember that the Angels rule the world. God's system of manifestation remains constant. In the same way as the "pattern of things in the Heavens" in the Angelic organization there was repeated on earth through the organization of the tabernacle and the *elohim* of Israel's judges and priests, so that Heavenly system is maybe also reflected through the judges and leaders of the world, every one of whom is controlled by an Angel. Hence the identical language used for both Angels and worldly rulers- in the same way as Angel-Cherubim language is used concerning both Angels and earthly armies, e.g. of Babylonians, who fulfilled their will.

This passage seems a footnote to the epistle: "Finally, my brethren..." (v. 10). This is similar to the footnotes begun in Phil. 3:1; Gal. 6:12 and 1 Tim. 6:20, all of which warn against the Judaizers - indicating the immense importance Paul attached to the coming struggle with the "Principalities and powers".

The context is set in v. 13. The preparation was to be because the church was facing "the evil day". This refers to a period of especial persecution of the church, which was to come at the hands of the Romans, seeing they were the only people with enough power to create an "evil day" for the Christian church at the time Paul was

writing. (1 Pet. 4:12; 5:8–9). The wrestling was against “the rulers of this dark world”, who at the time were the Romans. Note that the wrestling is spiritual wrestling to keep the faith (2 Cor. 10:3–5). This time of evil had already begun as Paul was writing (Eph. 5:16) – “the days are evil”. “Principalities” is translated “magistrate” in Luke 12:11; human “rule”, in the sense of human government, in 1 Corinthians 15:24, and the “power” of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20. So it does not necessarily have reference to any power or prince in heaven. “Powers” is translated as the “authority” of the Roman governor in Luke 20:20, and regarding one having “authority” in Matthew 7:29. We must “be subject to principalities and powers” (Titus 3:1) in the sense of earthly governments, insofar as they do not ask us to do things which are contrary to the law of God (Acts 5:29; 4:19; Mt. 19:17). If “principalities and powers” are evil beings in heaven whom we must resist, why are we told to be subject to them? If we accept that they refer to human governors and authorities, then this is easily understandable. “Heavenly places” may also refer to positions of authority in the secular world. Thus the king of Babylon was a figurative “star” in heaven (Is. 14:12), i.e. a great ruler. Jesus is the “sun” (Mal. 4:2), the saints are the “stars” (Dan. 12:3) of the future order. The present “heavens” of man will be replaced by the new Heavens when the Kingdom is established on the earth (2 Pet. 3:13), i.e. the positions of power and rulership, now in the hands of sinful men, will be handed over to the true Christians. The saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdoms of men (Dan. 7:27). Thus wicked spirits in the “heavens” could refer to men of wicked minds in places of power in the world who were persecuting the Christians.

“Wicked spirituals in high (heavenly) places” does not refer to wicked beings in heaven itself. The exalted position of the true believers in Christ is described as being “in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:6). “Spirituals” can be used to describe those in the church who had the gift of the spirit; having given a list of commands as to how the gifts of the spirit should be used, Paul concludes: “If any man (in the church) think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual (i.e. spiritually gifted, see N.I.V.), let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). 1 Corinthians 14 shows there was a big problem in the church of believers misusing the spirit gifts. Hebrews 6:4–6 describes some Jewish Christians in the first century who had the gift of the spirit, but who were leading the church away from true Christianity by their attitude. These would be a prime example of wicked spirituals in the heavenlies (i.e. in the church). The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25, cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple. In the same way as wicked people could be in the temple, so, too, they could be in the heavenlies of the church. Possession of the Spirit did not mean that someone was necessarily acceptable in God’s sight, e.g. Saul possessed it for a time (1 Sam. 10:10) as did the judges of Israel (Num. 11:17) although they were not righteous; they did not believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and therefore were condemned to die like the other Israelites, despite their having the Spirit – Psalm 82:1–7 says as much. For a period the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 possessed the gifts despite their errors, until eventually their candlestick was removed (cp. Acts 20:28–29; Eph. 4:11; Rev. 2:5). Thus the wicked spirits in the heavenlies were apostate Christians within the church, in league with the Judaists, leading the church into an “evil day” of temptation.

Thus the threat to the church was twofold: from the Roman/Jewish persecution and from the (often Judaist) “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13) within. Remember Ephesians 6:11–13 was written to the church at Ephesus. Paul had previously warned them about this threat from within: “For I know this, that after my departing shall

grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30). Rotherham’s translation brings this out well: “Our struggle is against the principalities against the authorities against the world – rulers of this darkness, AND against spiritual wickedness in heavenlies”.

It is possible to still interpret “the Devil” in v. 11, as having a certain degree of reference to the “Jewish Satan”. The “Heavenly places” of v. 12 may refer to the Jewish heavenlies; 2 Peter 3 and Deuteronomy 32:1 speak of the Jewish heavens. This is strengthened by the fact that the “sun, moon and stars” are sometimes figurative of the Jews (e.g. Genesis 22:17; 37:9; Dan. 8:9,10,24). We have shown that the wicked spirituals may have reference to the Jewish Christians who were spirit-gifted, but turned to apostasy. They would thus be in both the Christian and Jewish “heavenlies”. The threat from within the church posed by the Judaizers infiltrating the church, who were Jews. Thus “the Devil” was manifested in the Roman authorities *and* the Jews within the Christian church. The two entities were connected insofar as the Jewish synagogue powers often informed the Roman authorities against the Christians.

The “wiles of the Devil” offers support to the Jewish context in that the Greek word for “wiles” is elsewhere translated “to lie in wait to deceive”, in a verse which talks about the Judaizers subtly trying to introduce false doctrine into the church: the church was being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). If the “heavenly places” also represent the Jewish system, further meaning is given to Ephesians 3:3–10: “The mystery... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs (with the Jews), and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel... To make all men (both Jews and Gentiles) see what is the fellowship of the mystery... To the intent now that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”, i.e. that by the church showing the unity that existed between Jew and Gentile within it, the Jewish leaders (“principalities and powers in heavenlies”) might come to appreciate “the manifold wisdom of God”. This, in turn, opens up John 17:21: “That they all (Jews and Gentiles) may be one... that the world (this phrase almost always means the Jewish world in John’s Gospel) may believe that You have sent me”. The “evil day” of v. 13 would be a result of the Judaizers, who were “evil men and seducers” (2 Tim. 3:13).

Another approach is to be found by considering the view that many of the later New Testament documents are full commentary upon and critical allusion to popular ideas of false religion which were circulating at the time. The commentary of David Pitt-Francis on Ephesians 6 bears quoting at more length:

“The object of the Christian message was to shake such imagined deities out of their places, so that men would give real glory to Christ, and to the God of Heaven alone. Paul describes the conflict of Christian witness as a struggle, not against flesh and blood but... “against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”. To many unacquainted with the real impact of the gospel, both sun and moon seemed to have personalities which they did not possess, as did the stars of heaven, heaven itself, and those exalted parts of nature such as mountains and islands. Thus Isaiah 2, which contains primarily a prophecy against idolatry in Israel and describes idol-worship in the context of ‘high mountains’ and ‘lofty hills’ contains a description of the flight of men into caves and holes of the rocks from the terror of God, and this description is borrowed in Revelation. The end of the worship of sun, moon and stars is also foretold by Isaiah in a later passage, where the imagined gods of heaven are

described as being punished: "On that day, the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven – and the kings of the earth, on earth – they will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit... then the moon will be ashamed, and the sun confounded for the Lord of hosts will reign" (David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester: Mark Saunders Books, 1984) chapter 4).

6:13 *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to withstand it; and after you have done everything, to stand firm-*

"To stand" is the ultimate picture. It alludes to the victorious gladiator standing fully clothed in armour. Again, the image of 'standing' is of a gladiator's victory, not of a Roman soldier. The section begins in :11 with a call to "stand" ["Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand"] and concludes with the armoured man standing. The idea is that victory in this fight is certain, just as the faithful servants went off to trade in an uncertain world convinced that they couldn't lose but only gain. Strengthened by putting on the Lord Jesus... in Him... we have to win. Every time. And at the end, in the fight of our lives, we shall "stand" or 'be stood up' at the day of judgment. Gladiators were typically slaves, often those who had significantly sinned; and winning spectacular victory was often rewarded with freedom from slavery. That too is perhaps an intended aspect of this parable.

See on :12. Protection against spiritual destruction was not therefore simply in their own strength; they were to put on God's defences. Once they had done all they humanly could, the Divine defence would operate. The same idea is found in :17. It is this huge spiritual power which enables us, as David against Goliath, to successfully "withstand" evil. The same word is used in teaching that we are not to resist evil in physical, secular terms (Mt. 5:39). We are to resist evil- but in spiritual terms. I explained on :12 that the evil in view was the power of Judaism seeking to destroy Christianity in league with the Roman authorities. The same word for "withstand", often translated "resist", is used of how the Gospel of grace was resisted by Judaists and Romans (Acts 13:8; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:15), but the power of the Christian defence / resistance could not be 'withstood' (Lk. 21:15; Acts 6:10; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:9). We in our last days face a final time of evil which shall swamp the believers unless they are armed with God's defences, which basically refer in various forms to "the Spirit". The armour described is all defensive; the peace of God (surely a reference to the Spirit) keeps hearts and minds in Christ (Phil. 4:7).

6:14 *Stand therefore, having girded yourself with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness-* "The breastplate of righteousness" was understood by Jewish ears as referring to the High Priestly breastplate. No ordinary Israelite would ever have had the ambition to dream of wearing it. But as often, Paul calls the believers to the heights of spiritual ambition. They were not mere spectators at a show, but participants, the priestly tribe, called to do even the work of the High Priest on earth. The girdle or belt of truth enabled the Christian to flee swiftly; being girded on Passover night spoke of being able to flee quickly. And it is "truth", our covenant relationship with the Lord, which psychologically keeps us mobile from temptation, binding our minds together rather than us having the disordered and loose mind of the unbeliever.

6:15 *And having shod your feet with the readiness to announce the gospel of peace-* This is in the context of defensive measures against temptation and tribulation. Being prepared to witness to the Gospel is of itself a means of defence against temptation; for the work of witness means we will not be in league with the world but separate from it in a spiritual sense. "Peace" has been earlier used in the letter regarding peace in relationship between Jew and Gentile because of the peace with

God which is in Christ (2:14,15,17; 4:3). The good news is not simply of a future eternity upon planet earth *reddevivus*. It is far more than that. It includes the genuinely good and attractive news of reconciliation between persons who would otherwise have remained intractably separated.

Eph. 6:15 speaks of our each being 'sandalized' with the preparation of the Gospel. Who prepared the way of the Lord by preaching, wearing sandals? John the Baptist. It seems Paul is alluding to John here, setting him up as the preacher's example; and it was John who was described as 'preparing' the Lord's way, using the same word as here translated "readiness". The reference to "loins girt" (Eph. 6:14) would also be a John allusion- the record twice (in Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6) stresses how John had his 'loins girded'. See on Mt. 10:32. Wearing sandals again shows that the image is not of a Roman soldier, who wore boots, but of the gladiator in the arena. It is the Lord Jesus who has earlier been defined as the preacher of peace in Ephesians: "he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near" (Eph. 2:17). So again we see that the believer is being asked to clothe themselves with Christ, to have His attributes, to be strong "in Him".

6:16 *Meanwhile taking up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil-* "Taking up" here as in :17 carries the idea of receiving, accepting, as David received Saul's armour. The idea is not simply that our own faith will be our shield. That would be somewhat axiomatic, and the power of resistance and defence would rest with us alone. I suggest the idea is that we are to accept the shield of Spirit defence against temptation, which shield we receive if we believe we shall be given it. We are to believe that truly the Lord is able to keep us from spiritually falling (Jude 24). The fact He is able to do this shows of itself that we can be fortified over and above our own efforts. Otherwise He would have no role to play in keeping us from falling.

6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God-* "Take" as in :16 really means to receive or "accept" (GNB); see note on :16. We are to take the defensive armour of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which will keep us from falling; the helmet guards the head, the mind, the thinking, which Paul presents as the essence of Christianity. The Spirit is the guarantee that we will be finally saved, it is the earnest of the possession yet to be received in final salvation (1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). Believing this will keep our minds in peace; if really we are persuaded that we shall eternally live the spiritual life, we shall not give in to petty temptation now. But we must clothe ourselves with that as a helmet, just as we must of our own volition clothe ourselves with Christ in baptism. We receive not 'the-sword-of-the-Spirit', but the sword which is the Spirit or given by the Spirit. "The word [*rhema*] of God" is not necessarily the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; for not all the Bible had then been written. Paul in Rom. 10:8,17 understands this term to mean the Gospel. And the Spirit is available from believing the Gospel. And the *rhema* of God is likewise understood as the Gospel message in Acts 10:22 and often. The *rhema* of the Lord is specifically stated to be the promised gift of the Spirit in Acts 11:16. Experiencing the *rhema* of God was to experience the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:5). The grammar requires that the sword and not the Spirit is the word of God. The Spirit therefore gives us God's word; it is incorrect here to draw a direct equivalence between the Spirit and the word. The Spirit can give help through God's word- Bible verses can be brought to our mind in the battle against temptation. But the "word" in view is, as suggested above, specifically the word of the Gospel, the good news of the Spirit's help to us in times of need. This is the nourishment and strength ministered to us by the Lord

Jesus, "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 4:4), in our times of spiritual crisis (Heb. 4:15,16). We note that the word used for "sword" here is that for a short sword or dagger, appropriate to a gladiator, and not to the larger "sword" of the Roman soldier.

6:18- see on Lk. 12:37.

With all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit; and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints- "At all times" is really 'on every occasion'. Every occasion of temptation or testing is to be met by prayer; and we are not to simply pray for ourselves, but for others as we observe them in times of crisis. This suggests that spiritual strengthening is partly dependent upon the prayers of third parties for us. This is the reason for fellowship with other believers, opening up to others our spiritual needs. And it is why we should be continually in prayer for others- for we can play a role in their eternal salvation, just as they can in ours. Paul has listed six items in the defensive armour of the spiritual warrior; prayer is the seventh. This is the ultimate and completing weapon we are to use in withstanding temptation and the day of trial. "Prayer and petition" are hard to define separately; the sense may be that "prayer" is more general, and "petition" refers to specific supplication in time of specific need. Prayer "in the Spirit" surely connects with how the same phrase has been used earlier, of how "in Christ" we are the temple of God and are indwelt by His Spirit. If the promised Spirit of God dwells in us, then we are "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9). So the idea would be that those who are aware of the indwelling of the Spirit and live "in the Spirit" will pray "in the Spirit", in that same atmosphere, for the Spirit to provide the spiritual defence against temptation which the previous verses have offered. We are to pray whilst being alert / awake, in the spirit of the disciples in Gethsemane, indeed, in the spirit of the Lord Jesus praying there; see on Mt. 26:41. For He there was surely praying for us; and we with His Spirit are to pray for the spiritual perseverance of others in time of trial. This was exactly what the Lord was praying for in Gethsemane, whilst the disciples slept.

6:19 *And on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel-* Paul saw the Lord's "boldness" as an imperative to him to likewise be "bold" in preaching (Eph. 6:19). We all find it hard to be bold in witness, and yet in this as in all spiritual endeavour, 'thy fellowship shall make me strong'. A deeper sense of the presence of Jesus, a feeling for who He was and is, a being with Him, will make us bold too. Even Paul found it hard; he asked others to pray for him, that he would preach "boldly" [s.w.] 'as he ought to' (Eph. 6:20 AV); and their prayers were heard, for in his imprisonment during which he wrote Ephesians, he preached boldly (Acts 28:31 s.w.); indeed, boldness characterised his whole life (Phil. 1:20 s.w.). In passing, we note how Paul felt spiritually weaker than he was; he felt not bold, when he was bold; and we see how the admission of weakness to others and their prayers for it can grant us the victory we seek. The point is, who the Lord is, we are. Or, we must be. If He was bold, if He was apt to teach and patient, so must we be; indeed, so are we, if we are truly in Him. Likewise, all the Father is, we are to manifest if we bear His Name. We should daily pray for opportunities to witness ("utterance").

6:20- see on Mt. 26:35.

For which I am an ambassador in chains- Again we sense Paul's resentment of his chains, his limitations; but he doesn't become demotivated, he seeks for ways to serve and witness all the same, and asks others to pray for him that he might be able to still be the Lord's ambassador despite them. This should be our example, as we all

feel limited in some ways. There is an intended juxtaposition in ideas between being an ambassador, and yet being "in chains". The Lord's Kingdom has ambassadors / diplomats who are "in chains", who are not qualified at all in secular terms, indeed, who might appear to be precluded from such a role by the limitations of their position in life. But that is precisely the Lord's style and way of operation with us.

That in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak- After his conversion, we sense from the record of the preaching that Paul was in his element. The record of his early preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem is recorded with the same rubric: he preached "boldly", and on each occasion it seems he would have gone on, utterly oblivious of the fact he was heading for certain death, had not the other brethren "taken" him and quietly slipped him out of those cities (Acts 9:27). The same word translated "boldly" occurs later, years later, when Paul asks his converts to pray for him, that he would speak "boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:20). He has already asked them this in v.19; he asks for the same thing twice. And he confessed his same problem to the Colossians (Col. 4:4). As he got older, he found it harder to be bold. First of all, in those heady days in Jerusalem and Damascus, it was the most natural thing in the world for him. But as time went by, it became harder for him to do this.

6:21 *But so you may also know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, shall make known to you all things-* Tychicus is mentioned as running errands and messages (Tit. 3:12; Col. 4:7), and from his prison cell Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). This is another indication that Ephesians was written initially specifically to Ephesus, regardless of what later usage the letter had. Such "messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23) were vitally important in a period of very limited communications. In essence we can take the lesson that we should likewise sacrifice time and effort in order to keep the body of Christ informed of each other.

6:22 *Whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts-* Tychicus was sent from Paul's prison cell right at the end of his life, it would seem (2 Tim. 4:12 "I sent Tychicus to Ephesus"). Yet Paul looked out from his own immediate needs and sacrificed one of his few stable friends and encouragers, in order to comfort *them* and to tell them about his "state", so that they might pray for him. This was how much he valued prayer for him.

6:23 *Peace be to the believers and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ-* These wishes of peace, love and faith have real power. Paul clearly believed that his prayerful desire for their spiritual growth would result in them actually increasing in peace, love and faith. These are all fruits of the Spirit, or aspects of love, the one fruit; and he believed that his desire for them to be spiritually minded in these ways would produce actual fruit. It is an awesome concept- that we can actually positively influence the spirituality of others.

6:24 *Grace be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love-* "Grace" often refers to the gift of the Spirit, the power of new life within the heart of the believer. Paul has just wished them peace, love and faith- all results or fruits of the Spirit. Paul wishes them this gift and the spiritual growth which will come from it. "Undying love" is a fair effort to translate a difficult phrase, but the same word is elsewhere translated "immortality" and "incorruption". The love we now have for the Lord Jesus is an eternal love- in that, as John's Gospel expresses it, we can live the life we shall eternally live right now. The love we have for the Lord now is the love we shall eternally have. This highlights the profound and eternal importance of who we are now; our love for Him now is an attribute we shall eternally display, indeed we could say that the type of love we now have for Him, the relationship we have with

Him now, is what we shall eternally enjoy. And that is going to be unique, slightly different, for each of us.