

OBSERVATIONS ON EPHESIANS:

A Help to Interpretation

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INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

Ephesus

The great city of Ephesus lay on the main route between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire, and was one of the major cities of the ancient world. By Paul's time, it had become the capital city of the province of Asia (in modern Turkey). Ephesus was renowned as a "political, commercial, and religious center." We are also told that "it boasted a 25,000 seat theatre, a race course, and the temple of Diana...one of the seven wonders of the ancient world." (R. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 242).

The city's prosperity was due not only to its being one of the great ports of the Mediterranean, but also to its status as the center of the cult of Artemis (known as "Diana" to the Romans). The goddess Diana was regarded "as queen over both the heavenly powers, including the potent zodiacal powers, and the gods of the underworld." (M. Turner, *New Bible Comm. 21st Century* ed. 1228). Local artisans crafted statuettes of the image of Diana in the temple, and these were thought to have magical powers. Diana was believed to have a "magical influence in the unseen world [which] encouraged astrology and sorcery." (D. E. Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament* 2.255) It was because of the threat that Christianity posed to this religion that the city was in uproar at Paul's preaching in Acts 19:23-41.

It was crucial, therefore, that Paul emphasize the superiority of Christ over *all* powers, Diana included (Eph. 1:10, 19-22; 2:2, 3:9, 10, 16, 20; 6:10ff). One recent book puts it very well: "Ephesians strongly emphasizes the theme of power; the whole concern of Hellenistic magic was to obtain access to and use supernatural power, a power gained by manipulating the spirit world. Ephesians, more than any other epistle in the NT, addressed the Christian response to the spirit world and provides teaching on the power of God." (C. E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic*, 39). And we are not surprised to read in Acts 19:11-20 of open manifestations of God's power in this pagan city.

Character of the Letter.

It is generally conceded by saints and unbelievers alike, that Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus is one of the most sublime creations in the whole of literature.¹ Unending tribute has been paid to this "queen of the epistles," and this in spite of the fact that it is the most impersonal of Paul's writings. One writer has said, "Ephesians is more general in character than any other of Paul's epistles." (T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament I*, 484).

Yet in spite of this, the letter is written in a sustained loftiness of thought, which rises to greater descriptive heights than any other New Testament document in its setting out of the doctrines of the Church, the Headship of Christ, and the Supremacy of God. The teaching is profound, and some would argue, "Ephesians is the deepest book in the New Testament." (Hiebert, 2.267). Paul offers no small prospect to his readers; his subject matter is heavenly. Our full concentration is prerequisite to a fruitful understanding of his language. "It is the greatness of this epistle which makes its meaning so difficult to apprehend. Its thoughts are too big for its words." (W. G. Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* 3.198).²

Although its doctrine is profound, this book is arguably the place where modern Christians need to meditate in the most. Today's saints need a vision of their place within God's grand purpose that frees them from the insular rigidity of so many local churches. We must begin to see how we function within the family of God: that we are an integral part of the 'big picture,' which Paul is presenting us with. When we see this we can better appreciate the role of our local church in God's purpose.

Theme.

The truths pertaining to the Church in Christ Jesus are most conspicuous in Ephesians. By the Church we mean "...the whole family in heaven and earth..." (3:15). As Hiebert observes, "No local church is mentioned...its theme is rather the Church universal, the Church as the Body of Christ." (Hiebert, 2.267, 268)³

The didactic and aloof tone of the epistle makes it certain that Paul is not writing to the Ephesian congregation about *their* local church. Throughout, the vision is of all the children of God (1:5). Paul speaks of "the Body" (1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30); "the Church" (1:22, 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32); "the household of God" (2:19); "the family" (3:15); and "the Temple" (2:21). In none of these places is Paul speaking about a local assembly. In fact, by just looking at 2:16, 3:6, 21, 4:12, 5:23, 25, 27, 32, any reader would be forced to admit that the universal Church is to the fore in the Ephesian letter. Again, this is admitted by all interpreters. For example, the Baptist, Scroggie writes, "The 'Church' of this epistle is not any local assembly, nor any denomination, but the aggregate of all believers in Christ, disciples of Christ everywhere throughout the Christian age." (Scroggie, 3.182) Or, more recently, "Clearly the writer wants his readers to catch the vision of one church, thoroughly united in the Lord, though it contains members of various races and is equipped by God to render significant service in this world." (D. A. Carson, D. J. Moo, L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 315).

The unity of the Body is given emphasis in this epistle (2:5-7, 13-22 [note especially the oneness in Christ of Jewish and Gentile believers]; 3:67; 4:1-13, etc.) To bring out his theme the apostle pictures the Church as a Body (1:22, 23; 4:16) a building (2:20-22) and a Bride (5:25-32).

Author.

It may come as a bit of a surprise to discover that Ephesians is not considered to be from the hand of Paul by the majority of modern 'scholarship.' This is because of the influence of naturalistic criticism creeping into conservative circles. What have we to say about it? Certainly there is no need for Bible-believers to panic. Apostolic authorship has been very ably defended (see especially Zahn, I, 500-522).⁴ In fact, it was not even disputed until the second half of the 19th century. The letter itself declares its author (1:1, 3:1). Those who object to Pauline authorship (e.g. C. L. Mitton, A. T. Lincoln) have yet to come up with arguments strong enough to challenge the compelling evidence, both internal and external. As one modern writer expresses it, "When all objections are carefully considered it will be seen that the weight of evidence [of those who say Paul did not write Ephesians] is inadequate to overthrow the overwhelming external attestation to Pauline authorship, and the epistle's own claims." (D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 507).

Date.

Ephesians is usually dated around 60-62 AD. According to 3:1, 4:1, and 6:20, Paul was in prison, assuredly in Rome (despite some opinions to the contrary)⁵ from there he sent by Tychicus the letters to the Colossians, Philemon (with Onesimus) and this one to the believers at Ephesus (6:21, 22). Most conservative scholars date Ephesians to this period.⁶

The Ephesian Church.

The Apostle Paul founded this church on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Reading on in Acts 18, it looks as if Aquila and Priscilla and their new convert, Apollos, helped to establish the work (we cannot think that Apollos did nothing in Ephesus.) When Paul returned, he stayed in Ephesus for 3 years (20:31) building up the Christians there. By the time the Ephesian church received this letter, they would have been a large and very well-informed congregation.⁷

¹ Lloyd-Jones begins his great series on Ephesians with these words:

“As we approach this Epistle I confess freely that I do so with considerable temerity. It is very difficult to speak of it in a controlled manner because of its greatness and because of its sublimity. Many have tried to describe it. One writer has described it as ‘the crown and climax of Pauline theology.’ Another has said that it is ‘the distilled essence of the Christians religion, the most authoritative and most consummate compendium of our holy Christian faith.’ What language! And it is by no means exaggerated.” (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose*, 11)

² “The language...has difficulty in compassing the thought, struggling in...flow of words, in linked sentences, with the presentation of an idea that transcends it...” (K. Braune, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, in Lange’s Commentary, 3)

³ To say this is not to throw out the doctrine of the local church. The local church is the means whereby God works through believers in their community. To hold to the one should not lead us to reject the other.

⁴ See also W. Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 32-56.

⁵ Some interpreters place the writer in prison at Caesarea or even Ephesus itself. Their speculations need not detain us here.

⁶ E.G. T. Zahn, I, 492; H. C. Thiessen, 245; R. C. H. Lenski, 327; R. Gromacki, 245; H. Hoehner, 614.

⁷ When one considers that after Paul, both Timothy and (according to strong tradition) the Apostle John succeeded him as overseer of the Church at Ephesus. This might account for the severity of Christ’s warning given to this church in Revelation 2:5.

EPHESIANS – Chapter 1:1-14

Chapter 1:1-2: Salutation.

The apostle Paul, now a prisoner in Rome, addresses the assembly of Christians at Ephesus, whom he had last seen about six years previously.¹ In the opening verse, he states his apostleship as being **by the will** (*thelema*) **of God**. No one could take to himself the title and authority of an apostle of Jesus Christ without the special call unique to an apostle. This calling included sign-gifts (2 Cor. 12:12) and witnessing the resurrected Lord (cf. Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1). In 2:20, the apostles and New Testament prophets are called the *foundation* upon which the household of God rests.

In some of his epistles (e.g. Phil.; 1 & 2 Thess.), Paul does not feel the need to state his apostleship at the head of the letter. Here however, where deep teaching about the plan and purpose of God for the Church is being put across, he perhaps saw a need to stamp it with apostolic authority from the start.

Paul writes to, **the saints** (*hagiois* – separated [holy] ones), **and to the faithful in Christ Jesus**. Ephesians is written to all Christians; those **at Ephesus**, but also, we think, to churches around that city² and, because of its universal character (see esp. 3:15), to all God's people.

Grace be to you, and peace...(v. 2). Both the words, grace and peace, are important words within this letter.³ The reason we can know peace is because of God's grace (cf. Rom. 5:1-2).

In the ancient world, letters usually began with a short salutation, not unlike the ones that Paul uses for his epistles. The author's name and that of the addressee, and a short greeting was the usual way for letters to begin (e.g. Acts 15:23ff, 23:26). However, Paul makes of this characteristic greeting an address from God, the Bestower of a Christian's blessings.

Chapter 1:3-14: Paul's Thanksgiving.

This magnificent flood of praise to the Father⁴ comes from the wellspring of joy Paul feels when trying to communicate to the Ephesians what God has done for them. It is important for Christians to see that all of their many spiritual blessings—past, present, and future—are theirs *because they are Christ's*: or, to use Paul's own language, because they are **in Christ**. In the far reaches of eternity, God **blessed us with all spiritual blessings**. There is no reason to think that this equates to immaterial blessings only. We must be careful not to too strongly associate the spiritual with the non-substantial (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:42-49). These blessings are spiritual (not spiritualized!) because God is [a] Spirit, and all His children are fundamentally spiritual as well as corporeal creatures.

The blessings include joy, peace, faith, love, strength for the day, hope, and fellowship, in this life. These are perfected and conjoined with glorification, sinlessness, and as yet undefined 'treasures' in the future. The **heavenly places** (Gk. "Heavenlies" -1:20, 2:6, etc.) probably refer to the spiritual realm of the kingdom of Christ (cf. Col. 1:13), and not just to Heaven. If the phrase referred only to Heaven, it would mean one could not know any of these blessings while still on earth.

Just as our blessings were held in store for us, even so our very choosing and destination were enacted in Christ **before the foundation of the world** (v.4). That is to say, we were chosen in Christ in eternity past to be holy, blameless, and loving, in imitation of our Divine Father. This implies that the creation was one in which service was integral to the perfecting of God's world. The fall did not catch God unawares. It was within the Plan from the very beginning. The corruption and profanation of the original creation was no less evil because foreknown by God. God did not make man disobedient. And God did not forsake man in disobedience. Creation was a project from the start (Gen. 1:26-30), and the intrusion of sin has not altered God's purpose. In line with this the verse clearly shows that God does not save simply to rescue, but to use (cf. 2:10; Tit. 2:14).

We cannot accede to the view that the phrase, "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" be construed in the Arminian sense of God simply foreseeing who would believe. Of course, that is part of it, but it is not the whole story, and cannot be. The Lord God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. That is, He knows all things, He empowers and upholds all things, and He observes all things. God knows all true states of affairs. If He predicts the naming of Cyrus, or the date and place of Jesus' birth, or the demise of Satan; all of which were or are future events, these things must be utterly certain. They are not probabilities but pre-planned eventualities, designated by the mere will of the Almighty. God must never be thought of as One who must exert Himself in an impressive effort at keeping a universe full of plates spinning. They spin by the collusion of God's will and power. We may say that the power of God is 'pre-informed' by the decision of God (though they are really one).

Nothing in creation operates outside the constraints of God's power (i.e. His providence), since "He upholds all things by His powerful word" (Heb.1:2-3). There are no rogue facts out there, which have not been fully known about by Him. And since where God's power is, He is, it stands to reason that whatever occurs happens because he wills it to happen, and that includes many things He hates!

Paul can elsewhere teach that, "whom He did foreknow (*proegno*), He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29), and these same individuals, "He also glorified." (Rom. 8:30). If the end result of foreknowledge is a still future glorification, then the Greek word *prognosis* means more than "to know beforehand." It carries with it the connotation of involvement or relationship with what is foreknown; a meaning which is carried over from the Hebrew term *yada*. This, indeed, is its theological usage in the NT. Thus, I do not see how it cannot refer to God's fore-choosing of individuals. And we do not feel compelled, either by Scripture or by reason, to back away from the fact that God's omniscience is expressed in time in His Decree⁵.

In this passage (1:4-5), God's children then, are to be **holy and without blame before Him in love**, because we have been 'chosen' (v.4) and 'adopted' (v. 5) into His family. In adopting us, the Father has taken on the responsibility of bringing us up as sons within His household, a responsibility He will not shirk (Heb. 12:5-10), nor give up upon (cf. Phil. 1:6, 1 Cor. 1:8).

It is useless to argue that because the apostle employs a plural pronoun (*humas* – 'us') to define the objects of election he had to have been referring only to corporate election. As Hoehner points out, "The recipients of the choice, "us," comprise a body or group of believers. Still, chosen make up this group. As individuals receive the blessings of verse 3 and individually are sealed in verse 13, so individuals are the objects of God's election." (H. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 176).

To the praise of the glory of His grace (v. 6). The wonder of God's grace in planning and performing our redemption, and thereby making us **accepted in the beloved**, amazes the apostle (and it should us too!). But he hasn't finished yet. Our redemption was accomplished **through His blood** (9v.7); i.e. the blood of Christ, which purchased our forgiveness and acceptance. It is important to note what the text does not say. It does not say through Christ's *death!* Strictly speaking, it was not Christ's death, but His blood, which purchased our salvation (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). This indescribable cost to God proves **the riches of His grace**.

By this means, "God has caused His grace to flow abundantly into us, in the gift of all wisdom and prudence." (K. Braune, *Ephesians*, in *Lange*, 37). **All wisdom and prudence** (v.8), speaks of the provision of the spiritual understanding needed both to study and to meditate on these things (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15, 16). The **mystery of His will** (v. 9) includes the great truths of our salvation from eternity to eternity, which God now reveals.

Essential to proper Biblical thinking is the realization that God is over history, and that He administers events in history to fulfill His own purposes. What those purposes are, is described in verse 10 as the gathering together in one harmonious whole of, **all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth** (v.10). This is the deepest theology! We get some idea of the cosmic importance of the Cross when we remember Paul's words in Romans 8:18-23. In that great passage, Paul reveals "that the whole creation groans and travails in pain *together*." Extremes in weather, volcanic activity, the savagery within nature, all reflect the truth that creation is awaiting the re-ordering touch of the Creator. And as we are told, the natural world "waits for the manifestation of the sons of God" (cf. Rom. 8:22, 19); the final glorification of the saints. When this is accomplished, with Christ as Supreme Ruler, this world will take on new aspects of tranquility and beauty (cf. Isa. 11: 6-10; Mic. 4:1-4; Am. 9:13-15).

The key theological aspect to notice here is the pivotal role of Christ in the rectification of the fall and the perfecting of the original creative intent of God. Without him and His cross-work there is no clearing up the mess of history and there is no utopia on our horizon. The work of Jesus was sufficient not only to secure our eternal salvation, but it was enough to bring the entire universe to perfection.

When all things have been brought together in one under Christ, He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father and will resume His former equality within the Godhead (1 Cor. 15:23-28), His work of voluntary submission being concluded.

We feel almost breathless, yet the apostle continues: **in Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will** (v. 11). The Lord does not need to take advice from any creature, He "keeps His own counsel" (Rom. 11:34). God has thought to predestinate an inheritance for us (1 Pet. 1:4). An inheritance that we have already obtained, though we have not yet seen the splendor of it. "All things" here ought to be taken in its most expansive meaning, as the context makes clear.

The verse (12) **that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ**, reveals that our completed redemption will be the cause of new anthems of praise to God by angels, cherubim, seraphim, and the redeemed (cf. Rev. 5:8-10).

The personal pronoun **we**, changes to **you** in v. 13. Some interpreters suggest that the we in v.12 refers to Paul and his fellow Jewish Christians, while the **you** of v.13, the Gentile believers,

who would make up the majority of Paul's readership. As Paul unites the two in 2:11-18, this may indeed be the case. But, it could also be that the apostle, under house arrest in Rome, simply speaks of himself and his associates there. The phrase **in whom you also trusted** (v. 13) would then refer to those at Ephesus and its environs. However one takes it, the point Paul is making in these verses (i.e. 12-14) is that God's redemptive work, though planned in eternity, is initiated in the believer after he or she hears the Gospel (**the Word of Truth**) and trusts in Christ. The Holy Spirit then seals the believer as His own (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22). This seal is the Holy Spirit Himself, Who not only regenerates us, but Who also indwells us because we are His. He is called, **the earnest of our inheritance** (v.14)—the first installment, or down payment, of our eventual glorification. Thus, Christians are eschatological creatures (1 Jn. 3:1-3). We are **the purchased possession** of God, He having purchased us for Himself by the blood of Jesus Christ. All Christians are blood-bought (cf. Acts 20:28), and are not their own, but have been bought back from sin and separated unto God to serve Him, and to praise His glory forever.

¹ If we take AD 60-62 for the date of Ephesians, then it would be six or seven years since his final visit to the city in AD 54 (cf. Acts 19). See R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ixvii. Of course, Paul met with the Ephesian elders at Miletus shortly after (Acts 20:17ff).

² Many commentators hold that Ephesians is a "circular letter," intended to be read to the different churches visited by Tychicus on his errand. They point out that the words "at Ephesus" are not in the "so-called best manuscripts" (meaning Mss 'B' and Aleph). For a strong assertion of this view see, for example, H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 242-44. For an equally strong rebuttal in favor of the traditional (and ancient) view see R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians*, 330-342. For ourselves, we agree with the following opinion: "Perhaps the most probable solution to the problem is the position that the epistle was written to the Ephesians and addressd to them, but that the Apostle intentionally cast it into a form which would make it suitable to the...neighboring churches and intended that it should be communicated to them." (D. E. Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, II, 265)

³ Grace is mentioned 12 times; Peace 7 times.

⁴ These verses constitute but one sentence in the Greek texts. We see the same thing seven more times in 1:15-23; 2:17, 3:1-18; 3:14-19; 4:17; 4:11-16 and 6:14-16. The English of the KJV brings this out better than the modern versions do.

⁵ The Calvinist/Arminian debate hinges on God's exercise of His sovereignty. All but hyper-Calvinists allow God a permissive will (e.g. in allowing the Fall). It is the *extent* of that will which is the real issue. But I do not like to divorce God's sovereignty from His overarching providence. Therefore, I assume a moderate form of Calvinism.

EPHESIANS -Chapter 1:15-23

Chapter 1:15-23. Paul's Prayer

Verse 15 is supposed to be proof that Paul did not write this letter to the Ephesians. But as Paul had been away from Ephesus for a number of years, it is not unusual that he writes of having **heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.**

Faith in Jesus as Lord produces love between Christians. The fruit that God most desires to see His adopted children bearing is love (cf. v. 4; 1 Jn. 4:7, 8). From the subjective angle, the sign that a person is under the Lordship of Christ is the love they have for the saints. The news of the Ephesians' love, not only among themselves, but **unto all the saints**, encouraged the apostle to **give thanks** (v. 16), and to pray for them. We might ask ourselves, how often do we thank God for faithful saints, and intercede for them?

The content of this prayer is most instructive. First, it is addressed, as all prayers should be, to **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 17). But Paul adds another title, **the Father of glory**, to this. It is no coincidence to find this new title here. God's glory is the overarching intent of His purpose in redeeming us (vv. 6, 12, 14). The job of the saints is to bring glory to God in the midst of a thankless age. We do this when we train ourselves to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), by living by Christ (Jn. 15:5-7; Gal. 2:20).

Paul prays that God would grant the Ephesians **the spirit of wisdom and revelation** that they might know Him. We must realize that Christianity is a 'religion' of dependence, not in the way liberals like Schleiermacher meant it, where a feeling of dependence was made the cornerstone of his system, but a faith in the objective reality of our creatureliness and of God's right to be our Lord and Provider. And this dependence is as much a reality in the realm of knowing as in the area of sustenance, in fact more so. Our dim apprehension of what it means to be a child of the Creator-King and how that has been and is demonstrated is something that we must be ready to remedy. And the remedy is derived from our contemplation of God's revelation.

Paul's opening (vv. 3-14) constitutes a heavy diet of theology, even for those who had been personally taught by him in the school of Tyrannus some years earlier. We shouldn't think it unusual then, if he asks God to enlighten the minds of his readers and enlarge their understanding of **the hope of His calling, and the riches of...His inheritance** (v. 18).^[i] But this is not all; they (and we) need to understand **the exceeding greatness of His power toward who believe** (v. 19). God's empowering Spirit evidenced this provision of power, called His mighty power, at the resurrection, glorification, and ascension of Christ (v. 20). We have already been told that this same mighty Spirit indwells each believer in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:10, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16).

The Lord Jesus Christ is now exalted at the right hand of the Father **far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion** (v. 21). These principalities have authority and great power, but Christ is greater ("far above") than them all. The "powers" probably refer to the demonic rulers of darkness, which the author will speak of in chapter 6. Christ's name is above every name (Phil. 2:9) and always will be; all things, being put **under His feet** (v. 22), and all authority over all matters concerning **the Church** residing in Him (Matt. 28:18).

Jesus Christ is the agent of creation itself (Jn. 1:1-3), for whom everything was made (Col. 1:16b). He sustains the entire cosmos moment by moment (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), and He will one day return to rule over it (Psa. 2:7-12). This clearly shows that it is the Church's job to be taken up with Christ.

The Church is called in verse 23, **His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all**. This is a difficult concept, perhaps exceeding what Paul has written in previous epistles (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12ff). In 1 Corinthians, for example, "Christ equals the body; but in Ephesians and Colossians, the Church equals the body and Christ is the Head." (A. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* in *NIBC*,171)

The concluding phrase **the fullness of Him who fills all in all**, provides a magnificent ending to the prayer. Its meaning seems to be that Christ, the Head over all things, is somehow incomplete until His Church is gathered in. This is a tremendous paradox; that He Who is over all, and Who fills all (Col. 1:16, 17), nevertheless is filled by His Church. Although this appears to be an oxymoron, it is only what one might expect after reading John 15:1-8 ('The Vine and the Branches'). "This is the highest honour of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation is it for us to learn, that, not until we are along with Him, does He possess all His parts, or wish to be regarded as complete!" (J. Calvin, *Commentaries* Vol. XXI 218).

[\[i\]](#) This is more than the hope of heaven; it is the realization of what we really are in Christ. "It is through Christ that [Paul] sees heaven. To know Christ, to love Christ, to serve Christ, to follow Christ, to be like Christ, to be with Christ for ever! –that is what St. Paul lived for...When life is thus filled with Christ, heaven becomes, as one may say, a mere circumstance, and death but an incident upon the way—in the soul's everlasting pursuit of Christ." (G. G. Findlay, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, [The Expositor's Bible, VI] 23)

EPHESIANS – Chapter 2:1-10

Chapter 2:1-10: Salvation by God's Grace.

This chapter can be divided between verses 1-10, which speak of the method of our salvation; and verses 11-22, which speak of reconciliation (first, that of the Gentiles and the Jews brought together in Christ vv. 11-15, second, both reconciled unto God vv. 16-22). Both argue from what has already been said in chapter one about the power of Christ in us as our resurrected Lord.

And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. If one is going to speak about the grace of God, as Paul does in this section, one cannot ignore the effects of the Fall upon mankind. All men born into the world are **dead in trespasses and sins** (cf. Col. 2:13). This deadness (the term *nekrous* is used figuratively not literally – they are children of *disobedience!*) is total in regards to spirituality. The day Adam disobeyed God was the day God said he would die, and he did; not physically, but spiritually; that is, he was alienated from the life of God. His spirit was separated from its Creator, and his heart and mind were corrupted by sin. “There being nothing of that spiritual life in them [mankind after the fall] which consisteth of the union of the soul with God.” (J. Fergusson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 144). This is the doctrine known as Total Depravity.¹ It is vital that men understand their plight with God. They are utterly unable to do anything ‘spiritual’ without the Holy Spirit. And since “God is a Spirit” (Jn. 4:24) all an unsaved man’s religion and good works are as filthy rags in His sight (Isa. 64:6). From this spiritually dead condition **has He quickened us**. This means that Christ has infused His life (by the Spirit) into His redeemed ones.

The effects of this alienation from God are spelled out graphically in verses 2-3. **We walked according to the course of this world**, a course that was (and is) veering far from the path God originally devised for man (which we may call the path of righteousness). In 1 John 2:15-17, we are advised, “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” The reason for this is because this world is under the thrall of Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). In opening his letter to the Galatians, Paul refers to “this present evil world,” from which Christ has delivered us. According to Ephesians 2:2, all men without Christ walk **according to the course of this world**. But this is not all; they walk **according to the prince of the power of the air**, that is, Satan (cf. Jn. 8:44). Satan rules over all the unregenerate.

The **spirit that now works in the children of disobedience** is not the devil² himself, but the spirit of this wicked world. We speak of the ‘spirit of the times,’ by which we mean the life view adopted by the media, centers of education, the fashion industry, etc. This spirit is “an impersonal force or mood which is actively at work in non-Christian people.” (J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 74). It is that spirit which the demonic powers “raise up in wicked men against Christ and against God” (T. Goodwin, *Puritan Exposition of Ephesians*, 612).ⁱⁱⁱ The apostle wants to remind the Ephesians that their past lives were lived only to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. These desires may run in many directions, some lewd, some religious, some academic, etc. But they are power and authority over life due to their not being reined in by the higher authority of God’s Word.

The unregenerate man then *cannot* live to God, for, according to verse 3, he only lives to himself! This is what makes men **children of wrath**. Every human being born into this world who does not experience the saving grace of God, is under the wrath of God (cf. Jn. 3:36). The apostle paints a doleful picture indeed! But he has not painted it any darker than it is. He is setting the stage for the doctrine of the radical grace of God the Gospel.

But God...(v. 4) Now Paul can write about salvation! The Gospel is good news only because we can say: **But God**. Sin has left us helpless, inveterate enemies of the Almighty, “but God” has intervened to reconcile us to Himself. Who has yet fully understood verse 4? He is indeed rich in mercy! (Micah 7:18) The verse telescopes out to: **But God...Who is rich in mercy...For His great love wherewith He loved us.**

No one can understand God until they understand something about their own sin and misery. We must deal with men about their sin and make sure that they understand something of *that* before we can hope to give them any real understanding of the God Who is great in mercy and in love.

Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us (i.e. made us alive again spiritually, cf. Rom. 4:17) **together with Christ...**(v. 5). The contrast is as great as it can be: we were dead in sins, we are now alive in Christ. This contrast compels Paul to insert, **by grace you are saved**. For how can someone of whom verses 1-3 are true, be accepted in God’s eyes other than by God’s free grace? But God has not only quickened us; He **has raised us up together, and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus** (v. 6). We can look at this verse in two ways: either, a) Christ represents us in Heaven where He sits physically (1:20), or, b) in some way, believers are spiritually present before God’s throne. We know we have been born from above, and that “our conversation (citizenship) is in Heaven...” (Phil. 3:20) and we know that we can “come boldly unto the throne of grace...” (Heb. 4:16). Therefore, we do not think it unbelievable (even if we find it mysterious) to assume that the second alternative is correct (cf. Col. 3: 1, Jn. 3:13).

Why did God do this? Verse 7 provides an explanation which looks forward to our future hope. God loves us (v. 4) and our completed salvation magnifies His grace. Ahead of us **in the ages**

to come...(v. 7), God will **show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us.** All God's grace, and everything that it brings us, is mediated **through Christ Jesus.**³

Having shown the complete alienation of sinners from God (vv. 1-3), and the hope which lies ahead (vv. 6, 7) the apostle is in a position to write **for by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.** All Christians know these familiar verses (vv. 8-9), but often take them in isolation without understanding their purpose within the context of Ephesians 2. If we do not set grace up over against men's sin, we dilute the force of these verses. Salvation *must* be by grace...**and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.** The only way sinners have access to God's grace is **through faith** (Rom. 5:2), but we are not to make the common mistake of making "faith" the gift here. Exegetically this would be to relate a feminine noun ("faith") to a neuter pronoun ("this") which is a non-sequitur. It is best to take the neuter pronoun as referring to the first part of verse 8 (**for by grace are you saved through faith**). This would make the "gift" refer to the concept of salvation. As Hoehner has it, "the "gift" is that which is outside of ourselves and is to be received. Therefore, the gift of salvation has its origin in God, its basis is grace, and it is received by means of faith." (H. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 344. Cf. C. L. Mitton, Ephesians, NCB, 97).

Because salvation is a gift, it cannot be earned, most certainly not by men dead in trespasses and sins (v. 1). No man will stand before God and convince Him that his good deeds, done in the flesh, entitle him to the same salvation and inheritance as those who have humbled themselves and fled to the Cross. So Paul says that we are saved **not of works, lest any man should boast** (v. 9; cf. also Gal. 2:16).

What then is the place of works? This question is answered in verse 10. Good works are important to God, "...so important that God created us in order that we should perform them." (W. Hendriksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 124). Works done in the flesh do not have God in

them, either as their object, or in their working. God only called those things which *He* created “good” (cf. Gen. 1). The new birth of the Christian is in fact a new creation of God. **We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works... [cf. Tit. 2:14] which God has previously ordained that we should walk in them** (cf. 1:4). Therefore, what a contrast there should be between the walk of the unsaved man pictured in verses 2, 3 and the walk of the redeemed child of God! (cf. 5:8; 1 Jn. 5-7).

¹ Total Depravity means that the consequences of the Fall have affected every aspect of human nature. The image of God is marred (though not obliterated). Man has neither the inclination, nor the ability to exercise faith in Christ without the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. But to hold to Total Depravity does not mean that we sanction the High-Calvinistic doctrine of Total Inability, whereby man cannot believe unless he is first born-again. This teaching, however logical a step it may seem, goes beyond the statements of Scripture (cf. Jn. 1:12-13; Rom. 1:16). The case of Cornelius clearly destroys such a conclusion. See especially Acts 10:1-4 and 44-48. We must insist that Scripture teaches that God must bring a sinner to Himself (Jn. 6:37, 44, 54), but *precisely how this is done* is never fully explained to us.

² I.E. “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” is not necessarily personal, unlike “the prince of the power of the air,” although it could well refer to the activity of demons.

³ “God’s utmost end in man’s salvation is the shewing forth of what is in Himself, and the making it known that it may be glorified, especially to shew forth the riches of His grace...My brethren, God is glorified by being made known, and that was it that moved His will to shew forth what was in Him.” (T. Goodwin, *A Puritan Exposition of Ephesians*, 782)

EPHESIANS – Chapter 2: 11-22

Chapter 2:11-22 The One New Man.

The Apostle has just shown that the way out of the deathly grip of sin and Satan is the way of God's grace. Now he moves on to discuss some practical implications of salvation in Christ. The Gospel reaches out to all men, Jew and Gentile, and makes them brothers. In this way, it reconciles two opposing parties. But it also reconciles men to God. The Gospel therefore, brings peace both horizontally—between man and man—and, vertically—between man and God.

Therefore, remember...(v. 11). The apostle, a Jew, invites the Ephesian Gentiles to remember their condition previous to the coming of Christ into the world. The Jews thought the Gentiles were dogs. The Letter of Aristeas, for example, written by a Jew about 170 years before this epistle, refers to Gentiles as “worthless persons.”⁴ To distinguish themselves from the heathen, the Jews referred to themselves as “the Circumcision.” They did this, not because they alone practiced the rite,⁵ but because of its significance in identifying Israel with the God of the Old Testament Mosaic Law. It is hardly surprising to learn of the Jews speaking about Gentiles as the **Uncircumcision** (v. 11). By drawing their attention to this, Paul is not exhibiting racist tendencies, but he *is* highlighting the social gulf, which existed between Jews and Gentiles. This he continues to do in verse 12, where he reminds his hearers **that at that time** (before the Gospel came to them) **you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.**

Only Israel was the recipient of the prophecies concerning Christ (the Messiah). He was sent primarily to the twelve tribes (Matt. 10:5, 6) and *then* as a light to the Gentiles (Is. 42:6, Lk. 2:32). Paul puts this even more lucidly in Romans 9:4, 5. As one commentator has said it, “Though some Gentiles were admitted into Judaism as proselytes, Gentiles as a whole were excluded; they were thus alienated.” (H. Hoehner, *Ephesians in The Bible Knowledge Comm.* Vol. 2, 625). The term **commonwealth of Israel** probably

refers to godly Jews rather than the nation itself. The **covenants of promise** were made by God with Israel and with no other nation (Rom. 9:4). So Jesus truly could say, “salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22).

With no promises and no covenants and no revealed Law, the Gentile world indeed had **no hope, and** [was] **without God** (though they had many gods) **in the world** (v. 12). All that Paul said of the Ephesians is true of any unsaved person. Without Christ we have no hope and are without God; we are godless!

But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were afar off (as shown by verses 11-12) **are brought near** (v. 13). The Gentiles were brought under the umbrella of God’s promises in Christ. What accomplished this? **The blood of Christ** (cf. Col. 1:14). It is the Blood that accomplished this reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and made peace between the two factions. Paul continues, **for He (Christ) is our peace...**(v. 14). Now Paul, who employed the pronoun **you** in verses 11-13, can once again talk of **our peace**, because Christ **has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us** (v. 14). This He did on the Cross (cf. Col. 2:14ff), thus the Cross resolves racial conflict by resolving the spiritual man versus God conflict.

The **enmity** (v. 15) between the two sides was heightened by the role ascribed by the Jews to **the law of commandments contained in ordinances**. One may take this either as “the entire Mosaic legal system with all its commands that decree: ‘Thou shalt! Thou shalt not!’” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of ...Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians*, 441), or, as a reference to “the ceremonial laws, including dietary regulations, circumcision, rites of purification, sabbath and festival observances, sacrifices, and so forth.” (A. Patzia, 195). Colossians 2:14-22 inclines us to choose the latter, especially when one calls to mind the power of ceremonies and ordinances to exclude. On the other hand, the whole Law itself served the Jews’ purpose of negative discrimination, and so this aspect of the Law is also probably meant here.

Christ's work on the Cross did not just save our souls; it paved the way for the creation of God's new people, the Body of Christ. This is what is meant by Christ making **in Himself one new man from the two** [Jew and Gentile], **so making peace** (v. 15). Peace, that is, between the two groups.

Paul has dealt with the horizontal aspects of the Gospel; now in verse 16ff he can deal with the vertical effect. Christ **died that He might reconcile both to God in one body by the Cross, thereby putting to death the enmity** (v. 16; 3:6). This one new body is the entire number of born again believers of every age: the Church universal. (The theology of Ephesians does not support the notion that *only* the local church is significant in the New Testament. Paul's idea here is much grander than that.)⁶

Verse 17 is interpreted in a number of different ways by commentators. We know that Jesus Himself did not preach peace to the Gentile nations (those **which were afar off**) though He did preach peace **to them that were near** (the Jews). What then is Paul's meaning? As the Cross has been alluded to in verses 13, 15, and 16 (explicitly) he could be referring to the death of Christ which, metaphorically speaking, preached the Gospel to all men. But more than likely he means that the Gospel was spread by the apostles and prophets (cf. 2:20) and other believers; Christ working in them.

For through Him (Christ) **we both have access by one Spirit to the Father** (v. 18). Both Jew and Gentile are one in the Spirit (cf. I Cor. 12:13). Both are now the sons of God, there being no more difference between them. Note here the Trinitarian formula in verse 18. The Father sent the Son to die for sinners, the Spirit, sent forth by them both (Jn. 15:26) is the Agent of the new birth. This is most important for dispensational interpreters to take to heart, because it is easy to ignore the marvel that is the Church in this age in ones zeal for the Jews. We must remember that God is now dealing with the Church!

In these closing verses Paul uses the simile of a building. The Ephesians **are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints of the household of God** (v.19). In line with the thought-

flow of these verses “the saints” are believing Jews with whom the Gentiles are now unified in Christ. This building has as its foundation the apostles and prophets. This refers either to the apostles and the New Testament prophets, such as Agabus (Acts 21: 10, 11; cf. also, I Cor. 12:29, 14:29-37) which appears to be the apostle’s meaning in 4:11, or, it may simply refer to the apostles *as* prophets (cf. M. Turner, 1232). Either way, Old Testament prophets are not meant. The inspired teaching of these men (and women,⁷ cf. Acts 21:8, 9) really did lay the foundation of the New Testament Church. Of course, Paul does not leave out Jesus Christ. He is styled **the chief corner stone**. The function of the cornerstone was to align all the other stones of the building with itself, both horizontally and vertically.

In Christ, the building is **framed together** (v. 21) and **grows into a holy temple in the Lord**. In other epistles, the individual Christian’s body is called “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:19). Here, however, the temple is a picture of the one spiritual building of God (cf. 4:15, 16; 1 Pet. 2:5). All Christians **are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit** (v. 22) and so each individual within the Body of Christ ought to add to (and not detract from!) to its ongoing growth by his Spirit-led life (cf. 4:13-16).

⁴ “This points to the hereditary antipathy cherished, or the sacred recoil felt toward [Gentiles] on the part of the covenant people, so long as they were in their heathenish state; for to be called *Uncircumcision* by them was all one with being accounted reprobate or profane.” (P. Fairbairn, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*, 454; emphasis his.)

⁵ See M. Turner, *Ephesians, New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*, 1230.

⁶ This matter has been briefly covered in the Introduction.

⁷ Prophetesses were not Pastors. Their office was only temporal (like that of prophets). With the close of the Canon and the distribution of the Scriptures, their office ceased. Hence this verse can not be used to prove that the Bible sanctions women preachers.

EPHESIANS – Chapter 3:1-21

Chapter 3:1-13: The Mystery of the Church.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles...(v. 1). Most commentators believe that Paul wishes to speak about his situation as a Roman prisoner. He feared that his imprisonment might cause some to depreciate his teaching, and he did not want the Ephesians asking, “If God has done all Paul says He’s done, why is Paul in prison?” Paul addresses this in verse 13ff. But it appears verses 2-12 are a digression; an explanation of Paul’s special knowledge.¹

The dispensation of the grace of God (v. 2) is a reference to God’s imparting new revelatory knowledge about the Church to His apostle. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was entrusted with the dispensing of this knowledge to the Gentiles. **The grace of God** here, as in all Scripture, is not an impassive thing. Rather, it refers to God gifting Paul (though grace mustn’t be viewed as a substance) so that he in turn would be a gift to the churches.

How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery...(v. 3). The mystery being the revelation about the Church found...**in a few words**, in the preceding chapters. By reading those chapters, the church at Ephesus would understand Paul’s...**knowledge in the mystery of Christ** (v. 4). What is this mystery? It is the truth that the saints were predestined in Christ to be holy, spiritually-minded children of God, who corporately, in one body (Jew and Gentile) would grow “into a holy temple in the Lord.”

The revelation of the mystery of Christ (i.e. believers being *in Christ*) is specifically said to be unknown **in other ages...**(cf. Col. 1:26), and **now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit** (v. 5). This means that Old Testament saints had no conception of the Church as the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12).² Although some progressive dispensationalists

teach that the mystery here is more along the line of something formerly *unrealized* I do not think the Old Testament gives one any encouragements in that direction. Matthew's Gospel is the only one of the four to mention the Church explicitly (e.g. Matt. 16:18) and he clearly views it as something that Christ will build after His ascension. It is one of the new things with which the Evangelist is concerned in his Gospel. Hoehner makes our point for us: "This mystery was not known before the NT era. Only after the death of Christ was it revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by means of the Holy Spirit." (H. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 444).

The **prophets** in this verse are New Testament believers with a prophetic gift, and are not to be confused with Old Testament prophets who held the prophetic office. Verse 6 highlights the content of the mystery as it pertained to the Ephesian church. It was, **that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.**

It is a great privilege to be commissioned by God to **preach ... the unsearchable riches of Christ** (v. 8). This is why a preacher must be a good steward of the mysteries of the Gospel (1 Cor. 4:1). It was an even greater privilege to be made a minister of the apostolic office, so that God enabled one...**to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery** (cf. 2:14-19)³ **which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God...** (v. 9). It might seem a contradiction in terms to proclaim **the unsearchable riches of Christ** if they cannot be fully known. But just because something is fathomless, does not mean that *some* of its depths cannot be comprehended. The more we seek to understand what Christ is to us, the greater He becomes to us. Yet there is always an strong element of incomprehensibility in every biblical doctrine. We must never lose sight of the fact that God is incomprehensible to us unless and to the degree in which He makes Himself known to us.

The apostle Paul again speaks of...**the gift of the grace of God which was given unto him.**

The last clause of verse 7...**by the effectual working of His power** shows the truth of what has been already said about grace being active, not passive.

The Church, which is being ‘built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit’ (cf. 2:22) is a demonstration of the wisdom of God to all created beings—both good and evil. In this new humanity in Christ, angels and devils view...**the manifold wisdom of God** (v. 10)...**which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord** (v. 11) in eternity past. They find it bewildering that ...**we have boldness and access with confidence**...into the very throne-room of the Most Holy (cf. Heb. 4:16). The Book of Hebrews reminds us in chapter 9:7, that “the high priest alone once every year,” could enter into the holy of holies, but then, “not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” Now, in Christ, the Christian—on the basis of his adoption into God’s family (cf. Eph. 1:5)—is bidden to come continually to the throne of grace in prayer. God wants us to come into His Presence!

The words...**by the faith of Him** (v. 12) indicate not Christ’s faith, but our faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:22). By this, “he intimates, that everything which faith ought to contemplate is exhibited to us in Christ.” (Calvin, 257)

Now that he has explained his knowledge, Paul can return to the subject of his present afflictions. The last thing he wants the Ephesians to do is to give up because of his tribulations (v. 13). Paul’s imprisonment in Rome came as a result of him fulfilling his commission to dispense the mystery of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Therefore, this successful stewardship brought the riches of Christ to Ephesus, and, he can say from his prison cell, Christ **is our glory** (cf. Gal. 6:14).

Chapter 3:14-21. Another Prayer: for strength and understanding.

For this cause...(v. 14)⁴ Paul begins an ascending prayer to God on behalf of his hearers. He does this by emphasizing the family relationship of every believer...**in heaven and earth** (v. 15). The prayer begins in verse 16. **That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory** (cf. 1:17) **to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man** (v. 16). The Spirit's power within us is able to keep us persevering in the face of afflictions (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16, 17). To yield to God's Spirit is to give glory to God's Spirit. To bar His gracious influence upon our lives – even when He takes us into valleys and times of difficulty, is to defy God, showing a spirit of independence which is at cross purposes to His wise purpose.

Christ is to be welcomed by believers to preside over them. He should... **dwell in [our] hearts by faith**, as the center of our lives. Only if Christ is welcome in the heart is a Christian capable of being rooted and grounded in love (v. 17). If love does not undergird our thoughts and motives, our spiritual perception will be impaired. Paul wants every Christian to be...**able to comprehend with all saints** (the whole family of God) **what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height** (v. 18) the dimensions of the stupendous riches within the grace of God in Christ.⁵ Paul wants the Ephesians to know the unknowable, he wants them...**to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge** (cf. Phil. 4:7 and also, Job 11:7-9). The love of Christ is the starting point of every blessing the Christian will ever have. To know all mysteries and yet be without love makes a man nothing (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2). It is love which grasps these truths, and turns them into praises! It is love which sets doctrine ablaze! No wonder then that love is essential if the ending of Paul's prayer...**that you might be filled with all the fulness of God** (v. 19) is to be realized in the Church.

Paul ends his prayer with a doxology.⁶ A doxology is an expression in words ascribing glory to God. **Now to Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly** (Note the use of two superlatives because Paul is speaking about God.) **above all that we ask** (in prayer) **or think** (but don't dare to pray), **according to the power that works in us** (cf. 1:19-3:7, 16).

To Him be glory (v. 21). The objective of the saints is to strive together to bring glory to the Father in their profession as Christians (Christ-followers). This is the meaning of the words **glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages**. Those like the Ephesians, who have lived before us, and have gone on to their reward, we, the believers of the present, and those who may come after us, have one great duty: we are, "... bought with a price: therefore (we are told) glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). This is the purpose of the Church...**world without end** (v. 21), and we may concur with Paul in the hearty **Amen** with which he brings his prayer, and this chapter, to a close.

¹ This tells us that Paul would not 'edit' his letters. Besides, divine inspiration would preclude this.

² Thus, this becomes a central passage in the interpretative wrangle between Covenant Post and Amillennialists, and Dispensationalists. This writer is a confirmed Dispensationalist. For a fine treatment of these verses see C. C. Ryrie, "The Mystery in Ephesians 3" in R. B. Zuck, ed., *Vital Biblical Issues*, 180-186.

³ "The publication of the Gospel is called a *fellowship*, because it is the will of God that His purpose, which had formerly been hidden, shall now be shared by men." (J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XXI*, 254)

⁴ We take this to refer to verses 2-12, and not just to verse 13.

⁵ Most modern interpreters, along with the newer Bible versions, take these dimensions as referring just to "the love of Christ." See, for example, D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, 218-19. At the risk of straining a gnat, we believe Paul is praying, not only that they comprehend Christ's love, but that their hearts might be excited by Paul's doctrine of redemption, so that they understand Christ's love more profoundly.

Doxology: From two Greek words, "*Doxa*" meaning glory, praise; and "*Logos*" meaning (among other things) the expression of thought by a word(s).

EPHESIANS Chapter 4:1-32

The fourth chapter marks the beginning of the practical section of the letter. From here on in the writer is concerned with our responses to the doctrines taught in the first three chapters. This is not to say that chapters 4-6 do not contain doctrine, but the primary emphasis is the outworking of these truths upon Christians, both individually and corporately.

Chapter 4:1-16 Unity in Service.

Chapter 4 begins in the same way as chapter 3. But this time, Paul is using his circumstances (i.e. his imprisonment) to beseech the Ephesian church **to walk worthy of the vocation with which** [they were] **called** (v. 1). This verse makes it clear that just being born-again is not enough if we are to please God. To please our Lord we must be useful and obedient. It is vital that Christians understand their vocation, what their function is within the Body.

The first fruit of a Christian should be **lowliness and meekness** (v. 2). Without these characteristics in the life of the believer, further spiritual progress is impossible. We are to be like our Master, Who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). **Lowliness** is the same as humility. Christians should be humble people, remembering from what terrors they have been rescued, by Whom they have been rescued, and what it took to save them (Heb. 12:3-4). **Meekness** or gentleness is a disposition that, although it is in control of emotions, nevertheless, does not assert itself.¹ To be meek is to have an excellent spirit; it is to have inner strength tempered by a humble sense of duty to God (cf. Num. 12:3). Perhaps the finest description of the combination of these two qualities is given by Solomon in Proverbs 16:32, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city.”²

Humility and meekness are not qualities often found in the Lord’s people, but they are absolutely essential for healthy and constructive Christian relationships. Nobody can relate to their brother or sister in Christ in the way God wants them to relate if they are full of pride (cf. Rom. 12:3). Verse 2 continues, **with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love** (cf. 3:17). This we can do when we let Christ reign in our affections (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4, 5), tempering our egos and expanding our concern for others.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (v. 3). The greatest indication that we are living in a Laodicean-type age is the disunity we see in the Body of Christ. This displeases God and blasphemes His Gospel! How can we claim to be spiritually mature if we are not striving after a bond of unity within our local congregations? And how can we function properly within the greater Church when we have a fractious spirit? Unity is uppermost in the mind of the apostle as he writes this section of Ephesians. This is comes out strongly in the next three verses.

Paul mentions seven points of unity in verses 4-6, and he ties them together with the Trinitarian formula. Note **Spirit** in verse 4; **Lord** (Jesus) in verse 5; and **Father**, verse 6.

There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling (v. 4). **One Lord, one faith, one baptism** (v. 5); **One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all** (v. 6).

Focusing on these unities helps one appreciate the marvel of the new birth:

One Body - All believers in the universal Church. (1:23, Col. 3:15)

One Spirit - The indwelling Holy Spirit. (2:22, Rom. 8:9, 10; Gal. 4:6)

One Hope - The hope of eternal life with Christ. (Col. 1:12, 1 Pet. 1:4)

One Lord - Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. (Jn. 13:13)

One Faith - Which we take to be the Christian Faith. (v. 13, Jude 3)³

One Baptism - Which we take to be Spirit-baptism. (1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 6:3, 4)⁴

One God and Father - Our Heavenly Father. (1:17, 2:14)

... **Who is above all, and through all, and in you all** (v. 6). He is above all His creation (cf. Ps. 8:1), through all His creation (cf. Col. 1:16, 17; Acts 17:28) and in all His saints (cf. Jn. 14:23). Theologically, this is very rich, for Paul here brings together in one work the purpose behind the world and mankind – understood especially as redeemed men and women. The passage may also be taken as referring to the church, all of whom are under the Divine command, and indwelt by God's Spirit who works through them.

Because of our vital union to the Godhead, **every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ** (v. 7). The Lord Jesus Christ bestows spiritual gifts – by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-11) – to believers in order that they may contribute to the growth of His Church. Paul already said that he has been given special grace for the apostolic task (3:7-8), but all believers need to be aware that they too have a gifting to be employed in His service.

Many commentators have wondered about verses 8 and 9. First, what does it mean by **He led captivity captive** (v. 8)? In context, we believe the application to be “Christ, [Who] having captivated sinful people by redeeming them (they are His), is Victor and gives them as gifts to the Church.” (Hoehner, BKC, 634). Every believer has a gift, and if he or she uses it with humility and meekness, they become *themselves* a gift to the Church.

Now this, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that He also descended *first* into the lower parts of the earth? (v. 9). Every one believes that Christ ascended to the Father after His Passion. But not everyone believes that He descended into the lower parts of the earth—even though He said He would (Matt. 12:40). Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, quoting Psalm 16:10, states that Christ’s soul was not left in hades (cf. Acts 2:27, 31). What are we to make of this? Are we, like Calvin and many expositors, to take it as a figurative expression of Christ’s humiliation upon earth? (cf. J. Calvin, 275). I confess that I am left unsatisfied by the explanations, whether literal or figurative, which I have encountered. In light of such OT references as Ezekiel 31:16, Amos 9:2, and Isaiah 14:15 we should not dismiss the possibility of a literal fulfillment out of hand. Was not Christ made sin for us? (Jn. 3:14) Could He not have left our sins in hell and spent three days and three nights in Abraham’s bosom? (Lk. 16:22, 25—with the thief on the cross, Lk. 23:43).⁵ It is beyond our ability to say anything for sure. We enter the realms of speculation here and I do not feel qualified to decide the issue.

In verse 10, Paul shows that the same One who descended, also **ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things** (cf. 1:23). Now this risen and ascended Sovereign Lord gives certain people to the Church for its nurturing. There are four offices in the list in verse 11. The first two: **apostles** and **prophets**, were foundational offices (cf. 2:20); and as foundations only begin a building, and are not seen once the building is in progress, so these offices were only given in the 1st century AD. There are no more apostles and prophets!⁶ There were not many to begin with! On the other hand, the next two offices, those of **evangelists** and **pastor-teachers**, are very much needed in the present day. An evangelist is a man who moves from place to place spreading the Gospel. He does not preach to the converted. Paul was, for the most part, an evangelist (as well as being an apostle). Much for what passes as evangelist work today is nothing more than tickling the ears of the unlearned in the churches.⁷

A pastor is an undershepherd who feeds the flock. This is his principle duty (Acts 20:28). How can he do this if he is not a teacher? Pastors must be able to teach their congregations (1 Tim. 3:2, 4:13-16, 5:17, Tit. 1:9, etc.). These two aspects of the same office reveal the great responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of those who take the oversight of a local church (cf. Heb. 13:17). They must guide and care for their people, but they must also feed them, in order that they may grow (cf. v. 14, 2 Pet. 2:2). The great purpose

to be kept in mind is unity. But this is not to be understood as “unity at any price.” Too many evangelical Christians, following the lead of misguided and (we must say it) unfaithful church celebrities, will have ecumenical unity by blurring distinctions between the historic faith, and the doctrinally suspect (e.g. Romanism, Neo-Orthodoxy, Open theism, the Apostolic Movement, Emergent, etc.). Unlike those mentioned the apostle Paul is not about to throw away the doctrinal teaching of the previous chapters, and these truths provide the underpinning for his applications.

Evangelists and pastor-teachers are to work for the building of the Body of Christ. This work must continue to be faithfully done **till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, and to a perfect man** (cf. 2:15, Col. 3:10, 11) **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ** (v. 13). What Paul means is that when every saint is perfectly conformed to the will of his Lord, the Church will be a perfect reflection of the One who called it out (Cf. 2:20, 21; Tit. 2:14). This is not possible in this life, in these bodies. Nevertheless, every believer is responsible to be the best Christian he can be. If this admonition is ever taken seriously, the Church will shine brightly as a powerful witness in this dark world.

This is a high calling indeed, and elsewhere Paul himself says that he strives for it (Phil. 3:14ff). But knowing the indolence of many, Paul incites us to be henceforth...**no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine** (v. 14). It is characteristic of children to be unsettled in their minds and feelings about things, but this innocence, which is so charming in youth, also means that their minds can be impressed by falsehood and cunning craftiness. We should not be childlike in our approach to the teachings of the Bible (cf. 1 Cor. 13:11, 14:20). Even new Christians are instructed by Peter to “desire the sincere milk of the Word,” which will be the cause of their spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:2). It is doctrine that is needed to train our minds in truth. To think biblically we must think theologically. The inference is obvious. Christians would not be carried about with every wind of doctrine if they understood (and were taught!) right doctrine. Sadly, many pastors today seldom include sound doctrine in their sermons and Bible studies. Small wonder then that so many believers are not where they should be in their comprehension of the Word and in the knowledge of God and His Christ.

In verses 15 and 16, we are given the characteristics of maturity. The first is **speaking the truth in love**. Elsewhere, we are reminded that “love...rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6). It is a great shame that even speaking the *truth* in love is sometimes more likely to turn people against us (cf. Gal. 4:16) than to bring them closer to us. But notice how the importance of speaking the truth in love one to another is brought out by what follows. We quote verse 15 in full: **But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, even Christ**. Love and truth are the building materials of spiritual

growth. They must be blended together in the Christian's life. Without them the whole Body cannot be **joined and knit together by what every joint** (i.e. every saint in the Body) **supplies**. Weak Christians make a weak Church. The problem starts in the local church and spreads to the Church in general. The fault is not in Christ, who supplies us with the strength and ability to do His will; the fault is in us, and in our pastors and teachers. We should all contribute our energies, our best energies, toward the **increase of the Body** and to the **edifying of itself in love** (v. 16).

Chapter 4:17-32 The Renewed Life.

The Gentile world of the Ephesians was filled with worldly wisdom and worldly forms of worship. When combined, these have a huge impact upon the thinking of any community. But now in Christ, Paul charges the Ephesian Christians not to walk **as others walk, in the vanity of their mind** (v. 17). To have a head full of worldly thoughts is to have it empty of proper knowledge (cf. Prov. 9:10). The world has its **understanding darkened** (v. 18). People are blinded to the truth 'by the devil's black hand held before their eyes.' (John Trapp, 595) The problem with an unbeliever is natural, inbred ignorance of spiritual truth...**because of the blindness of their heart** (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). They are characterized as **being past feeling** (v. 19). They are hardened in their sin, and, as Paul expressed it to the Romans, "...they did not like to retain God in their knowledge..." (Rom. 1:28) A darkened understanding and a blind heart make the conscience dull, therefore, man's wicked heart (cf. Jer. 17:9) will indulge itself **to work all uncleanness with greediness**. That is the world! The Christian has been liberated from such thinking; he has been given the light of understanding, a sharp conscience, and a new world view. So Paul can say, **but you have not so learned Christ** (v. 20).

Because **the truth is in Jesus** (v. 21) those who have both **heard Him, and have been taught by Him** (not in person, but through His ministers), ought to proclaim their new birth by their new walk. They should **put off concerning the former conversation** (life-style) **the old man, which is corrupted according to the deceitful lusts** (v. 22); **And be renewed in the spirit of your mind** (v. 23, cf. Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 2:16).

The new mindset, which every Christian is to adopt and maintain, is described in verse 24 as a putting on of **the new man**. This is not to be confused with chapter 2:15. There, the "one new man" is the Body of Christ, whereas, here, it is the regenerate self. This new man is Christ formed in the believer (cf. Col. 1:27). The "one new man" of chapter 2:15, is every believer in Christ's Body, the Church. Christ in us produces **righteousness and true holiness** in our lives. As this is a present fact for each Christian, they must stop **lying** to each other and **speak every man truth with his neighbour** (v. 25). A main reason being **we are members one of another**.

Be angry, and sin not (v. 26). It is all right to be angry if there is a cause (cf. Matt. 23:13ff), all too often, though, we get angry "without a cause" (Matt. 5:22). It is possible to be angry and not to sin. On the other hand, anger may leave the door wide open for sinful thoughts, so Paul adds: **let not the sun go down upon your wrath**. A meek spirit will ensure obedience to this precept.

Neither give place to the devil (v. 27). “For he knows how fine is the line between righteous and unrighteous anger, and how hard human beings find it to handle their anger responsibly. So he loves to lurk round angry people, hoping to be able to exploit the situation to his own advantage by provoking them into hatred or violence or a breach of fellowship.” (Stott, 187)

Christians, of course, are not to **steal**. They are not to be thieves. The apostle approves of work as a thing which is good, not only because ‘idle hands aid the devil’s plans’ but also, **that he may have to give to him in need** (v. 28).⁸ Giving gifts of money or goods to needy brethren is a ministry that many saints miss out on. They give their “tithe” to the church (that is where the money goes) and often see it spent in a wasteful and unseemly manner (which is done in many a church), when it could be used to show proof of God’s love toward others.

In line with what he has said about the edifying of the Body, the writer continues: **Let no corrupt communication** (rotten, injurious, worldly speech) **proceed out of your mouth** (cf. Luke 6:45) **but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers** (v. 29). “That is, that it may spiritually benefit them.” (Hendriksen, 221; see also, Col. 4:6.)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (v. 30). As we are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:22) and it is the Spirit Himself who has made us new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) we **grieve** Him by our substandard lives. We are safe in Him, He has **sealed [us] unto the day of redemption** (cf. 1:13, 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Phil. 1:6, Rom. 8:23). Our response should be joyful and spontaneous obedience to the cause of Christ. Old and sinful character traits such as **bitterness, and wrath, and anger** (unrighteous anger) **and clamour** (wild and improper vocalizing) **and evil speaking [should] be put away from [us] with all malice** (v. 31). This last attitude particularly is most unbecoming of a follower of Christ! In view of what has been said in verse 17ff, we are not surprised to read in the concluding verse of the chapter, **And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another** (cf. Matt. 18:21, 22) **even as God [the Father] for Christ’s sake has forgiven you** (v. 32). If God in Christ has overlooked our mountain of sins against Him, we in turn, if we are animated by the same Spirit, should find no difficulty at all in complying not only with this verse, but also with all the admonitions contained in the epistle. Or, at least, attempting to comply with them.

¹Meekness has been well described as “a virtue whereby we are rendered tractable and easy to be conversed with.”(J. Fergusson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 193.)

²Matthew Henry’s words on this verse are worth reproducing.“The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true wisdom, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy.A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one.”(M. Henry, *Commentary, Vol. III*, 886.)

³A few writers take it to mean the grace of faith that all God's children exercise toward Him.

⁴Some take this to mean water baptism (e.g. H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies*, 183). But water baptism is only a figure of our Spirit baptism (1 Pet. 4:21). It is the baptism with the Spirit that places us into Christ. Besides, Paul is not dealing with an admission rite which puts us into a local church.

⁵We recall that Christ, when He was upon Earth, predicted that He would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40).

⁶Here the words of John Stott are apposite. "There is another view, however, popularized by 'pentecostal' and 'charismatic' Christians, namely that God is again raising up prophets and prophetesses today, who speak His word in His name and by His direct inspiration. I have to confess my own grave hesitation about this claim. Those who make it seldom seem to recognize either the uniqueness of the original apostles and prophets or the superfluity of successors once the New Testament Scriptures became available to the church. Besides, there have been many similar claims in the history of the church, which do not encourage one's confidence in the modern phenomenon." (J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 162)

- We forcefully echo such sentiments!

⁷See the fine comments in L. S. Chafer, *True Evangelism*, 15ff.

⁸ This plainly shows that Christians are to give money to needy brethren as well as to their local church.

EPHESIANS – Chapter 5:1-21

Chapter 5:1-21: An Illuminated Life.

Be therefore followers of God, as dear children...(v. 1). The word **therefore** connects these verses to what preceded them. As a young child follows its parent, so we should be **followers of God**. To follow God it is necessary to have regard to His wonderful character. By this I mean, we follow God because of Who He is, and because we appreciate a little of His multifaceted perfection. We follow because we are attracted, and we follow because we are enabled to follow. We want to walk after our Father and to please Him.

The KJV uses the word **followers** and not “imitators,” which is the word employed by modern translations. Although “imitators” is a technically correct translation, it is not as full a word as **followers**, and is, perhaps, theologically open to question. An imitator is not necessarily a follower. God does not want mimics, He wants disciples. The old saying, “imitation is the best form of flattery,” contains more than a grain of truth to it. But one ought to remember that the great imitator of God is Satan himself. It is Satan who appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14, cf. Eph. 5:8). In any case, we are not seeking to flatter God (cf. Psa. 78:36).

We are **dear children** to God. This is a very real truth that many believers struggle with. It is hard sometimes for us to believe that God always loves us, especially when our lives do not match up with God’s Word or even with our own self-expectations. How many preachers will confess frankly that it is easier to preach consecration to God than to practice it daily! True, but we are still beloved children. We are “accepted in the Beloved.”

Knowing that, despite ourselves, we are beloved of God, produces in the regenerate heart, true affection for the Father, and this affection turns into allegiance. This is what makes it a joy to walk after Him and seek His will. Paul urges his readers to **walk** (which implies following) **in love, as Christ also has loved us...**(v. 2). As we follow, we walk, and how can we follow Christ otherwise than in love? The argument is compelling! Love sacrifices for those loved. Love was the primary motive standing behind the Cross. Christ offered Himself as a **sacrifice to God** for us. God accepted the sacrifice because He was the Sender (Jn. 3:16, 17; Rom. 5:8). The finished work of Christ turned the obnoxious stench of men’s sins into a **sweet aroma**, placating the justice and wrath of Almighty God (cf. Lev. 1).¹

Our numerous sins make manifest the sin nature. We are redeemed from them, but our position within the Body makes it vital that we do not indulge our old nature. Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit found it necessary to warn us about this throughout the whole New Testament. He inspires Paul to write the following admonition: **But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints** (v. 3). There are three sins highlighted in verse three: they are **fornication**, which is sexual impurity; sexual relationship between unmarried persons. In Ephesus, (as today) this was “a sin so lightly thought of among the heathen as hardly to be held of them a wrong or shame at all.” (H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies*, 247).² The next sin is **all uncleanness**. By this, Paul is referring to sexual perversion, also common in the heathen world of those days. **Covetousness** is included with the other two vices because it connotes an evil desire, in this context connected with sexual lust.

Let it not be once named among you, as is fitting for saints. The world should not be able to point a finger at the Church and accuse it of entertaining such things in its midst. The world is as the world does, and when the church adopts worldly ways of “doing church” the results are not hard to predict. Divorces, adultery, abortions are as much a problem in the churches as they are outside them. This is blasphemous. It is a direct result of hirelings in our pulpits and ‘executives’ on our deacon boards. It is symptomatic of America’s preoccupation with externals – success, presentation, presence, credentials and not with the things of the Spirit. When will we stop living by sight and obey in faith?

What goes for the Church, goes for the Christian. If sins are brought up at all, they should only be discussed in abhorrence. The list continues: **neither filthiness** (shameful imaginations) **nor foolish talking** (it is neither good to suffer fools, nor to be one) **nor jesting** (pranks and tomfoolery do not endear nor approve us to others). In opposition to this list Paul does not give their opposites. Instead, he writes, **but rather giving of thanks**. At first appearance this might seem to be rather a lame rebuttal. But, in fact, it is very clever, for when one gives thanks to God it is hard to entertain any vice. The lesson here is simply to be God-centered never man-centered. This fifth verse, and others like it, cannot be simply dismissed as a reminder that an unsaved person has no part in the kingdom. We must regard it more seriously, as aimed at the *saint*. We notice the mention of an **inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**. Is it possible that a backslidden Christian will forfeit his inheritance (but not his salvation, cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15)?³

If verse 5 is not a blunt warning to Christians, then Paul makes no sense in verses 6 and 7. In verse 6 he warns, **let no man deceive you with vain words**. We must take this to heart. The **you** in this verse is obviously a reference to believers. God’s wrath abides upon **the children of disobedience** (cf. 2:2) precisely because they think and live this way. The apostle says that the Christian can also incur God’s

displeasure, so much so that he will lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Jn. 8). Paul's words would be **vain** in themselves if this was not true, and his next admonition, **be not therefore partakers with them** (v. 7) would be senseless.

For you were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord...(v. 8). As previously illustrated in chapter 2:2-3, to be unsaved is to be in darkness.⁴ An unsaved man is disinclined to come to the light of the Gospel (cf. Jn. 3:19-21) because his heart is blinded to its truth (cf. 4:18). But now, **in the Lord** (cf. Eph. 1) a person *is* light—for God is light (1 Jn. 1:5). So then, how are we to **walk**? Answer: as **children of light** (1 Thess. 5:4-5; Rom. 13:12). A child of light is one whose life does not contradict his profession of having “passed from darkness to light.” (Jn. 5:24). He produces **the fruit of the Spirit** (v.9) which is displayed in a witness grounded in **goodness...righteousness and truth**. These are basic ingredients of Christian character.⁵

If we keep in the light, then we will be able to prove (1 Thess. 5:21) **what is acceptable to the Lord** (v. 10). There are many things that are known to be unacceptable to God; these include **the unfruitful works of darkness** (v. 11). No Christian should be in **fellowship** with the world. Why should we live below our calling and indulge in trivialities and base desires? The Ephesians are reminded that they are to **reprove** wickedness. How could they reprove sin if they were fellowshiping in and around it? (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-17). To reprove sin is to expose it to the light of the truth.

Now, verse 12 brings up an interesting question, for it says, **it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret**. The question arises, how could someone reprove and expose sinful practices, and yet not mention them? We believe that the reproof must be in our lives. We must remember that Paul is speaking in the context of 1st century life in Asia Minor. Many abominable sins were committed **in secret**. These sins could be discussed generically, but they ought never to be a “topic of conversation.” To mention them in any other than a context of ethics and discipline would only be to blight a believer's testimony. By walking as children of light, we make manifest the works of darkness; **for whatever makes manifest is light** (v. 13).

It seems in verse 14 that we have the inclusion of a proverbial saying, although some have connected it to Isaiah 60:1-2. A spiritual torpor has descended upon many of the Lord's people. As fundamentally spiritual creatures, this is unnatural. **Christ** is in the light, to be in fellowship with Him means to be **awake**, alert, and watchful in all things.⁶

See then that you walk circumspectly (carefully, watchfully) **not as fools, but as wise** (v. 15) **redeeming the time, because the days are evil** (v. 16). We may assume that to be **wise** is the same as to **walk** in the light. Likewise, to walk as fools, is to act or think as if we were unregenerate, and still in darkness. A fool takes no heed to his goings, or to his business. As it is true that, ‘the devil finds work for idle hands,’ no Christian should entertain a barren spirituality. The time⁷ we have in this life is short. So short that if the saint does not walk circumspectly, he or she will have finished their course with little or nothing to show for it. The **days are evil**; realizing that fact should focus our minds on the importance of following God.

In this verse, the writer is going back to what he said in verse 10. An **unwise** person is set to stumble in an evil world. Christians *can* understand **what the will of the Lord is** (v. 17). Christ will give us light (cf. v. 14) for the way. There is a lot of confusion about today over this matter of knowing God’s will. Although there are times we must learn to wait upon Him, it is surprising how much we can know of it in most of our daily circumstances. The problem for many children of God who seek counseling for their perplexity in this matter is usually straightforward enough: they are not walking in Christ’s light, and they are not walking in meekness, humility, and love!

And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (v. 18). To be **drunk with wine** is to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (cf. v. 11). To be **filled with the Spirit** is to live as light in the Lord (cf. v. 8, 9). This is a command, not an alternative. We can choose either to fill up our empty lives with entertainments and trivialities (signified by being drunk with wine), or we can seek the Spirit’s filling by allowing Him to work in us and through us (cf. Gal. 2:20). With the temptations of the world all around us, how can we ensure that we remain spiritually minded? The apostle addresses this important point in verses 19 and 20. Ways to maintain a spiritual outlook are delineated: we are to **speak** to ourselves, and **sing** to ourselves. **Psalms** refers to the Old Testament Psalter. **Hymns and spiritual songs** are uninspired songs of praise. “There may, however, be some overlapping in the meaning of these three terms as used by Paul.” (Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, 240) Whatever their specific meanings, one thing is clear: Christians are to be joyful people, with the praises of God continually on their lips (cf. Heb. 13:5).

Most commentators and modern versions translate verse 19, “speaking to *each other*,” because the context is corporate. This is certainly true, but Paul’s admonitions are also to every *individual* in the Ephesian congregation. Thus, “individualism” finds no foothold in the Christian life. It is never just about us. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers makes this clear (1 Pet. 2:5). There are no maverick priests.

Paul, of course, is not giving an exclusive list of spiritual practices here. And he is not down on good music, music that aids one to view God, creation, or, indeed, the marred image of God within mankind, in a spiritual light. What the apostle has in mind is that these things ought to help one's thoughts to rise heavenward **to the Lord**. Just singing, "Give me a sight O Saviour, of Thy wondrous love to me," does not automatically mean that one's thoughts are towards God. Alternatively, listening to, for example, composers whom God has gifted with great musical talent (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler) does not obviate spiritual thinking.⁸

Thanksgiving is to be a constant activity of the believer's heart. We must give **thanks** unto God **always for all things...**(v. 20) good or ill (Psa. 34:1; Job 1:21). All our thanksgiving is mediated through and **in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (v. 21). This verse concludes the section. It reflects the thoughts contained in chapter 4:2, 3, 32, and chapter 5:2, and is, in fact, the natural outcome of their observance. Every Christian ought to live "...in lowliness of mind," and we should "...each esteem other(s) better" than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). The fear of God (Acts 9:31, Prov. 1:7) will ensure this is so.

¹ The doctrine known as "Propitiation" (1 Jn. 4:10) is a concept that has come under much criticism, even from conservatives (e.g. Westcott, Lenski). For an excellent defence of this vital doctrine, see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, chapters 3 and 4. Also, R. Law, *The Tests of Life*, 161-163.

² Edersheim gives a bleak description of Roman morals in these times in his great *Life of Jesus*. After speaking of the worship of the Romans, he goes on..."The social relations exhibited, if possible, even deeper corruption. The sanctity of marriage had ceased. Female dissipation and the general dissoluteness led at last to an almost entire cessation of marriage. Abortion, and the exposure and murder of newly-born children, were common and tolerated; unnatural vices, which even the greatest philosophers practised, if not advocated, attained proportions which defy description." (A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 179.)

³ It is perhaps worthwhile to note here that only classical Dispensationalism has taken the "Bema" Seat seriously. Such verses as Ephesians 5:5 should be applied to that future works judgment of believers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10, 11). Other passages which allude to this judgment include Luke 19:11-27; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; 1 John 2:28, 4:17; Revelation 22:12.

⁴ "All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things. Some light there is of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no day-light. Till the

sun arise, it is night still, for all the stars, and the moon [do] to help them.” (R. Leighton, *Works III*, 307.)

⁵ Several times now we have pointed out the importance of good character. It may be of benefit to the reader to go back to Ephesians 3:17; 4:2, 14-16 and compare them (and any pertinent comments) with this passage and those on 5:17 and 6:14. These references clearly reveal the cruciality of conformity to Christ.

⁶ A helpful corollary to this verse is Micah 7:8.

⁷ “Look upon your precious time; time runs, and do you stand still?” (T. Watson, *A Plea for the Godly*, 308.)

⁸ It is a simple fact that most artists and composers have led immoral lives. One does not have to appreciate the person in order to get something out of their music. Nevertheless, in this, as in other areas, our Christian liberty is not to be made an excuse for license.

EPHESIANS – Chapter 5:22-6:9

Chapter 5:22 – 6:9: Relationships

From here to chapter 6:9, Paul deals with relationships. First, he writes to husbands and wives, then to their children, and, finally, to servants and masters. A feature of this section is the way one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ governs one's approach to others in the home.

The first thing God instituted was marriage. It is the very bedrock of a good society. The world does not provide a rationale for a good marriage, neither does it know how to protect and nurture stability and fidelity within the marriage union. The opposite is true of the Bible. Scriptural marriage is a beautiful thing. So beautiful, in fact, that Paul uses it as a picture of Christ's special relationship to His Church. But it must be a *scriptural* marriage!

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord (v. 22). Some would like to join this verse to verse 21 (e.g. C. I. Scofield, C. Keener). But to do that would be to ignore the fact that verse 21 is aimed at the Church body, whereas verse 22ff, is much more specific, aimed at a sub-group within the Body.

The submission that God requires all wives to show their husbands is not passive subjugation. It is allowing the man his God-appointed role as head of the household. It is only "fit" for wives to acknowledge that the final say is not theirs, but their spouse's (cf. Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5). We must also emphasize that Paul is addressing Christian families, and that he is assuming that the husbands and wives in the church already own Christ as Lord of their own lives. If, however, they do not, and the husband, for example, is unruly and offensive, we should note the command is for wives to submit **as to the Lord**. If they cannot submit to their husbands, and also submit to God, then God must come first, but this must be done with 1 Peter 3:1 in mind.

For the husband is the head of the wife...(v. 23). This is taken for granted by the apostle. In the pagan societies of the day, men were regarded as superior to women. The Bible treats them as equals, but equals in their relationship to God, not in authority within marriage. That this is not outmoded thinking becomes evident by reading the rest of the verse: ... **even as Christ is Head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body**. Christ's position has already been described (cf. 1:20-23). If we own Christ as Head of the Church, we should agree that the husband is the head of the wife. Such a gradation is Biblical (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). As Christ is the Saviour of the Body—that is, the Church—the husband should be the protector (which, by the way, occasionally translates *soter*), of his bride.

Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands (not every other man in the congregation) **in everything** (v. 24). The man is responsible for his wife's safety, comfort, and spirituality. But, disobedient wives are responsible bear responsibility for their own conduct.

Husbands, love your wives...(v. 25). This love is not self-centered love, but is the same love that has been commended elsewhere (cf. 5:2, 1 Cor. 13, etc.). The balance within a scriptural marriage is that of "submit/love."^[1] It is a balance that cannot be bettered, and is the recipe for a strong husband and wife bond. Furthermore, husbands must love their wives **even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it**. If the husband is to demand submission from his wife, then she has the right to demand that he love her enough to die for her. Of course, this does not mean that *if* obedience or love is not received that the other person is within their "rights" to withhold what God has commanded. There are no "rights" here, just faithfulness, first to Christ and then to one another.

Hitherto, Paul has been using the figure of Christ and the Church to exemplify Christian marriage. Now he takes the opportunity to speak about the figure itself. The reason Christ died for the Church was **that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word (v. 26) that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (v. 27)**. From these verses we see that the love of Christ at the Cross was not just for our salvation, but for our *sanctification*. It is the Word of God which is used for our daily cleansing (cf. Jn. 15:3, 17:17). Here, it is likened to the **washing of water**.

If every Christian walked in the Spirit as a child of light (cf. 5:8, 9) then the Church would indeed be on its way to becoming **holy and without blemish**, being more obviously “a habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:22). But, although this is not the case, still Christ works in the Church, and will one day **present it to Himself a glorious Church, &c.**

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife, loves himself (v. 28). The figure of Christ and the Church is once more imposed upon the marriage bond. Husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves. What he gets, she gets. He ought to be treating his own body as a temple of God. In other words, he should be observing Ephesians 5:1-21 in his own life, and he should want the same for his mate. As the Lord **nourishes and cherishes...the church (v. 29)**, so the husband is to nourish and cherish his wife, remembering that he and she are one.

Just as a man and a woman become one in marriage, as Christians **we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones (v. 30)**. The association is so close that both organisms are a reflection of each other. (Notice also that this verse does away with the notion that a Christian may lose his or her salvation. As part of Christ’s Body, we cannot go to hell—unless Christ Himself goes there!).

In verse 31, the apostle quotes Genesis 2:24 to establish a connection between verses 28-30. In verse 28, “their own bodies,” is a reference, not only to the man’s personal physique, but to his wife also; likewise, the reference to “his own flesh” in verse 29. We can say this on the authority of verse 31. Notice the husband **shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (v. 31)**.

What has Paul been speaking about? Marriage? Yes. But more importantly the **great mystery** of which the letter to the Ephesians is an explanation; the mystery **concerning Christ and the Church (v. 32)**. Paul has cleverly used the husband and wife relationship to further amplify his teaching about Christ and the Church. This does not mean that what he has said about marriage is to be put aside, rather it has been given new force by the apostle’s argument. Speaking to the husband first, he repeats, **let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (v. 33)**.

Has Paul not labored his point? Could he not have told us our duties more concisely? Undoubtedly, marriage is of great importance to him, and “he [has] spent a great deal of pains in this point.” (P. Bayne, *A Puritan Exposition of Ephesians*, 535). Why? Because families make up local churches, which make up the Church universal. If the marriage relationship (“submit/love”) is not right, then the Church is affected at its root. Scriptural marriage is crucial to the health of the Church.

[1] The expression is borrowed from J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 220. For a good assessment of gender roles, see B. Edwards, ed., *Men, Women and Authority*.

EPHESIANS – Chapter 6:10-20

Chapter 6:10-20 The Christian's Warfare and Armor.

It would be remiss of the writer not to include a discussion of “a believer's use of God's resources, to help him stand against evil powers.” (Hoehner, 642) In an epistle that, more than any other, dwells upon the Christian's role in the Church, a section such as this (6:10-20) would only be expected.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (v. 10). The believer's strength is in Christ, He it is who vanquished Satan. The devil has defeated everyone who he has come up against, apart from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not to be underestimated by us. Too many of the Lord's people are unwilling servants of the devil. By that we mean, they are often found doing his will instead of the Lord's will (e.g. Matt. 16:23). We must be strong **in the Lord** (cf. Prov. 18:10, Psa. 91:2, 2 Cor. 7:16). The Lord's **might** (cf. 1:19) is greater by far than that of Satan (cf. 1 Jn. 4:4; Heb. 1:2-3). By speaking of **the power of His might**, Paul is not forgetting his grammar; he deliberately uses what seems to be a redundant superlative in order to better explicate the enormity of Christ's power (cf. Matt. 28:18).

The believer is to be armed both in heart and mind (cf. 1 Pet. 4:1). The apostle turns to military terminology in order to illustrate what has been properly called “the Christian warfare.” Spiritual battles are encountered by “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:12). No true saint can function in the Body without encountering some resistance from the forces of evil. Therefore, we must all **put on the whole armour of God** (v. 11), which provides the Divine protection and endurance so that no Christian need break ranks and suffer the work of God to be impaired.

Of course, one is not to forget that this is figurative language. The important points in this section are the spiritual realities, which the figures represent, and not the figures themselves. “We must not...inquire very minutely into the meaning of each word; for an allusion to military customs was all that was intended. Nothing can be more idle than the extraordinary pains which some have taken to discover the reason why *righteousness* is made a *breastplate*, instead of a *girdle*.” (Calvin, 338)

The **armour** Paul refers to will be delineated in verses 14-18. Its purpose is **that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil**. Satan uses deceit and craft to get his way. He is “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3) and he appeals to our old wicked natures in order to bring about our fall. Our objective in spiritual combat is to **stand** (vv. 11, 13, 14). At the end of the day, when the trial of our faith is passed, we should

still be standing for our Lord and His Gospel. This is not to say that there is no exertion on our part; **we wrestle** (v. 12) we contend (Jude 3) we strive (Phil. 1:17, 27) **against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places** (v. 12). Wrestling involves hand-to-hand combat. The figure is chosen because the Christian warfare is not like an artillery bombardment, with both sides launching volleys of hardware from a distance. It is a fight at close quarters. The enemy marches against us, and our duty is to hold our ground. If we are standing faithfully in the power of Christ's might, then the **powers of darkness** will not get through. But if we try to stand in our own strength, there can be only one outcome. The description that Paul gives of these powers is one of authority and great strength. It is clear that he is saying that their capacity is far too great for the unprepared Christian to handle. If he strives without his Master, he *will* fail!

Therefore take to you the whole armour of God (v. 13). When we stand in the spiritual armor, there is no way through for the devil (Jam. 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:9). We are always on duty and should be ready at all times. Sadly, so many saints neglect the spiritual armor until it is too late. **The evil day** arrives and the lackluster saint is left searching for spiritual strength and guidance in the midst of confusion.⁴

What is the Christian armor? Using the imagery of the Roman soldier, the apostle lists six pieces (seven if one includes prayer). The metaphors aside, the armor comprises of **truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word of God**. The fact that each of these is described by a particular piece of a Roman soldier's attire is really unimportant. What *is* important is that we each have these six traits in our lives.

The first two pieces mentioned are **truth and righteousness** (v. 14) and are basic ethical requirements for any Christian. One might say that they should be at the core of Christian character. A Christian who is unrighteous in his dealings ought to be a contradiction in terms. Likewise, a Christian who does not assess the world from a biblical standpoint does not assess it truthfully. But more than this is implied here. Truth equals integrity, sincerity. This is why John so pointedly associates truth with our practice of daily living in his second and third epistles. Christians who have short attention spans when righteousness is being discussed ought to give themselves a thorough spiritual examination (2 Cor. 13:5), because righteousness (or a love of it) is the chief characteristic of the man or woman of God.

The next thing, in verse 15, is what the writer calls **the preparation of the Gospel of peace**, the upshot of which is that every believer in the Gospel should *know* the Gospel. He should know why the Gospel is necessary to fallen man and what its relation to the rest of Scripture is, and why it is the most important message in human history. Every believer should be able to explain the Gospel with confidence and

enthusiasm (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15). Not only does the Gospel make peace between God and man, and between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2), it also gives peace to the one who obeys it (cf. Jn. 14:27). Any obedient saint may stand against evil spiritual powers in full assurance that they cannot prevail against him.

The most vital piece of spiritual protection is **faith** (v. 16). Without it, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) or, in fact, to do anything in the spiritual realm. When one considers what the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, a lack of faith is a serious setback in the evil day. When the storm clouds gather, and persecution or sickness or unemployment or financial hardship, or, dare I say it, church splits happen. When all is confusion and nothing makes sense and God seems so distant, it is faith that brings perspective into the situation. It is faith that will trust God even though it feels as though God is displeased or is not watching.

What are **the fiery darts of the wicked**? We believe that they can take the form of temptations, flatteries, slanders, discouragements, etc. The darts may be hurled by either spiritual or human opponents. They are the only offensive weapons of the enemy which Paul mentions, and they can cause great harm to the unprotected who do not trust God in the dark times. We agree with the view that they include, “all those violent temptations that inflame men’s lusts.” (Matthew Poole, *Commentary*, III, 679). Faith quenches these **fiery darts** and renders them harmless. One more thing, the fact that they are *hurled* from often hidden positions shows us that Christians must be prepared at all times, whether they feel the enemy to be close or not.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (v. 17). By **salvation** Paul means our experience of the new birth and our new life in the Spirit. A saved man must always remind himself that he is not what he was (2 Cor. 5:17), but that he stands with Christ and Christ will have him in the ranks. He has been saved for a purpose (cf. Tit. 2:14).

Although it is fashionable for preachers to point to a Bible and call it the **sword of the Spirit**, the apostle is here referring to the **Word of God** in the heart and on the tongue. Simply waving a Bible in the devil’s face does nothing; we must know it, and be able to use it (cf. Lk. 4:3-13). The fact is that many saints try to strike the devil a blow by reciting their *experience* of salvation rather with their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. The Christian Faith is founded upon the Scriptures, not on any subjective experiences we have had as a result of believing them. This is not to negate the importance of proper spiritual experience. We believe that it is to be included in the Apostle’s meaning when he speaks of **salvation** in this verse. Notwithstanding, it is the **Word of God** which is *our* only offensive weapon.⁵ In a day when Bible

literacy is in a tailspin, it behooves pastors and Christian educators to inculcate “Bible knowledge” as a vital part of discipleship.

Taking another look at the pieces of the Christian’s armor, we find that what we are discussing is no less than the spiritual makeup of the man or woman of God. In view of this, if any man thinks that he may do without one of these traits, he may as well declare his intention to quench the Spirit!

Now, **prayer** is finally mentioned (v. 18). Some include it as part of the Christian armor, but we think that the apostle is likening it to **watchfulness**. A man can be watchful, whether he is armed or not. Prayer keeps us spiritually alert. By continual communion with God, and by making requests of Him (i.e. **supplication**) we can maintain an awareness of the needs of both ourselves and of others. We are to look out prayerfully **for all saints**. Paul even includes himself in this number.

On this matter of prayer, we cannot pass over the exhortation of one greater than ourselves. “Let us stir up ourselves to keep this watch that we may see, and walk in the strength of our prayers...If we should devise anything by way of petition [e.g. to a magistrate] should we not wait [to see] how it is received? what is said to it? Would we give our petition, and carelessly depart, never thinking on it? How much more should we wait and see what will become of our requests to God?” (Paul Bayne, 670)

In his situation, in a prison in Rome, Paul covets the prayers of the Ephesian church. He asks them to pray that when he comes before Caesar, he **may speak boldly** as an **ambassador** of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) though **in bonds** (v. 20). In a way not explained in Scripture, God has allowed Himself to be moved by our prayers. Some Christians tell us that prayer doesn’t change things it simply aligns us with the will of God. But that hardly fits the petition that Paul is making here. Surely, a great incentive to pray is that prayer *can* change things. How? The same way obedience works. God knows we will produce fruit before we obey, but the fruit produced is contingent upon that obedience. Likewise, if we don’t pray, we cannot expect the answer that God would have decreed on the basis of it.

Chapter 6:21-24 Closing Remarks and Benediction.

Having taught the Ephesians of God’s riches in Christ, and of the marvel that is the Church, and having given practical instructions about how God wants us to live as members of Christ’s Body, Paul can now close his great epistle. The letter contains no information about Paul’s circumstances,⁶ but Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle, would bring them up to date (v. 21). It appears that Tychicus was not just sent to

deliver letters. Paul also says that his function was ministerial. He was sent to bring news about Paul and **that he might comfort [their] hearts** (v. 22).

Paul closes very much in the way he began. This benediction is not the usual one with which Paul ends his letters. He wishes them to know that God's **peace** (v. 23) and **grace** (v. 24) were toward them. The mention of **love with faith** reminds one of the writer's words in Galatians 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing; nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love." Faith and love belong together. Love without faith is only human affectation, and faith without love is barren trust.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (v. 24). And if anyone can read this epistle to the Ephesians and not love the Lord Jesus sincerely, he hardly understands the special grace of God.⁷

Amen.

⁴ The sage wisdom of William Gurnall applies here. "Grace in a decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness." And again, "A declining Christian must needs be a doubting Christian... And doth it stand with thy wisdom, Christian, to put a staff into the devil's hand, and an argument into his mouth, to dispute thy salvation with?" (W. Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, I, 233-234.)

⁵ "When we use it in our battle we are to use it only as 'God's utterance.'" (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians*, 674.) What Lenski is saying is that our faith in the Bible as God's empowered word is what gives it its cutting edge in our lives. We strike on God's behalf.

⁶ Braune observes, "What is wanting in no other Pauline Epistle will be missed most of all in the Epistle to the Ephesians, viz., historical references. Only two facts are noticed: the imprisonment (3:1, 4:1, 6:20) and the sending of Tychicus with oral intelligence (6:21, 22)." (K. Braune, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 4, in *Lange's Commentary*.)

⁷ We cannot do better than to close with Bishop Moule's final words from his excellent book on Ephesians: "What more do we want? Nothing, O blessed Lord. For this means the possession of Thyself." (H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies*, 340.)

Personal Thoughts About Commentaries on Ephesians

1. Harold Hoehner – A massive book with an impressive argument for Pauline authorship and extremely detailed in the exegesis department. There is room for him to survey all the options and argue for his choices. One of the best commentaries on any Book.
2. Peter T. O'Brien (Pillar) – Okay, I haven't read this or even perused it. But it's by P.T. O'Brien, whose other works, especially his "Colossians" I am very familiar with. Everyone recommends this and I'm sure I can trust their judgment.
3. F.F. Bruce (NINCNT) – Paired with Colossians & Philemon, this work gives the pith and substance of Paul's letter.
4. Markus Barth (Anchor) – Huge treatment, hard to read, but very suggestive. Two volumes with impressive theological reflection based on minute exegesis. Surprisingly for a German he argues for Paul as the author.
5. A. T. Lincoln (Word) – Lincoln sometimes reads like an evangelical; sometimes like a liberal. He rejects Pauline authorship (for no good reason that I can see). I like this work because one gets the sense of the forward-looking strain in the epistles. Shame he doesn't write on Philippians!.
6. J. Armitage Robinson – A very sound older (1904) exegetical work with extra notes on important Greek words. Includes some very helpful paraphrases of tough passages.
7. John Stott (BST) – Stott is a little doctrinaire sometimes, but he is a master expositor. This work is of great help to the preacher who wants to build in good applications from the text itself.
8. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones – I'm going to include these eight volumes of sermons by "the Doctor" because even though one might raise disagreements here and there, the sheer quality of reasoning through the text is without peer. It's all good, but if you can't afford the whole set, start with the two volumes on chapter 6:10ff., the Armor of God.
9. Klyne Snodgrass (NIVAC) – Snodgrass is always stimulating to read. He does really good work letting Ephesians speak for today. Takes a not entirely convincing corporate view of election.
10. Clinton Arnold (ZECNT) – A very good commentary, pitched just below the technical but with real attention to the text. Arnold is well known for his book *Ephesians: Power & Magic*, which is a superb background study of how pagans in Ephesus understood the concept of spirits and power, including using magical papyri and amulets.

There are numerous other fine works which are worthy of commendation. Francis Foulkes in the Tyndale series, Frank Thielman in the Baker series, Ernest Best's ridiculously expensive ICC contribution, and Bryan Chapell's work in the Reformed Expository series. I haven't seen William Klein's commentary in the Revised EBC, but I'm sure it is worth reading, as is William

Hendriksen's book. The older works of John Eadie and C. Leslie Mitton should be procured if possible.