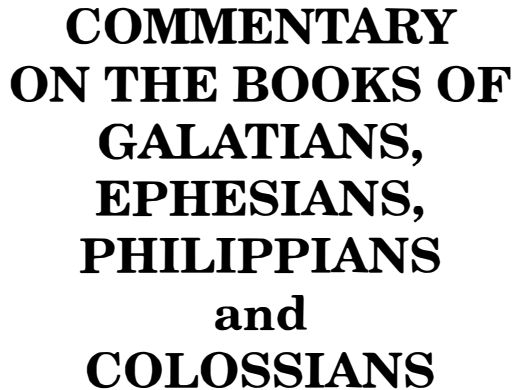


**GOD'S MESSAGES
BIBLE
COMMENTARY
SERIES**

VOLUME 6

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8).



**COMMENTARY
ON THE BOOKS OF
GALATIANS,
EPHESIANS,
PHILIPPIANS
and
COLOSSIANS**

BY
LEON D. STANCLIFF

B.A. ~ Speech
M.A. ~ Bible, Physical Science
Ed.S. ~ Education

Murfreesboro, Tenn.
2000

2000
Printed in the United States of America

A Product Of
Sain Publications
P. O. Box 616 • Pulaski, TN 38478
931 ~ 363-6905

Table Of Contents

Introduction 5

GALATIANS

Galatians 1 11

Galatians 2 25

Galatians 3 37

Galatians 4 55

Galatians 5 73

Galatians 6 91

EPHESIANS

Ephesians 1 113

Ephesians 2 129

Ephesians 3 145

Ephesians 4 159

Ephesians 5 181

Ephesians 6 205

PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 1 227

Philippians 2 243

Philippians 3 255

Philippians 4 265

COLOSSIANS

Colossians 1 285

Colossians 2 299

Colossians 3 311

Colossians 4 325

Dedication

This volume of the
Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated

to

Brother Perry Underwood

who was the
father of my wife.

Brother Underwood believed in Jesus Christ
with all his heart.

He married Ora Barber, my wife's mother,
but then lost his beloved spouse to an early death.
In spite of this tragedy, he believed God's promise.

“And we know that all things work together for
good to them that love God, to them who are the
called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).”

He raised two fine young Christian women,
each of whom married preachers,
and passed on his faith to his grandchildren.

He later married Birdie Pope,
with whom he spent his last twenty-eight years.

Perry Underwood served as a deacon
in Christ's Church.

He loved his fellowman.

But above that, he loved the Word of God,
and he lived it.

He accepted me as his son.
I would like to rejoin him in heaven.

~ Leon Stancliff

Introduction

I. The author of the book of Galatians.

In many cases the authorship of New Testament books is disputed. Such is not true in the case of Galatians. This author of this book is almost universally considered to be the apostle Paul. Only an ignoramus would contend that Paul the apostle was a fictitious figure. His life and travels are entirely too well known, even in fairly minute details, to successfully deny his existence.

Paul the apostle did exist; and it was he who wrote the book addressed to the Christians of Galatia. There is no need to spend space and time in further proof.

II. The Recipients of the letter.

Most of the letters of the New Testament were written either to a single congregation, or to an individual. It is expected that those of us who have lived after the fact will glean principles relating to our own lives as we read those truths which were passed from the apostles to their readers. This letter was written to a group of churches in Asia Minor.

Paul had converted a number of persons in this area during his first missionary journey. They were, by the time of the writing of this letter, members of churches of Christ at such places as Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Paul was very jealous for the welfare of those whom he had converted to Jesus Christ. In this case, he had

received disturbing information that caused him to fear for the spiritual welfare of those converts. He would do everything within his power to prevent their apostasy.

III. The Date of the letter.

There have been a variety of dates suggested for the writing of the epistle. Some have placed it as early as A.D. 48-49, shortly after the first missionary journey. Other suggested dates are A.D. 50, A.D. 53, A.D. 55 and A.D. 57-58. I think the number of suggestions clearly tells us there is considerable difficulty in pinning it down. All I can say is that enough time had elapsed for false teachers to have made inroads toward the corruption of the gospel truths taught by the apostle. I think the earliest dates are a bit suspicious.

IV. The Theme of the letter.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. The first twelve of the apostles were told to preach the gospel to all nations. However; Paul had a very special assignment to extend the good news to those who were not of the fleshly seed of Abraham.

The apostle Peter was so concerned with the special place the Jews held as God's "chosen people" that God provided a special miracle to prove to him that the Gentile household of Cornelius was no longer off limits. Peter was told that what God had cleansed was not to be considered unclean.

Peter was not the only Jew who had trouble with admitting the uncircumcised to the fold of God.

The law of Moses had been given to the Jewish people. Although they must have known that no man ever kept the law to perfection, they must have taken great pride in observing the rituals of the law. Therefore many among the Jews who were converted to Christianity felt that before a Gentile was approved of God, that Gentile must first be circumcised. Once circumcised, he could then keep the law and also follow Christ.

Paul disagreed violently. The law and the prophets were forerunners to the gospel. They prepared the way for the Lord. When Christ died upon the cross the law had accomplished its mission. The keeping of the law of Moses was not necessary in order to be approved of God under the gospel dispensation . The law pointed out the nature of sin. The gospel provided a means for the removal of the guilt of sin. When that veil between the holy place and the most holy in the temple was rent from top to bottom at the death of Jesus, the law was no longer binding. In this letter to the Galatians, Paul was to place the emphasis upon the faith of Christ; not in the keeping of the law of Moses.

V. A disturbing development.

A very large number of commentators have adopted the view that faith alone is the major theme of the Galatian letter. This is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. Those who hold this position tell us man can do nothing to merit salvation. All is dependent upon God. Nothing is dependent upon the works of men. The entire responsibility of man, according to these “faith only” advocates is to accept

what God has offered.

If faith is to be of any value to the servant of God, it must be accompanied by works. James stated that "*Faith without works is dead.*" And again, "*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*" (*James 2:17-20*). Now if one is satisfied with a dead faith he is very much deluded. Let us demonstrate our faith by our works. It is not an either-or proposition. Salvation is impossible without both.



**The Book Of
GALATIANS**

Chapter 1

GAL 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Paul's letters are typical of those of the time in which he lived. He began by giving the identity of the writer. We today place our signature at the end of the letter rather than at the beginning. This would seem as strange to Paul's readers as his signature at the beginning seems strange to us.

His apostleship was being placed under question by some of the Jewish teachers. He was not one of the original twelve. He had not walked with Christ through the over three year period when the Lord was alive upon the earth. Perhaps, they thought, he had simply chosen the office of an apostle through his own ambition, and had persuaded others to support him. Paul immediately dealt with that accusation.

He was not an apostle because he had made himself one. Neither was he an apostle because other humans had appointed him. His apostleship was assigned through the authority of Christ himself, and from the Father in heaven who had raised His son Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul's apostolic authority had been well established through the miracles he was able to perform. These were the proof that he was no less qualified than the original twelve.

GAL 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

We do not know just which of the brethren were with him at the time of the writing of this letter. We do know they were not apostles in the sense that he was an apostle, and that they could not claim inspired co-authorship with Paul.

As stated before, the letter is addressed to a number of churches in the territory of Galatia in Asia Minor. This is the region we now know as Turkey. There may have been more Christians in that area then than there are at present.

GAL 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

The blessings of grace and peace find a place at the beginning of many of Paul's letters. Grace is unmerited favor. If mankind received what it deserves from the hand of God, the end would be most tragic. Day by day and hour by hour each and all of us do those things which would bring condemnation upon our heads. The fact that such punishment is postponed, reduced or even eliminated completely from our lives is due only to the gracious forgiveness of our loving Father in heaven. Between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ we are blessed far beyond what we could ever expect.

Peace, as it is used in the New Testament scriptures is something far more than the absence of violence and warfare. It is a condition in which one is in harmony with both God and man. It is a condition in which all things are made to work

together for good to the one who enjoys it. Such peace originates in the mind of God.

GAL 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

But not only do grace and peace come to us from a forgiving God. They are a result of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ spoke of himself as the Great Shepherd who cares for the sheep and is willing to give himself for those sheep.

This present world is to be contrasted with the world to come. Satan is alive and well in this present world. His angels are active in practically every phase of life. He would like nothing better than to see men reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment day when they could be plunged into the fire of hell. As a result of our sin Satan could well claim that we are due the wages of sin which is ultimate separation from God and all things righteous. However; it is not God's will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That is why he sent His Son. That is why His Son came to this lowly land of sin and sorrow. Jesus prayed in Gethsemene that if it was possible the cup might pass from him. But, he said, "*Thy will be done!*"

GAL 1:5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus was associated with glory before the world began. The seventeenth chapter of John's account of the gospel speaks of the glory Christ had with God before the creation. We are told also that Christ is the express image of God. We are told that he was caught up into glory. And we are also taught that he will bring many sons to glory. What a simple and powerful verse this one is! Christ rightly deserves every accolade men may direct toward him, both now and forever.

GAL 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

Several commentators point out that it would be at this point that Paul would ordinarily say something very nice about those who would read his letter. For example, he would give thanks for their faithful service and love for one another. He does not do that in this letter. He launches right into a very serious problem. The Galatian Christians had placed themselves in the greatest of danger. They had at one time heard a call to leave the bondage of sin and take advantage of the mercy and forgiveness of God through his Son Christ Jesus.

It was not Christ himself who had done the calling here. It was someone other than Christ who had called them *into* Christ. Perhaps Paul is referring to his own preaching. He could also be speaking of the Father in heaven. Each Christian is called into the Grace of Christ by a number of voices. The Father calls. The Son calls. The Spirit of God calls. The one

who introduced each of us to the gospel called, etc.

The Galatians had heard the call. They had responded to that call. Now another voice had caught their attention. It was not calling them to Christ. It was calling them away from Christ. Paul found it a most astounding thing that those who had once escaped the bondage of sin would turn back toward it. What kind of a call could be so attractive that they would leave their freedom and once again embrace captivity?

GAL 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Though they might think the voice they were hearing was another gospel, it was not. The word gospel means “Good News.” This new voice was far from being good news. It sought to tear them away from the grace found in Christ and leave them struggling in the works of the law of Moses. It was nothing more than a perversion or mutilation of the true gospel of Christ.

GAL 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Even if Paul himself were to come to them contradicting what he had formerly preached concerning the wondrous grace of God found in Christ, they must not believe it. No source of any

kind had the right to dissolve the joys available in Christ.

On Mount Sinai angels were associated with the giving of the law. But even if an angel were to come to them, preaching the need to keep the law of Moses to meet the approval of God, they were to ignore that source. The one who would have them depart from Christ and turn to another plan of salvation would be accursed of God. There is no other way.

GAL 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Plain words sometimes need to be repeated for emphasis. That was true in this case. There was no other way to make the danger clearer than just to repeat it. The man or angel who preached what they claimed to be good news, but who had placed the effectiveness of that supposed gospel on the keeping of the law of Moses, would find themselves accursed by God.

GAL 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Paul asked them if they felt that he should alter his message to them for the sake of pleasing men. If he preached what he had preached before, he would be persuading men to follow Christ. If he

preached what some had later preached to them, he would be trying to change the will of God. He would certainly not be laboring in the service of Jesus Christ if he altered the true gospel.

GAL 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

It sounds a bit like Paul was being accused by some of those who had been led away by the false teachers of having diluted the will of God in preaching the demise of the law of Moses. They may have seen him as preaching that which men would like to have preached rather than the strict commandments of the law, as given through Moses.

Paul vehemently denied that what he preached was the product of human minds:

GAL 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How did he receive the message he was preaching if he did not get it through the minds of men? His claim is that he did not hear it from men. He had not been taught what he was propounding by his Jewish teachers.

His claim was that he had learned what he was preaching directly from the Son of God. He had met him personally and the information he received did not filter through fallible men. Other passages tell us of Paul's being caught up into the third heaven

where he heard things that were unutterable. Paul was charged by the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentile world. He was given an unadulterated presentation of just what he was to preach to them. No man had polluted it.

GAL 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

The word “conversation” in this verse includes more than vocal conversation. Paul speaks of his entire pattern of life. If anyone ever attempted to learn and live the Law of Moses, Paul had previously done that. No man was ever more dedicated to that system of doctrine.

He was so certain of himself that he felt obligated to destroy all Christ stood for. When he says he wasted the church of God he is saying that he would have been pleased if he could have left it a deserted wasteland. It was a well known fact that he did everything he was able to do that he might hinder the progress of the church. His efforts did have an effect. The damage he caused was so great it defied measurement. The reader will recall how Paul held the garments of those who stoned Stephen to death for preaching the Word of God.

GAL 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

The apostle had been proud of his accomplishment when he compared them with many of his fellow students of the Law. He had outrun them because of his intense dedication to what he believed at the time to be pleasing to Jehovah. Traditions are those teachings which are passed down from one generation to another. Paul was out front when it came to keeping the minutest details of Moses' Law, which had been passed down to him through those who came before.

GAL 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

Apparently, God had recognized in Paul the very loyalty that he needed in one who was to be given special responsibilities for seeing that the gospel was preached to all men, and not just to the Jews?

Here is another of those verses some try to force into the predestination mold. God did not force Paul to preach Christ and his church. God did, through his ability to foresee the future, know this man would fulfil his will when given the opportunity and the evidence necessary to convince him of the Divine will.

All of us would do well to allow God to do with us those things for which we were brought into this world. There are things each of us can do that no one else can do. If we do not do them, they will not be done. God expects that you and I will realize our talents and opportunities, and that we will become

instruments of righteousness in our own unique way, just as Paul did.

GAL 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Is it not interesting that Paul talked of God revealing his Son “*in me*”, rather than “*through me.*” The Christian is “in Christ”, but Christ is also “in him.” Christ must be in the Christian before the Christian can preach him to his fellowman. Once he has gotten in, he can then come flowing forth.

To the Jew all non-Jews were heathen. It mattered little that they might be cultured and literate. If they were gentiles they were heathen. What a strange experience for Paul! A Jew among Jews. Yet God selected him to preach to the disgusting gentiles.

Once convinced it was the will of God, Paul did not falter. Nor did he go back to his teachers and ask them what he should now say to the gentiles. He had no need to do this because Jesus himself trained him up in the way that he should go. He was preaching to please God, not men.

GAL 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

He could have immediately traveled to the city of Jerusalem where he would have been able to sit

at the feet of those who were already apostles. He did not need their tutorship any more than he did that of Gamaliel or the other famous Jewish rabbis.

Instead, he went into Arabia, the territory east of Canaan. This was not the place to receive human training in how to preach Christ. Notice that he then went right to Damascus, a city where he had previously persecuted Christians to death. This would not have been the wisest path of action as far as his own personal well being was concerned.

GAL 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

One can get an entire university education in a period of three years. If Paul had been interested in preaching the doctrines of men he should have used those three years at the feet of the greatest human teachers available. It was certainly not because he had been put under pressure by the original apostles. Peter was the one who had preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost. But, it was not until three years had passed that Paul even conferred with Peter.

The time he spent with Peter was only fifteen days. That would hardly be enough for him to absorb all the inspired apostle could impart to him. His visit to Peter was not to learn the gospel from him. It was to share their mutual responsibilities in the spread of the good news.

GAL 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

He had not even seen any other of the apostles except for James, the brother of the Lord. One who was trying to learn the gospel truths from men would certainly have sought out the rest of the inspired men. Paul did not need to do that. He was inspired himself.

GAL 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Paul then did much the same as a witness in court today would do when he raises his right hand and swears before God to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” He solemnized all he had said about the source of his knowledge of the truth by affirming in the presence of God himself that everything he had written was correct.

Some supposedly religious men are hypocrites. Paul was not. He had acted in all good conscience. He wrote the present letter in the same manner. His readers could depend completely upon that which he was writing. He was not preaching or writing to please men.

GAL 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

We do not know how long after Paul visited Peter and saw James the Lord's brother that he moved out into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. His point appears to be that as the apostle to the Gentiles, he needed to move out into the locations where Gentiles

were to be found. Syria and Cilicia were such areas. Later, in his series of missionary journeys, he would extend his contacts to Asia Minor, Greece and Italy. This was only the beginning of his obedience to the Christ who commanded him to show his love for those he once had disdained.

GAL 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

This must have been a strange experience for those Christians who had suffered at his hand in the regions of Jerusalem and Judea. They did not personally see the new man. They would certainly have known his face if he had come into their midst. They did not have that opportunity. They might well have had difficulty in accepting the sincerity of his change, or the reason for it.

GAL 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

One does not have to see such changes personally. When someone who has created as much havoc among others as Paul had created among the Jews who converted to Christ, word of a complete turnaround would travel rapidly. What tremendous news! The same man who had made life so miserable in the past was now using that same energy to promote that which he formerly despised. There could hardly be better news than that.

GAL 1:24 And they glorified God in me.

They had good reason to glorify God because of this almost unbelievable transformation from persecutor to preacher. Paul is not the only one in history to have brought such a response from Christians. There have been those who were utter atheists, and who then have seen the folly of fighting Christ and his church. We are never glad that any man was an opponent of Christ. We are extremely glad that a number of those who have been opposed to him have later attempted to glorify the one they fought. This causes others to glorify God as a result of the about face of those who were converted.

Chapter 2

GAL 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

Paul had by this time established his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was second to none of the original twelve. He is still solidifying that position.

The fourteen years mentioned in this verse could mean fourteen years after his conversion. He seems to be giving a short history of his life from the time he was converted. But some have seen this fourteen years as being counted from the events previously discussed. I believe it has to do with the time which elapsed from his conversion.

He set out for Jerusalem with two of his companions, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas had supported Paul from the earliest days of his Christian life. Titus was a Gentile whom Paul had converted during his missionary efforts.

GAL 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

It was not by coincidence that the apostle made this trip. God had revealed his will that this be done. It was important that the leaders in the church at Jerusalem be aware of that which Paul was

preaching to the Gentiles. This was a very special time in the history of God's relationship with men. The transition was being made from the stage in which the Jews were God's chosen people to the stage in which all men, both Jew and Gentile were to be incorporated into the body of Jesus Christ. It was therefore critical that Jewish Christian be prepared for the assimilation of Gentiles as being approved of God.

The first steps had been taken. Peter had received instructions in Ceasarea to go to the household of Cornelius and preach to them. The Jewish Christians had accepted the fact that Gentiles might be acceptable as a part of the family of God. But, they were still not convinced that the Gentiles need not commit themselves to the keeping of the entire law of Moses before becoming disciples of Christ.

Those of reputation no doubt were Peter, James and John, as well as other leaders of the Jerusalem church. Paul went first privately to those who had the greatest influence. It is often wise to gain the cooperation of those who have strong influence before entering into a meeting with the larger body of which they are a part. Paul desired to avoid any last minute surprises.

GAL 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

Paul's position was accepted. Titus was not required to be circumcised as the law of Moses required of the Jews. Titus was accepted as a Christian without having been circumcised.

GAL 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

It was important that the leaders in the church at Jerusalem did not require Titus to be circumcised. There were certain false teachers who had quietly entered the congregation in Jerusalem, looking for some means by which they might put pressure on Christians to bind themselves to the keeping of Moses law. These deceptive brethren would like to have forced all the Christians to not only be circumcised, but to keep the dietary and other commandments of the old law.

GAL 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul, Barnabas and Titus were not for one moment willing to bend their teachings to accomodate these mistaken brethren. They were determined to preach the freedom of the gospel, even in the face of social pressures.

There is a strong lesson for present day Christians here. The only thing that matters in the Christian way of life is to find the will of God and obey it. It does not matter what a Pope says. It does not matter what a denominational conference decides. It does not matter what the preacher of the local congregation says, or what the elders of a

congregation say, if those persons or groups are at odds with the truth as God has presented it. We have no obligation to subject ourselves unless God has spoken.

GAL 2:6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Paul had obviously entered into select company when he went to Jerusalem. This was a very special city in the history of God's people. Even now the apostles resided in that city. Paul could have been awed in the presence of Peter, James, John and the others. He was not awed. They did not provide him with any information or truth which he did not already possess.

God does not accept men on the basis of their wealth, their position or their intellect. Every man is approved of God when he loves God and does his very best to keep His commandments.

GAL 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

This is an interesting verse in that Peter was the one who was first commanded to open the door of the gospel to the Gentile world. However; even

though Peter was given that very special privilege, he was not the one who was to move out into the lands of the Gentiles and establish churches there. Peter would remain in Canaan. Paul would go Gentile territory.

The verse does not teach that there were two different gospels, one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. It teaches that Paul took the one gospel to the Gentiles. Peter took that same gospel to the Jews.

GAL 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

The same God who empowered Peter so that he was effective in preaching Christ to the Jews had empowered Paul in his work with the Gentiles. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem were able to see that God was working successfully in both of these great men.

GAL 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Shaking hands has been a sign of approval and partnership for centuries. It was done in the days

of Peter, James, John and Paul as it is done all over the world in the twentieth century. The three who were perceived to be foundational personalities in the church were happy to count Paul and Barnabas as fellow workers in the preaching of the gospel. Paul and Barnabas were expected to go to the Gentiles. Peter, James and John would work primarily among the Jews. This, of course, did not mean Paul could not labor among Jews, or Peter among Gentiles.

GAL 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

One thing which was agreed upon was that Paul and Barnabas should keep in mind the poor Christians who were found in the Jerusalem area. Paul commented that he certainly agreed with that plan. His later collection and delivery of the contributions of the Gentiles for the poor saints in Jerusalem confirms the sincerity of his statement.

GAL 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Then Paul brought up a very serious matter. Peter had visited the Christians at Antioch and had made a bad mistake while there. It became necessary for Paul to boldly point out Peter's error. Paul is certainly not trying to boast here about being more

faithful than Peter. He is still making it clear that he had an important part to play in the spread of the gospel and that he did not hesitate to fill that role.

GAL 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

It is to Peter's credit that he thought enough of Gentile Christians that he would leave Jerusalem and go to visit them. It is not to his credit that he came up short in standing up under pressure.

As long as Peter was not in the presence of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who believed it wrong to associate with uncircumcised Gentiles, he did very well. But, when some of those Jewish Christians came to Antioch, Peter bowed to the pressure and ceased to associate with the Gentile Christians. Peter could be strong and he could be weak. He was strong in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. He was weak when he denied three times that he knew the Christ. This time he showed his weak side. As we can see, even an apostle can make mistakes. If the Roman Catholic church wishes to see Peter as the first Pope, and at the same time claim he was infallible, they must deal with this incident.

GAL 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

The problem reached farther than just Peter's denial of fellowship to the Gentiles. His action was contagious. Other Jewish Christians in Antioch followed his example and pulled away from the Gentiles. It went so far as to swallow up Barnabas in the movement. This must have been very disturbing to Paul. Barnabas had been very supportive in the past.

GAL 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Paul did not back off. He challenged Peter and the others to change their actions. What they were doing did not coincide with the truth of the gospel that all men are one in Christ Jesus. Nor did it agree with the teaching that the law was no longer binding. The law was only a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. It was not a slavemaster intended to keep men in bondage forever.

Paul reminded Peter that he had been a Jew and had not hesitated to live among the Gentile Christians without forcing them to be circumcised. Now he was reversing his position and by his actions in separating himself from the Jewish Christians, he was really telling them they must live under the regulations of the law of Moses as the Jews had done.

GAL 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

Both Peter and Paul were Gentiles by birth. The Jew considered the Gentile to be outside the realm of God's blessings. The Jews had been proud to be a part of the chosen people of Jehovah.

GAL 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Nevertheless, now that Peter and Paul understood that no man had ever been justified by keeping the law of Moses, they had both committed themselves to living by the principles of faith as presented by the words and deeds of the Master. They were living in such manner that they might be made just or righteous by Christlike living.

The reason the works of the law did not justify flesh is that no man has ever kept the law perfectly. This includes both the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Let no man deceive us. Christ does present law. The man who failed to keep the law of Moses was condemned. The man who fails to keep the commandments of Christ is condemned. The only way either of these men can be saved is through the grace of God in the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

GAL 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Peter and Paul both knew of the relationship between faith, works, grace, love and obedience. If they went back and made it appear that men must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, they were saying Christ had taught them to live under the condemnation of sin. Paul showed his astonishment by saying, “*God forbid.*”

GAL 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

If it was the will of Jesus Christ that men go back and live under the law of Moses, he was rebuilding that which he came to replace. Any man who turned away from the freedom found through the grace of Christ had made himself a sinner. He had rejected everything Christ came for.

GAL 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

The law taught the coming of a Messiah who would fulfil that law. Until a man died to the law, he could never truly live unto God. He must have the grace of Christ to make up for his inability to live the perfect life.

GAL 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Paul insisted that the Christian must crucify himself to take advantage of the grace of Christ. If the Christian attempted to please God through the strength of the flesh he would fail. He must come to realize that only to the degree that his life is controlled by the teachings and example of Jesus can a man be justified or made righteous in the sight of Jehovah. The Christian does not depend upon his own power to please God. He leans upon the everlasting arms of Divine strength. The sacrificial life of Jesus makes the difference.

GAL 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Our friends, the Seventh Day Adventists, frustrate the grace of God. They have convinced themselves a Christian must remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy, before he can be right in the sight of God. Paul disagrees. He says if we become righteous through the keeping of the law, then there was no need for Christ to die for our sins.

I would add one last note to this chapter. Paul said in the sixth chapter of Romans, "*Shall we sin then that grace may abound? God forbid.*" The grace

of God does not provide a license to sin. The grace of God in Christ is meant to provide a remedy for momentary lapses of those who strive to keep God's commandments. It is not meant to encourage men to sin in order that the blood of Christ can be smeared over hypocrisy.

Chapter 3

GAL 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

The thinking of the Galatian Christians had been distorted. It was as if they had been put under a spell of some kind. They were determined to see Christian achievements as being subject to the keeping of the law of Moses. They were ready to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Son of God, but felt that they could stand justified in the sight of God by their own works.

If that be the case, then the crucifixion of Christ lost its meaning. Christ died that we might live. Yes, it is true that we must work the works of him who sent Christ, but without his perfect sacrifice our works would fall short and leave us under the penalty of eternal separation from God.

GAL 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

In our present day manner of speech, we would say, "Tell me one thing." Just how did you Galatians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Did it come to you because you worked diligently, or did it come because you repented of your sins and placed your life in the hands of the Son of man?

I might add here that all true Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when they become alive

in Christ (See Acts 2:38). Paul will later refer to spiritual gifts of a miraculous nature. However; that is not the entirety of the matter. Every faithful Christian began a new life when baptized. That new spiritual life is in contrast with the old life which began at the time of physical birth. It came about through the infusion of the Spirit of God and not from any personal human achievement.

GAL 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Here is that word “foolish” again. The Galatians would have no difficulty in determining Paul’s evaluation of their thought patterns. They were very unwise to say the least. One does not come to life as a Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit, and then decide to earn his eternal salvation by his own power. If we are to be perfected it will not be by our personal effort. It will be by the cleansing power of the blood of Christ and by the guidance and strength of the Spirit of Christ.

GAL 3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

What things had the Galatian Christians suffered? We are not told. Nevertheless, the implication is that they had endured much hardship in trying to work their way to heaven. If they continued their present philosophy of life, which was

so dependent on their own perfect keeping of a system of law, this would all be in vain. They would fall short somewhere along the way and thus would not enter into final glory.

Perhaps Paul would be able to persuade them the true purpose of the law of Moses and they would place their confidence in the grace of God rather than on the keeping of the law.

GAL 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Is Paul speaking of his own ability to work miracles, does he refer to others also? Through the power of the Holy Spirit some Christians during the apostolic age were able to work miracles. They received this power through the Spirit of God. They did not have it because they had developed it on their own. No man received the Holy Spirit because he or she had kept the law of Moses. It came about because the individual had placed their trust in the Son of God and united themselves with him.

GAL 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

It is quite certain that Abraham did not live a perfect life. For example, Abraham deceived the Egyptians concerning his wife Sarah. In spite of his faults, God accounted him as a righteous man

because of Abraham's overall trust in God's way of life. This righteous position was placed on his account because of God's grace and not because of his own keeping of the law of Moses, or any other system of law. No one keeps law systems perfectly.

GAL 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Jehovah made some wonderful promises to Abraham with respect to his descendants. Now just who are those descendants who were to benefit by being of the seed of Abraham? The Galatian Christians were composed of both Jewish and Gentile persons. Paul is ready to make the point that a Gentile does not have to become a Jew before he can become a Christian. The Gentiles who follow the faith of Abraham were just as truly the spiritual seed of Abraham as were the Jews.

GAL 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Abraham lived long before the law was given. Abraham lived about 1900 years before Christ. Moses received the law about 1500 years before Christ. God had promised that those from ALL nations would be blessed as descendants of Abraham. This promise was not restricted to the Jewish nation. The term "heathen" in this verse refers to those nations who were not of the Jews. The law did not even exist

when God made his promise concerning the justification of the heathen by faith.

GAL 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Who then is able to claim the blessings promised to Abraham's descendants? It has to be those who demonstrate the same faith that Abraham demonstrated. Jesus was to say later that God could raise up children to Abraham from the stones of the earth. Men did not have to become Jews before they could be the children of Abraham by faith.

GAL 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

The man or woman who feels that they can be saved eternally through the keeping of the law of Moses, or of any other law system, is doomed to destruction. No man ever kept every commandment of the law of Moses to perfection. The first time he or she fell short they found themselves separated from God and under the curse of spiritual death. The law did not save. The law defined sin and spelled out the punishment which was due when sin occurred.

GAL 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Paul came back around again to make certain his point was established. Men do not save themselves by their own efforts. Spiritual life comes about because of the grace and mercy of God, and not because men keep the law to perfection. Men do not do that. If we inherit eternal life it will be because grace and faith met in us, not because we lived a spotless life.

GAL 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Faith and law are two separate things. Faith rests upon trust. Law rests upon regulations. If we are to live through the keeping of law, that law must never be broken. If we live by faith, the weaknesses and frailties we fall into may be forgiven when we repent and change our course of action.

GAL 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

There was only one fleshly being who ever kept the law to perfection. That person was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was a part of the Godhead itself. He was the only one who ever deserved to go to heaven on his own merits.

This placed him in a position to offer an invitation to others to unite themselves with him and obtain eternal life. He offered his own perfect life on the

cross and took our sins away through his death. This is not the normal course of events. It is difficult for us to understand. If we place a piece of clothing which is filthy and dirty in with many other garments that are spotlessly clean, the clean garments do not make the dirty garment clean. The dirty garment stains all of the other clean ones. It is not so with respect to the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. By becoming one with the spotless Christ we can be washed clean and be unstained in the sight of the Father in heaven.

Jesus died that we might live. He took the punishment which we deserve. He died the death of the most hideous criminals of his time. He did not deserve that death. The one perfect man took all the sins of all the imperfect men upon himself. He is the one garment that can make all the other garments that come into contact with him clean.

GAL 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Jew who thought he was safe in the arms of God simply because he was a fleshly descendant of Abraham was very mistaken. That blessing was to come on those who had the same kind of faith as Abraham had, whether they were Jew or Gentile.

The “we” in this verse includes both Jew and Gentile. Both Jew and Gentile may receive spiritual life, which is gift of God. And it will come to those

who follow in the footsteps of faithful Abraham.

We should also add that the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of the Spirit are one and the same thing. The Holy Spirit itself is the gift that is promised to those who place their lives in the hand of God.

GAL 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

The covenant God made with Abraham in the long ago has not been cancelled. It was confirmed by God himself. When men make a covenant and confirm it, that covenant is not to be broken or cancelled. It is to be kept. If that is true with men, it ought not to be difficult to see that when God makes a covenant and confirms it, that covenant will neither be broken nor changed.

GAL 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Now the fact is that God himself entered into a covenant with Abraham. He promised that the seed of Abraham would be blessed. When God made that statement, he was not speaking in the plural. He was speaking about one seed of Abraham. The promised blessing was offered through Jesus Christ,

the Son of God. The Jews, separate and apart from Christ, have no hope of eternal life. He is the one seed through whom all the faithful will inherit the promise.

GAL 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Some see a contradiction between the four hundred years Stephen mentioned in Acts 7:6 and the four hundred thirty listed here. There is no contradiction. Stephen was talking in round numbers. Paul was being more precise.

Which came first, the covenant God made with Abraham, or the law, as given through Moses? The answer is not subject to debate. The covenant with Abraham came first. That covenant will not be broken. God keeps his promises, even if men do not. The promise to Abraham is still in effect. One does not have to keep the law of Moses today to receive eternal life.

GAL 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

If one receives the promise of eternal life through the keeping of the law, the promise made to Abraham is of no consequence. The reality is that if we must keep the law of Moses to receive eternal life, all men are doomed to hell and without hope. This is not the

case. God made his great promise to Abraham long before the law was given.

GAL 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Why then did God even give the law of Moses? If no one ever keeps it, and Abraham and his descendants may inherit eternal life through faith, the Jew may wonder what God's purpose was in giving such an extended list of dos and don'ts as were found in the law given through Moses.

There is an answer to this question. The law was needed to spell out both the nature of sin and the awful consequences of sin. God gave it because the world was not yet ready to meet the one who would be able to cleanse all of those who would place their faith in his life and teachings.

God did not give the law directly to men. He gave it to angels. The angels made it available to Moses, and Moses then transmitted it to the people of Israel. Mankind needed some preparation before they would be ready to meet the one who is now known as "God with us." It would be many centuries before men would be in a position to actually see and hear the "Word which became flesh and dwelt among us."

GAL 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

Verse twenty has given Bible commentators much

food for thought. Burton Coffman, who usually has good insight, and who ordinarily has some kind of explanation for every phrase in the scriptures, admitted that he did not know the meaning. He also added that he found the same to be true of every other writer he had examined.

Shall I be presumptuous if I make the effort to harmonize the verse with what has gone before? Forgive me if I go wrong. Hear me if I help to clarify.

Paul had been talking about Moses and the angels being mediators between Jehovah and the people of Israel. Now a mediator exists when two parties who have been at odds need to be brought together. Man and God had been separated from one another by sin. The law of Moses was a step in the direction of mending the gap. There were two mediators between God and the people when the law of Moses was presented. When Christ appeared, he was God himself. There was no mediator other than “God with us.”

As is true with any remark in any commentary on the Holy Scriptures, the reader is under obligation to search out the truth for himself. If I have helped I am delighted. If I have hindered I pray that God will forgive me and that the reader will seek diligently until he has come to a knowledge of the truth.

GAL 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

In no way is the law of Moses antagonistic to the the promise given to Abraham. On the contrary, the law helped men to realize the need for the grace which God was to offer to the world later through his own Son.

If eternal life could have been offered through the keeping of the law, the law of Moses would have served that purpose. But, the law did not make men righteous. Only perfection in keeping the commandments of the law would have earned a position of absolute righteousness. Therefore no man was ever righteous without the coming of the one perfect man, Jesus Christ.

GAL 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

The purpose of the law of Moses was to show men that the law only defined sin and demonstrated their need for something which could do that which the law did not do. Only after the law had served it's purpose would men be prepared for introduction to the One Perfect Sacrifice. All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Therefore all men need the freedom from sin which comes only by faith in Christ.

GAL 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

If Christ had not come, every one of us would be

under the curse of death. We could have known the nature of sin through the instruction of the law of Moses. We would have been hopeless and helpless. Sin leads to death. All have sinned. All deserve to die. The diagnosis had been made. The cure was not yet presented.

GAL 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

A great deal has been made of the relationship between the Greek schoolmaster or pedagogue and the action of the law of Moses. The point is made that the pedagogue did not instruct the child. The pedagogue only brought the child to school where the instruction was to be given. I think this illustration has been overdone. The law did much to instruct men in spiritual matters. I believe it is a mistake to say that spiritual instruction had to wait for the coming of Christ.

It is certainly true that the law of Moses did not present the complete truth which makes men free. However, the law was more like an elementary school teacher that prepares the students for further instruction later. The elementary teacher does not get the student ready for a medical license. He or she does provide the foundation upon which the medical training may be laid. The law of Moses laid the foundation upon which the faith of Jesus Christ was laid.

GAL 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Perhaps my analogy breaks down here. The foundation of a building is still a part of the building after the structure is built upon it. The law of Moses is no longer a schoolmaster. It has performed its function and has been replaced.

Yet there is a little more to the story. The law of Moses is still included in our Holy Bible. Why should that be if we are no longer under its tutorship? May I suggest that the answer to that question is that God's scheme of redemption is a unit. Just as a building needs a foundation, even after the superstructure has been erected, the system of grace through Jesus Christ is supported by our understanding of the horror of sin and the need for escape from its curse.

GAL 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

If you and I are to inherit the blessings owned by the Father in heaven, then we must be his children. It is not the case that those who are unknown to one would inherit his possessions. That which qualifies individuals as children of the Heavenly Father is a heart of faith. The person will not be recognized as God's heir because he has lived a perfect life such as God lives. He must be recognized as God's child because he has united himself with the only perfect man who ever existed.

GAL 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The question then is, “How may I unite myself with the Son of God in such manner that I may be one with him and be purified through his cleansing blood? How may I put on Christ? How may I know I am a child of God?”

This verse makes the answer as clear as crystal. The faith that saves from the curse of death is a faith which comes to life in obedience to the command to be baptized for the remission of sins in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Someone may say, “That is all very good. But what do you mean by being baptized into Christ. Is this some specific action, or is it a general attitude which is shown by just living the good life?” The Bible leaves us with no room for doubt on this matter. The child of God will have been born a second time. This second birth is one of water and of the Spirit. After having been born of water and the Spirit, the newborn Christian must be faithful unto death. He will then receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

But perhaps the first birth is physical birth and has to do with the embryonic fluid. No, this will not do. The embryonic fluid is not water. It is an elaborate chemical solution. The Bible is entirely too clear about the nature of baptism to allow the first birth to be completely physical and the second to be completely spiritual. In the eighth chapter of the book of Acts the Ethiopian eunuch had heard Philip’s teaching concerning baptism. He then asked, “Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized.” He was told that if he believed with all his heart he might be baptized. Both Philip and the Eunuch went

down into the water. The eunuch was then baptized and the two of them came up out of the water.

The baptism that puts one into Christ is one in which a person simulates the death to sin by allowing himself to be immersed in water. He is then raised from that watery grave to live a new life in Christ. He or she is a child of God, and by remaining faithful, that child of God may enter into the joys of heaven at the proper time.

GAL 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

The Jews among the Galatians had no more right to claim God's favor than did the Gentiles. Once the person was taught and believed in Christ as the Son of God, that person must be willing to confess that fact before men. He must repent of his sins and be baptized to die to his old life and rise again as a part of the body of the Son of God. Circumcision is that of the heart in today's world. It is not that of the flesh. Jesus is the Son of God. When united with God's Son such distinctions as maleness and femaleness fade into the background. Slave and owner become a part of the same body. Jews and Gentiles become brothers in the family of God.

GAL 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The Jew, according to the flesh, has no monopoly on the favor of God today. With the coming of Christ as the Son of God, both Jew and Gentile must become one in him. Once that is accomplished the promised blessing to Abraham's seed may be claimed. When this world has been replaced by a new heaven and a new earth and all of the faithful have been raised from the graves, we will realize the full extent of this fantastic promise. In the meantime, let us live by faith in the Son of God and persuade others to do the same.

Chapter 4

GAL 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

This chapter continues Paul's argument to those who were tempted to live under the law of Moses while at the same time embracing Christianity. Paul contended that this is an impossibility.

The apostle compared the people of God to a child who was passing through those years in which he must be trained to take on the responsibilities of manhood. The time would come when he would be ready to move from the earlier stage to the latter. The child might well be heir to a vast fortune. However, until the age of accountability arrived he would have no more authority than a servant in the family. He would first go through the preparation period. Then, when the proper time came, he would make adult decisions.

GAL 4:2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

While the child was still immature, he would be led by various supervisors and guided into such a condition that he could meet the problems that he must face when he came of age. At the time this letter was written many fathers specified the age at which their sons would be considered men. Sometimes a celebration took place when the youngster reached the time appointed by his father.

The age of twelve was often chosen as the transition point. This may seem a bit young to we who live in the twentieth century. But, when we stop to think about it, that is the age when voices begin to change and the growth rate increases fantastically. It is the age at which Jesus was found in the temple asking and answering questions of the wise men. You will remember that when Joseph and Mary found him and scolded him for not being present with them as they set out to return to their home, he replied that they should have known he must be about his “Father’s” business. I think this is not just a coincidence.

GAL 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

The word “children” is not used in this verse to talk about those who are young in years. It is talking about a stage of immaturity in the development of God’s people. Before Christ came, God’s scheme of redemption was in a premature condition. The elements of the world could mean either one of two things. It could refer to those who lived under the law of Moses. It could also refer to those who had worshipped false gods, or even were materialistic in their thinking and thought religion unnecessary.

It is likely, however, that Paul was primarily interested in the condition of God’s people during the years when the law of Moses was in effect. This could be called the elemental period of the world.

GAL 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Just as a young man concluded his boyhood and took his place as a man, God's people were expected to pass through the preparatory period of the law and meet the responsibilities of adulthood. This took place when God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

God's Son was made of a woman. This was in order that men might see how far they had wandered from the image in which they had originally been created. When one sees Jesus, he sees what man was meant to be. The Word of God could have come in some other way. God, in his infinite wisdom, foresaw the need to place a perfect example before mankind. The law had only gotten man ready to set eyes upon "*that which is perfect.*"

The Son of God was made under the law in the sense that he arrived at the precise time when the law had made that arrival appropriate. He was also made under the law in the sense that he was born while the law was still in effect.

GAL 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

There was a vast difference between the relationship of God's people under the law of Moses and under the Christian dispensation. Under the law of Moses the people were but servants of the

Most High. With the coming of Christ there was the opportunity to be adopted as true children. Which would you rather be my friend, a bondservant or a son? Those under the law needed a redeemer to remove the guilt of sin. Only after that was accomplished could any man become a true child of God, with all the privileges of heirship.

GAL 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Although the word sons is used here, it clearly includes daughters as well. Anyone, male or female, who is willing to crucify the old man of sin and replace him with a new babe in Christ, becomes a precious child of God. The Spirit of Christ, which is also the Spirit of God, is granted unto that person and they become spiritually alive in Christ. They are a new man in Christ Jesus. I think few persons realize the impact of that statement. Spiritual blessings on earth, as well as the hope of a home in heaven, come with that new birth. It is not a light thing to be able to call Jehovah our “Father.”

GAL 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Those under the law of Moses, no matter how faithful, were only servants in the house of God. The Christian is a true child of God. He or she stands

to inherit unlimited joy and riches in the mansions prepared for God's family.

There are very rich individuals on earth today. Some of them are so rich they do not even know how much they are worth. How would the reader like to be the heir to the fortunes of any one of the ten richest families in existence? The answer is obvious. But, the glory of heaven dwarfs the fortunes of all ten of these richest families combined. We simply have no way of conceiving what it will be like.

GAL 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

There had been a time when Paul's readers worshipped idols. They did this because they had no knowledge of the greatness of Jehovah. When the true and living God was preached to them, they heard and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their efforts then turned from pleasing idols to serving the Almighty. This was a reasonable and very proper change in behavior. The idols had no power to see, to hear or to respond to the needs of their worshippers. Adoration of the idols was wasted time and effort.

GAL 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

In spite of their exhibition of good judgment in turning from idols to Jehovah, they had now

endangered their souls by moving backward and embracing the old covenant given on Mount Sinai. Paul used the term “weak and beggarly elements.” The law of Moses was weak and beggarly in that it could not save men from their sins. The sins were merely rolled forward until the crucifixion of Christ. The law of Moses was elementary because it was merely a time of preparation for that which was to replace it. We today pass through elementary school in preparation for high school. We use the chemical elements to build more complicated chemical compounds. That which is elementary always looks forward to something more elaborate. The law of Moses was elementary when compared with the Christian dispensation. The one who turned back from Christ to Moses was moving from freedom to slavery.

GAL 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Under the law the Jews observed sabbath days. They celebrated feasts in the first month, the seventh month, etc. At every turn they were keeping some feast, fast or act which was specified by God through the instructions given on Mount Sinai.

GAL 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Paul was extremely concerned over their movement backward from Christ to the keeping of

the law. He could not help but wonder if the time he had spent with them had been completely wasted. If they were going to give up all the blessings found in Christ in order to return to the rituals of Moses law, his time and effort had been to no avail.

GAL 4:12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

What does Paul mean by saying, “Be as I am.”? I believe he is referring to the change he made from Judaism to Christianity. He did not want the Christians of Galatia to leave Christ and take a backward step by moving into Judaism. When he had left Judaism behind, he had in a sense become as they were. They had moved from idolatry to Christ. He had moved from Judaism to Christ. He wanted them to forego any departure from Christ to Moses. That would be movement from where he was to where he had previously been.

If they did move into Judaism, they had not hurt Paul personally. They had most certainly hurt themselves.

GAL 4:13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

One of the great questions of the New Testament age has to do with Paul’s infirmity. No one can be absolutely certain as to what his physical infirmity

was. He may have contracted a disease in the course of his travels. He is thought by some to have had serious stomach trouble. Others think the problem was poor eyesight. The evidence is insufficient to make an airtight case. Whatever his infirmity was, the Christians in Galatia knew Paul had risen above it to preach Christ to them. They had heard him gladly.

I am reminded of one of the most impressive Christians I have ever known. His name was Granville Brown. Granville had to walk with crutches. When he spoke at a pulpit stand, he would set aside his crutches and lean the weight of his body on his elbows as he spoke. He was extremely effective as his listeners noted the extra effort he put forth to tell them of Jesus. I recall the first time I ever heard him speak. We were in a college speech class together. When it came time for Granville to make his first speech, he moved laboriously to the speaker's stand, laid his crutches aside and leaned himself upon his elbows. Then he smiled a wide smile and said, "My friends, I have a distinct advantage over the rest of you. No one is staring out the window." Paul may well have used his physical infirmity in a similar manner.

GAL 4:14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Paul's thorn in the flesh was a temptation to him. The temptation would be to let others take

over the work he was able to do. He was proud that he had not yielded to that temptation. He was also proud that the Galatians had heard his preaching and obeyed it. They had considered him to be an “*angel of God.*” The word “angel” means “messenger.” Paul is not claiming non-mortal status. He is claiming that he carried the message of Christ and that they had received him as a representative of the Son of God.

GAL 4:15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

To what blessedness does Paul refer? The words “ye spake of” are not in the Greek. When they are removed the sentence reads, “Where is then the blessedness?” There are numerous explanations as to the meaning of Paul’s question. I shall not bother to list a number of them. I will give what I believe to be the most reasonable meaning of Paul’s question.

Blessedness has to do with happiness. Paul had been talking about the danger of their casting aside the blessings of Christ to place themselves under the restrictions of the law of Moses. I believe the question Paul asked has to do with his own happiness. They were so concerned with his welfare that they would have given their own eyes to him to overcome his handicap. If they were that concerned about his welfare, it was difficult for him to believe they would turn to Moses law when he had left it to preach Christ.

GAL 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Those among the Galatians who desired that they turn to Moses were attempting to persuade the Christians that Paul was a false teacher in preaching the ineffectiveness of that law. He was pointing out that he was not their enemy. He was not doing them spiritual damage when he urged them to follow Christ rather than Moses. He was truly acting as their friend. He was telling them the truth. The truth would make them free. The one who released another from bondage was not their enemy. He was their friend.

GAL 4:17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

The Judaizers were certainly having an effect upon them. However, it was a detrimental effect and not a beneficial one. What was happening was that these false teachers were making an attempt to cut the Galatians off from Christ in order that it might affect the Judaizers advantageously.

This is a very real danger in the entire religious community. It is possible for smooth talkers to manipulate the masses of people in such a way that the false teacher may profit at the expense of those who are taken in by his or her oratory. God will see that such evil workers are properly punished for their selfishness and greed.

GAL 4:18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

The apostle was obviously absent from them since he is writing a letter. He states that what he has been doing is a good thing. That is the opposite of what the Judaizing teachers have been doing. He had preached Christ to them when he was present with them. It was no different now, as he wrote to them. Whether present or absent he desired that which was best for them.

GAL 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Paul speaks as if he were having birth pangs in his attempt to bring the Galatians to life in Jesus Christ. He uses the word “again” as if he had already gone through such labor in the past and was now having to repeat it.

The scriptures make two very interesting and related statements. One is that we are baptized into Christ. The other is that Christ is formed in us. Thus I am in Christ and Christ is in me. Unless both of these statements are true, we deceive ourselves into believing we are children of the Father in heaven.

GAL 4:20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

The apostle could not be everywhere at once. He wanted badly to be able to converse with them personally. That was not possible. He wished that he did not have to talk about this matter of abandoning Christ for the law of Moses. Yet, he recognized the danger to their souls that really existed. They were in a most serious position and Paul very well knew it.

GAL 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

There were some of the Galatians who had already buckled under the pressure of the false teachers. They were ready to honor the regulations of Moses law. Paul set out to persuade these weak Christians that if they really understood the law of Moses they would not wish to be bound by it. He is ready to explain how the law taught its own future replacement.

GAL 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Abraham was to become the father of many nations. We are told that he begot two sons who were to be great princes. Jacob gave birth to twelve sons. Ishmael did the same. The descendants of Ishmael originated in a setting of bondage. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, who was a servant in the house. Jacob was the son of Sarah, who was the mistress of the house.

Paul is ready to track the difference between the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. His point will be that the Israelites should have rejoiced in their freedom and not desired to move into the status of bondservice that the Ishmaelites endured.

GAL 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Sarah had given Hagar to Abraham because the two of them feared they would never have children. The birth of Ishmael was due to human effort. Man was attempting to accomplish through his own efforts that which God would have done in his own time. On the other hand, Isaac was born as the result of supernatural intervention. God had made a promise and He kept it when he was ready.

GAL 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

The figure of speech which Paul used next is not as easy for us as it would have been for the Galatians. An allegory is a story in which the persons of the story and the events of the story have deeper meanings. Fables and allegories are closely related. The allegory is usually based upon real events while fables are imaginary. What then was the meaning behind the account of Hagar and Sarah?

GAL 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hagar represented the law of Moses. That law was given on Mount Sinai and was typical of both Sinai and earthly Jerusalem. The children of Hagar and earthly Jerusalem were in bondage to the law. They were sentenced to death because there was no way of escape from their sin. To be free from sin, the keeper of the law of Moses had to keep that law without exception. None did that. All were under the condemnation of death.

GAL 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

The Jerusalem which is above is the source of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is free because it does not depend upon the efforts of men to escape from sin. It depends upon the supernatural strength of the Christ who live a perfect life in our stead, and died that we might live. The Christian is the offspring of the freewoman and is thus free from condemnation.

GAL 4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Heavenly Jerusalem is the freewoman. She is the mother of God's children. She does not attempt

to work her way to salvation through human effort. She bears her children through the Spirit of God. Oh yes, it is true that man must work to be acceptable to his Father. Nevertheless, his work does not save him in and of itself. James said, *“Show me thy faith without thy works and I will show you my faith by my works.”* The faith that saves is a faith that produces the fruit of the Spirit of Christ.

You see, it is true that Hagar had children while Sarah was still barren. But that condition was not to last forever. The number of Sarah’s descendants by faith now far exceed the number of Hagar’s descendants by the flesh.

GAL 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Paul told the Galatians that as Christians they were like Isaac. They were born as a result of the supernatural intervention of God. Their existence did not depend upon human arrangements and efforts. God had promised Abraham a multitude of descendants who would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore or the stars of the heaven. That promise was being kept through the spiritual birth of such as the Galatian Christians.

GAL 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Ishmael was about thirteen years older than Isaac. He took pleasure in making life difficult for

his younger half brother. Thus the child born through human effort set himself up in opposition to the child who was born through the power of the Spirit of God. That was exactly what was taking place at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. Those who depended upon serving God through the keeping of the law of Moses were making life very difficult for those who were depending upon God's spiritual power.

GAL 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

God instructed Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael out from his presence. Ishmael was not to stand equal with Isaac in the scheme of redemption. Nor were the keepers of the law of Moses to stand equal with those whom the truth has made free in Christ Jesus.

GAL 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Christians are not under the law of Moses. See Paul's words found in Romans 8:1-3.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the

law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:



Chapter 5

GAL 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

There are two major types of bondage described in the New Testament. One is the bondage of sin. Peter speaks of those who are the slaves of corruption (2 Peter 2:19). Paul has much to say about this type of bondage in the sixth chapter of Romans. He declares that the one who has crucified the old man has become a new man in Christ. This new man has died to sin and is no longer a slave to it.

The other is the bondage of the law of Moses. That law defined sin. It spelled out the penalty for sin. It prescribed sacrifices which resulted in the rolling forward of sin. But, that law was only a school master to bring men to Christ. It did not remove the sin for ever. Christ offers the perfect sacrifice which can take away the guilt of sin and free men forever from the sentence of eternal separation from God.

The newborn Christian has been washed in the blood of Christ, and has thus escaped from the condemnation of death which is the common fate of the Devil and his angels. The spiritual strength which comes with this new life in Christ is sufficient to ward off the fiery darts of Satan. Both the one who turns back to the world of heathenism, and the one who moves back to dependence upon the law as given by Moses, have entangled themselves again in a yoke of bondage.

The newfound liberty in Christ is that of loving God enough that one can do exactly what one pleases, because what pleases one is that which also pleases God. The first and second commandments are to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love one's neighbor as one's self. The true Christian will desire to do just that. He is also free to do it. It is difficult to believe that an individual would choose bondage over freedom. Yet the Galatians were in danger of doing that. Millions today have done the same.

GAL 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

As an apostle who had been instructed personally by Christ, Paul pleaded with the Galatians not to return to the keeping of the law of Moses. Paul means more than the mere cutting off of the flesh of an eight day old male baby. He is talking about the commitment that goes along with circumcision. The word circumcision is often used to include all those who had entered into the old covenant with God. He was their God. They were his people. They were his people because the males had been circumcised and all had submitted themselves to the statutes, precepts and judgments of that covenant.

Those who had entered into the new covenant with Jesus Christ had no business reversing themselves and again embracing the old covenant.

It was necessary to make a choice. Would they follow Christ? Or, would they return to the system whose gateway was circumcision? If they chose the law they had given up the benefits of the Kingdom of Christ.

GAL 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

There were obviously false teachers who had entered into the midst of the Galatian Christians and were trying to persuade them they must first be circumcised before they could be considered God's people. There could be more than one motive for such teaching. Some might have been sincere in what they were teaching. Others might have personal glory in mind. The priests were a favored group under the old covenant. These teachers may have seen some advantage for themselves in persuading others to follow certain portions of the law.

Paul told them very emphatically that circumcision was not simply a single action performed on an infant. Those who were circumcised committed themselves to every command and principle stated in the law as given on Mount Sinai.

GAL 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Those who returned to the system of circumcision had forfeited everything Christ offered to them. They

had no perfect example. They had no perfect sacrifice. They placed themselves in a position where they had to be justified, or made righteous through the keeping of the law. Since no man has ever done that, they were all under condemnation and had no claim upon the mercy and grace offered by the life and death of the Son of God.

It would be wise for those who follow Martin Luther's statement "Once in grace, always in grace." to read this verse of Galatians over and over again. It is most certainly possible to fall from grace; some of the Galatians had done just that.

GAL 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

The Spirit of God revealed the hope of righteousness in Christ to mankind. Christ first taught his apostles. The apostles then provided us with the Holy Scriptures which tell us we can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and can be made clean in the sight of God. That hope does not come through the keeping of the law of Moses. It comes as a result of faith in the Lord. There is hope for the righteous who have entered into Christ. There is no hope for those who turn from him and try to find it either in the world, or in the law of Moses.

GAL 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

With the replacement of the law of Moses by the example and sacrifice of Christ, circumcision of the flesh became meaningless. It is true that Paul was circumcised. It is also true that he had Timothy circumcised. But Paul's circumcision occurred before the coming of Christ and made no difference in his spiritual relationship with the Father in heaven. Timothy was not circumcised for the purpose of commitment to the law of Moses. His circumcision was only a matter of expediency and was not intended as a commitment.

There is a very important principle found in the last part of this verse. Faith is not simply a belief that Jesus is the Son of God. Faith that is not accompanied by works is a dead faith. The faith that Paul and the other apostles preached was a faith that came to life as a result of love for both God and man. Do not depend upon the law of Moses for redemption. It is now impotent. That which does make a difference is a working faith, based upon love.

GAL 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

What had gotten in their way? Someone had interfered with their progress and was attempting to turn them back from their goal. I understand the language of this verse presents a picture of a runner on a race track who has been interfered with by another runner. The first runner was moving efficiently toward the finish line. Then he was caused

to stumble or lose ground because of an obstacle placed in his path. The Galatian Christians should have been moving forward in obedience to the gospel of Christ. Instead, some of them had stumbled. Paul asked them to consider who it was that had caused their problem.

GAL 5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

One thing was very certain. It was not the teaching of either God or of his Son that caused them to turn back to the bondage of the law. God had made careful preparations for the discarding of the law of Moses and the entering of the system of faith in Christ which the law was intended to introduce.

GAL 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Homemade bread is no longer common in the homes of those of most of the world today. We do not see first hand just how leaven has it's effect. It was not so when Paul wrote these words. His readers very well knew that a small amount of yeast would spread throughout an entire loaf of bread.

Although we have not observed the effects of leaven in bread, we have most certainly seen the effect Paul was warning about. One person, or a small group of three or four can cause dissension in an entire congregation of God's people. A single false

teacher is sometimes able to spread his lies to the detriment of hundreds of others. It seems there were some among the Galatian Christians who were still unaffected by those who were advocating circumcision. These were maintaining their faith and hope in Christ.

GAL 5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul was worried about the situation. Nevertheless; he trusted that the majority of them would not follow the influence of the false teachers. If they would avoid following these persons, the teacher would be the only one who would face judgment for his teaching. Those who rejected him would escape the punishment he was to face.

The words “*whosoever he be*” indicate that Paul had no respect for the persons of men. It mattered little whether this teacher of falsehood was high and mighty, or of less significance. He would have to face God and answer for his actions.

GAL 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

The apostle is not saying that he had preached circumcision. His words indicate that someone was trying to persuade the Galatians that he did support

it. As pointed out previously, those who were arguing such probably pointed to his own circumcision and that of Timothy to make their case.

He is really asking them why he is undergoing persecution from the supporters of circumcision if he promoted it himself. He was suffering persecution, and it was not reasonable to expect that persecution if he sympathized with the circumcision position.

The offense of the cross which he mentions has to do with the offense of the cross of Christ to the Jews. In First Corinthians 1:23 he had referred to the preaching of the crucifixion of Christ as a stumbling block to the Jews. If Paul had preached the necessity of circumcision, these Jews would have accepted his position and there would have been no friction. Circumcision had no part in his preaching and therefore the Jews were still taking offense to that preaching.

GAL 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

Some commentators take a very literal view of this verse. The words “*cut off*” may actually mean “castrated.” These commentators believe Paul was saying that if these who had been causing hindrance to the Christians in Galatia wanted to see foreskins cut off he wished that it could go farther with them and that they actually be castrated and made eunuchs.

I agree with those who take a milder position here. I believe he was saying that he wished they

were cut off from the fellowship of the Christians, and could no longer reproduce themselves within the church.

GAL 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Right here we have a major transition in thought. Paul almost invariably closes his epistles with some admonitions toward practical living of the Christian life. He desires to do that this time. He moved in that direction by talking about the liberty the Christian has to do as he pleases. Every Christian has the freedom to live as he pleases. However, the true Christian pleases to do the will of God. He or she will not think of using the grace and mercy of God and Christ as a license to sin. This same Paul said in the sixth chapter of Romans, "*Shall we sin that grace may abound. God forbid.*" Living according to the desires of the flesh is selfishness. Living faithfully because we love both God and man is the exact opposite.

Release from the restrictions of the law of Moses did not, and does not, allow for licentiousness and debauchery.

GAL 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

If the Galatians had seen the end product of the law they would have realized the truth of Jesus words when he answered the question as to which is the greatest of the commandments. *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.”*

GAL 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The friction which was occurring at the time Paul wrote was certainly not a sign of love and affection for one another. If they continued in the path they were traveling the end result would be mutual destruction. It is an unusual Christian who has not seen the truthfulness of Paul's words. Whenever men seek to take advantage of others in order that their own selfish interests may be built up, everyone suffers.

GAL 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

The Galatians are urged to consider the vast difference in the two ways of life and choose the way of the Spirit of God rather than the way of selfish lust and pride.

GAL 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Yes, the Spirit and the flesh are most certainly two opposing philosophies of life. One cannot walk both pathways at the same time. He can walk according to his own will and pleasure, or he can walk according to the example set before him by the Christ. He cannot follow both at once. The flesh places self at the center. The Spirit places Christ at the center.

GAL 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

The little three letter word “the” before the word law is critical to the understanding of this verse, as well as the understanding of the unity of the entire chapter. Paul did not say Christians are not under any law. He said they are not under “the” law. The law he refers to is the law of Moses. There is a completely different kind of law under which the Christian serves. Note Paul’s words in Romans 8:2. *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”* Law seeks to define that which is right versus that which is wrong. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the law which is presented to us by the loving example of our perfect Saviour. When we are led by the Spirit we are controlled by that law and not by the law of Moses.

GAL 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

But what does that law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus spell out as works of selfishness and human will? An extended list follows. Some of these works of the flesh are overlapping, but we will spend a moment with each.

Adultery is sexual unfaithfulness to one's husband or wife. One may adulterate milk by pouring water into it. One may commit adultery in marriage by diluting it with another sexual partner.

Fornication differs from adultery in that it includes all sinful sexual linkages, whether one is married or single.

Uncleanness is general impurity of life. We are told, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" The unclean are those whose hearts are corrupt and whose actions follow.

Lasciviousness may also have to do with either thought, speech or actions. The lascivious person is one who cares little about what others think about his wicked way of life. This type of person revels in telling filthy jokes, wallowing in pornographic literature and participating in suggestive dancing, etc.

GAL 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

The *idolatrous* person has found some object of adoration which is placed above the Creator. It may be an idol made from wood, or metal. It may be a hobby or even a profession. It may be houses and

land. Anything which is held up higher than God in either prestige or service is an idol.

Witchcraft is dependence upon evil spiritual powers. Devils, demons and witches were a reality in the days of both the Old Testament and early Christianity. Do such powers still exist? There is reason to think they do not. They may have existed in New Testament times in order that the authority of Christ and the apostles over the demonic world could be demonstrated. The witch of Endor called up Samuel. Jesus cast out demons in a number of cases. It is likely that the activity of these principalities and powers ceased with the cessation of miracles among Christians.

Hatred is a desire for the the downfall of that which is hated. It is the opposite of love. Love desires the well being of that which is loved. Hatred desires and seeks the destruction of the hated thing.

Variance has to do with contention and wrangling. This type of person is never satisfied unless men and women are set up against each other.

Emulation is ill feeling toward others because of advantages which they either have, or are imagined to have. One person receives a promotion. The other resents his good fortune.

Wrath is uncontrolled temper. It is an evil thing when improperly applied. Yet, it can be justified, as in the wrath of God. What is the difference? The wrath of God is only visited upon men when they have proven to be utterly beyond correction.

Strife and variance are closely related. The one who loves strife will attempt to set others at variance

with each other.

Seditions are conditions set up by persons who cannot stand seeing unity in others. They will manufacture methods of breaking that unity in one way or another.

Heresies are false teachings which result in ill feelings toward other persons because they do not hold identical views.

GAL 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The *envious* person begrudges some good fortune which has come to another. Jealousy and envy are twin brothers. They also both walk hand in hand with emulation.

Murder is the premeditated killing of another human. “*Thou shalt not kill.*” is one of the original ten commandments. Jesus took that commandment a step farther and stated that the one who hates his brother has already committed murder in his heart.

Drunkenness is the condition of mind brought about by the use of alcohol or other chemicals that distort reality. One may be drunken through the use of numerous drugs. Alcohol is a main culprit, but certainly not the only one. The drunken person says and does that which he would not say or do if sober.

Revellings are uncontrolled riotous parties, often associated with consumption of intoxicating drinks.

And such like groups all the other works of the flesh which Paul did not choose to list. One of the most interesting sermon topics I have ever come across was one called “And such like.” The reader would probably have little difficulty in adding other works of the flesh to the list Paul gave above.

GAL 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

When men or women focus their attention on fleshly appetites they destroy themselves and others. It is not so with the fruit of the Spirit of God. Centering our attention on the things which are above will lift men to spiritual heights. It will cause them to take on the image of God, which is what he intended from the beginning. These characteristics lead ever upward, for both the individual possessing them, and for those who are influenced by them.

Love comes first. Without love there will be no other spiritual fruit. The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians gives us an exhaustive description of what happens when a person loves. I refer the reader to that chapter for further consideration.

Perhaps I should add that there are at least three levels of love.

First—the passionate or erotic love which leads to procreation of the species.

Second—the filial love which members of a family have for one another.

Third—is the love which sacrifices everything for that which is loved.

Joy is the gladness which comes when one is in harmony with the will of God and realizes God has forgiven sin and is ever present to give strength, guidance and comfort.

Peace is the calmness of spirit growing out of the realization that one is walking in the safety of the Great Shepherd. There are many grievous wolves who would like nothing better than to devour God's sheep. The eighth chapter of Romans declares that with our hand in the hand of the Saviour, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Longsuffering refers to the ability and willingness to hold the temper in check in the face of disturbing factors. This is the opposite of the "short tempered" person. Jesus is our best example.

Gentleness is sweetness of disposition. It avoids ill treatment of others, either in word or in deed. The gentle person will bend over backward to see that others are not abused.

The person who has *goodness* is one who mixes kindness and strength. A mother is good when she feeds her two year old as it sits in its high chair. She may also be good when she gives that same two year old a light pop on the bottom for getting into some mischief.

Faith is trustworthiness. This kind of person will not promise one thing and do another. The life of the person is consistent. This is not the same as faith in God, although it grows out of faith in God. The person who believes in God will also be a trustworthy or faithful individual.

GAL 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Meekness is strength under control. Both Moses and Christ are described in the Bible as being meek. Neither of them was cowardly. Both were subject to the will of God. Both had the power to do many things they did not do because they recognized the difference between using their strength for right or wrong. We are told that “*the meek shall inherit the earth.*”

Temperance is the art of self discipline. The temperate person will not let emotions, appetites or desires control his life. We sometimes talk about temperance with respect to the use of alcohol. It is much more far reaching than that. It involves the entire manner of life.

GAL 5:24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

When a man turns from sin and is baptised into Christ, that man becomes a new creature. Old things are passed away and new ones take their place. He places his welfare in the hand of God. Destructive works of the flesh are nailed to the cross. He is buried with Christ in the waters of baptism and rises to walk in newness of life. He is provided with the gift of the Holy Spirit to aid him in vanguishing all the fiery darts of Satan and in bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit.

GAL 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Now it is hardly possible that one may come to life through the Spirit and then fail to walk in the Spirit. The same Spirit that enlivens gives guidance, comfort and strength. What a blessed gift God provides for those who shun the works of the flesh and seek first the Kingdom of Heaven!

GAL 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

And so we close this chapter. Neither the Galatian Christians nor ourselves can afford to turn back to envy, provocation and the search for fleshly glory. We must ever seek the mansion which has been prepared for those who love and serve their Maker!

Chapter 6

GAL 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

In chapter five Paul had been comparing the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. Sometimes those who are attempting to live in the Spirit and walk by the Spirit stumble and fall. The stumbling may be just for a moment. It may last the rest of one's life. Satan is incredibly subtle and powerful in his attempts to make havoc of a Christian life. At one time or another each and every one of us has failed to produce fruit of the Spirit which we could have brought forth. It is just as true that each of us has served the devil by participating in the works of the flesh.

When a Christian man or woman falters along the way, are his brothers and sisters in the Lord to immediately condemn him to an eternal hell and give up on him; or are they to make every attempt to pick him up through prayer and efforts toward correction? This verse gives us a clear answer. His or her brethren are to do all within their power to restore that sinner.

There are two considerations which must be taken while lifting up a fallen brother or sister. First one must not humiliate the one who has stumbled by taking a holier than thou attitude. The one who is doing the correcting must remember that he also falls far short of the perfect example set by our

Lord. Then he must also remember that while trying to help the sinner, he may just fall victim to the same temptation as the one he is helping.

GAL 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The burdens which weigh us down are made lighter when another person is willing to share them with us. This was recognized by God when he instructed us to confess our sins one to another. We do so with the understanding that true Christians will help us improve rather than heap shame upon us when we ask for their help. Let us meet our obligations toward the penitent member of the body of Christ. We place salve on a sore body to help it heal. Only when it is obvious that the sore is endangering the rest of the body do we amputate it.

God informs us here that in assisting our erring brothers and sisters in Christ, we are fulfilling the law of Christ. There are two ways to look at this. Jesus said the first commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. He added that the second was like it in that one is to love one's neighbor as himself. When we try to lift up one who has fallen we are honoring both of these commandments.

But we should also notice there are some who believe law and love are opposites. They believe the Christian dispensation has nothing to do with law, but that it motivates strictly through love. Let us see!

Where there are commandments and punishments there is law. When Jesus presented the sermon on the mount he spelled out many things men were not to do. He also said that those who do such things shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Yes, dear friends, there is law in Christianity. The basic difference is that under Christianity we have the grace and mercy of God offered to us through the Saviour. Under Moses there was no eternal remedy. Under Christ there is!

GAL 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

That man who rejoices when he compares his own holy life with the unholy life of the fallen brother is making a most serious mistake. A careful look at his own life will reveal many sins. It is not wise to put our righteousness under a magnifying glass and then sweep our sins under the rug. *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”*

GAL 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

The measuring stick for our own life ought not to be the flawed life of a brother. It must be the perfect life of the divine Son of God. When we start comparing our life with his, we will have a proper standard of measurement. Any rejoicing that is to

be done must then arise from our own true discipleship rather than from a comparison with that weak brother.

GAL 6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

This verse seems at first to state the opposite of verse two. There it was said that we are to bear one another's burdens. Now we are told each of us must bear his own burden. How can these two statements be harmonized?

The answer lies in the two different meanings of the word burden. In verse two, where we are to bear one another's burdens, the burdens are the trials and difficulties of life. Sorrows can be shared. Guilty hearts can be made clean as others help to apply the medicine of the Great Physician. The loads which are too heavy for one may be carried successfully when a brother or sister offers a helping hand.

The other meaning of the word burden has to do with the responsibilities that each man must face for himself. No other person can believe in Jesus Christ for you. Nor can they repent for you, make the good confession or be baptized for the remission of sins. Only you can do those things. There are people only you can teach. There are tasks that only you can do. In all of these things each one of us must bear his own burden.

GAL 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

The word “communicate” here is used in a different way than we normally use it. We talk about communicating when we are writing a letter or talking to someone. The way the word is used in this verse is related to a portion of the word itself. It means to “share.” What then does this have to do with the Christian who is aiding another and the one who is aided? It is just this. Those who teach the word of God have the right to be rewarded for what they do. The teacher has shared his knowledge with the one who was taught. In return, the one who has been taught is expected to share what he can offer with the one who taught him. Members of a congregation of God’s people are expected to provide financial support, as well as moral support, to local preachers and also to missionaries.

GAL 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

God’s eye is on the sower. He will see that the seed produces a suitable harvest. If one fails to sow seed, there will be no harvest. If he sows seed sparingly, he will reap a small harvest. If he sows bountifully, he will reap a bountiful harvest. The Word of God is seed in the hands of human sowers. God expects it to be sown in the hearts of men. We will be held responsible if we fail to plant it. We will be abundantly blessed if we do plant and cultivate it.

GAL 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that

soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

We have now come back to the matters Paul discussed in chapter five. He compared the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. Now he is ready to draw us a picture of what will happen if we plant the works of the flesh, and if we plant the seed of the Spirit.

One does not plant bean seed and expect to reap wheat. Just so; when one sows envy, jealousy, lasciviousness and lying, that person should expect to see a harvest which resembles the seed. When one sows love, peace, joy and kindness, that person may expect a harvest of the same. The sowing of the works of the flesh result in death and corruption. The result of sowing of the fruit of the Spirit is an abundant life, both in this world and in the world to come.

There is one other reality we must not overlook. The harvest is almost always greater than the amount of seed planted. Godliness is similar. One kind word may lead to another, until the one word sown results in many kindnesses. In contrast, one act of lust or pride may well bring on an avalanche of evil.

GAL 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

The religious harvest is not always as predictable as the agricultural harvest. It is possible to become

discouraged when one tries with all the heart to do the will of God, and then sees little or no immediate reaping of good things. It may seem that one sows good and reaps sorrow.

The book of Job is the best answer that I know to such discouragement. Job was a good man. The Devil took note of that and challenged God. He claimed that if Job were to suffer a little he would curse God and die. God accepted the Devil's challenge. Job suffered horribly in about every way one can suffer. Then, when it had been established that he would remain true to God regardless of the temptations, God gave him much more than he had in the beginning. Although Job could not see the reason, there was a very good one. For many centuries men have read about Job's trials and have been encouraged to maintain their faith in times of great difficulty. Sometime, somewhere we'll understand. In due season we shall reap, IF WE FAINT NOT.

GAL 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

I remind you again that our example is Jesus. The Saviour suffered and died that men might live forever in heaven. He did not die for perfect men. He died for sinners. If we wait to do for others until we find perfect persons we will wait forever. We must do all that we can for all men. Some will turn away. Others will come to Christ. Those who do

come to the Lord become a part of the family of God, or the household of faith. We should love and cherish them with a very special affection, even if they do require correction from time to time. Each of us will need it also.

GAL 6:11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

There are two understandings of what Paul meant when he talked about a large letter. The first is that he was writing a fairly long epistle to the Galatians. Some object that with only six chapters this letter can hardly be called “large.” The answer which comes back is that the Corinthian letters and the one to Rome were not yet written and this one might well be large when compared to some others he wrote.

The second explanation is that Paul wished for the Galatians to know he had personally dictated this letter. They mention that he had some affliction of the flesh, perhaps very bad eyesight. He might then have written in large letters because of this. Someone else may have written the body of the letter as he told them what to write, and then handed the apostle the pen to sign it and let those who received it know it was his own. I tend toward the first explanation. The word “letter” is in the singular. If he had been talking about the size of individual letters we would expect him to use the plural and say, “See with what large **letters** I have written to you.

GAL 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Verse twelve tells us a little more about the motives of those who were trying to press circumcision on the Galatian Christians. They were not interested in the salvation of the converts. They were interested in boasting about how many they had caused to be circumcised. This way they could accomplish two goals. They could glory over the power they had over the converts. They could also make it easier on themselves among the Jews who would not persecute them as much if they caused the Christians to be circumcised.

GAL 6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

How could Paul and the Galatians know these false teachers were out for their own glory and comfort rather than for the eternal happiness of those they influenced? If these teachers had kept the law their motives would be less suspicious. They did not do that. There were a host of commandments given on the Mount that they were completely ignoring. One could hardly believe they were sincere then in teaching the urgency of circumcision. The one who was circumcised was bound to keep the entire law of Moses. They did not do that!

Let each of us be cautious that we do not let personal glory come before love of our fellow Christians.

GAL 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Paul made it clear that he did not glory in counting the number of persons he had converted and then holding that up before men to show what he had accomplished. His glorying would be in the satisfaction of knowing others had turned from the way of the world to the way of the cross. He had died to the world and separated himself from it. It filled him with joy that others might, along with him, look forward to life everlasting.

GAL 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

With the coming of Christ, circumcision meant nothing at all. A man who was circumcised had no advantage whatsoever over one who was not. Neither did the one who was not circumcised have an advantage over the one who was. What does matter in the Christian age is that one cut himself off from the selfish pleasures of this world and be born a second time to live as a new creature in Christ and produce the fruit of the Spirit of God.

GAL 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The rule of which Paul speaks is that of Jesus Christ. Those who are his disciples are to think as he thought, speak as he spoke and act as he acted. That kind of life will result in peace among men and mercy from God. The last part of this verse is merely a way of repeating the first part in different words. He is not referring to fleshly Jews. The “Israel of God” today is the Church of Jesus Christ. Those who walk with Christ may look forward to mercy and peace.

GAL 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Hopefully Paul would not have to deal with such troublemakers as had been stirring up problems among the Galatians. He had already had enough to go through in serving the Lord. Not only had he endured mental agony. He even had physical scars on his body due to both beatings and stonings. He did not need any further hindrances.

GAL 6:18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

The word “brethren” was precious to the apostle. It should be the same for us. As is usually the case,

Paul closed this letter by praying that the grace of Jesus Christ would go with them and give them strength, comfort and guidance as they served in the kingdom of God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1949.*
- Barclay, William, *Letters to Galatians and Ephesians, Philadelphia, Pa., The Westminster Press, 1958.*
- Coffman, Burton, *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Houston, Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977.*
- Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary with Critical Notes, Vol. 3, New York, N.Y., Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1823.*
- DeHoff, George, *DeHoff's Commentary, Murfreesboro, Tenn., DeHoff Publications, 1991.*
- Hendrickson, William, *NT Commentary on Galatians, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1968*
- Johnson, B.W., *Johnson's Notes, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate Company,*
- Lipscomb, David, *Commentary on New Testament Epistles, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate, 1939.*
- McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible, Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.*
- Meredith, J, Noel, *A Commentary On Galatians, Lawrenceburg, Tenn., Meredith Publishing Co. 1981.*
- Zerr, E.M., *Bible Commentary, Raytown, Missouri, Reprint Publications, 1954*





**The Book Of
EPHESIANS**

Introduction

I. The author of the book of Ephesians:

The very first verse of this book informs us that the apostle Paul was the author. Fundamentalist students of the scriptures believe that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the inspiration of each of the books in our present Bible versions. They also believe the Spirit was providentially involved in determining which books were selected. If the book begins by claiming Paul to be the author, the claim is accepted.

So-called higher critics take delight in swallowing camels and straining at straws. They have raised two objections to Paul's authorship. First they think the style of the book is much more elegant than letters such as First and Second Corinthians. Second, they believe Paul would have closed the letter with a series of names, as he did in several other books.

Neither objection will stand. The style of Romans is also different from that of most of his other epistles. A man like Paul can certainly alter his style of writing to fit different purposes. The omission of a list of names of Christians in Ephesus at the close of the letter may well have been due to the fact that he knew so many in that congregation he felt it unwise to mention some without mentioning all.

In addition, there are a number of ancient references to Paul as the author. These references reach back to within a couple of centuries of the time the book was written.

The objections to Paul's authorship of the book of Ephesians do not need to be taken seriously by

those from that day to our own who have held the apostle to be the author.

II. To whom written:

The first verse also claims the letter was written to the Christians in the city of Ephesus. There is a bit more of a problem here than in the case of Paul's authorship. This time we find that the words "in Ephesus" are not found in a very large number of important early manuscript copies. If the words "in Ephesus" are left out it would appear that the letter was addressed to all faithful saints in Jesus Christ.

This could possibly be an explanation as to why there is no list of names at the close of the letter. It may not have been addressed to a single congregation, but rather to a more general readership.

It is true, however, that Tychicus was chosen to deliver the letter. This can be seen from Ephesians 6:21. In 2 Timothy 4:12 Paul also spoke of sending Tychicus to Ephesus. Your present commentator tends to think the letter was sent by Tychicus to the saints in Ephesus, but that the letter was deliberately written in more general style in order that it could be helpful to many faithful saints in other parts of Asia.

III. Place and date of writing:

Paul made several missionary journeys into Asia and on into Greece and Italy. He took great pride in being the apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus Christ

had personally appeared to him and given him that responsibility. He took the charge seriously and did his utmost to obey his Saviour.

The first journey reached only as far as Antioch in Asia Minor. This is the territory we now know as Turkey. On the second journey Paul and his companions were told to bypass Ephesus and move on into Macedonia. He did this, but on his way back he stopped at Ephesus on the eastern coast of Asia Minor. He did preach in the synagogue, but could not stay at that time. He promised he would be back later.

On his third missionary journey the apostle kept his promise. For about two years he taught in the school of Tyrannus. A number of the seven churches mentioned in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation were founded while he was at Ephesus.

To get the clearest look at Paul's work in Ephesus it is necessary to study the fifteenth through the twentieth chapters of the book of Acts.

The book of Ephesians is thought to have been written about the same time as Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. At several points in the letter the author tells of being a prisoner. See Ephesians 3:1; 4:1 and 6:21-22. We find that, according to Acts 28:3—31 Paul was imprisoned in Rome for a lengthy period of time. The prison epistles, including Ephesians were written during this imprisonment sometime around A.D. 60.

It is important that we spend a few words concerning the nature of the city of Ephesus. While

Rome was the grandest city in Europe, Ephesus held a corresponding position in Asia. In Ephesus the eastern and western cultures met. As an example, we find the Temple of Diana constructed with Greek architecture, while the goddess herself was a many breasted oriental goddess of fertility.

The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It measured over 400 feet in length and 239 feet in width. There were 127 majestic columns similar to those at the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee, except that those in the temple of Diana were larger.

Associated with the worship of the goddess Diana was a thriving trade in magic and silver models of the temple, etc. When this commentator visited the location a number of years ago he was shocked to find that models of the male sex organ were being sold to the visitors. Undoubtedly this was an echo of what was taking place at the time Paul was there. To say the least, Paul had his work cut out for him as he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in such an environment.

IV. Purpose and Nature of the book:

Ephesians bears many similarities to the book of Philippians. There are many verses that are identical to those found in Philippians. Many of the thoughts are similar. Both seek to glorify the church. However, Philippians concentrates on Christ as the head of the church while Ephesians centers attention on the blessings and obligations of the Christians who make up the body of the church.

Through Christ as the head, and Christians as the body, all things are to become one. Today man is at war with man. Man is battling against his physical environment. And worst of all, man is fighting with God. Ephesians envisions an ideal world brought about by the life and teachings of the Son of God.

V. A Brief Outline of the Book of Ephesians

The book of Ephesians is divided into two main sections. Each of these two sections is then subdivided into three more.

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

- A. The Heavenly Nature of the Church
 - 1. The church as a body
 - 2. The church as a temple
 - 3. The church as a mystery
- B. The Earthly Conduct of the Church
 - 1. The church as a new man
 - 2. The church as the bride of Christ
 - 3. The church as a soldier for God.

Chapter 1

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

As was pointed out in the introduction, the reasons for accepting the statement that Paul was the author of this epistle outweigh the objections of the critics. The style of the letter is somewhat more elegant than much of Paul's other writings. But men are capable of writing in contrasting styles. As an inspired apostle, Paul could certainly have used one style for Romans and quite another for Ephesians. The objection that there is no list of individual names at the close of the letter is met by realizing that Paul spent years with this congregation. To have listed a few select names would have risked offending many others whose names were not listed.

The apostle was specially chosen by the Lord himself to take the lead in presenting the gospel to the Gentile world. Jesus was acting in harmony with the will of the Father in heaven when he gave Paul this commission.

It is true that the words "at Ephesus" are not included in the most important manuscripts. However; the letter was to be delivered by the hand of Tychicus who had very strong ties with the Ephesian congregation. It is not unlikely that the letter was first given to the Ephesians and then circulated to the faithful saints in the entire area of Asia Minor.

The saints and the faithful are not two separate groups. A saint is a person who has dedicated himself

or herself to the service of God. Such individuals have separated themselves from the world and strive to live a holy and pure life. The idea that one becomes a saint only after having lived a particularly notable spiritual life and then having been canonized by a human council is both false and dangerous. Paul is addressing his words to those who have become saints through believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repenting of their sins, confessing Christ before their fellowmen, being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. Then, by living dedicated and faithful lives, they have become sanctified. They are properly called saints.

EPH 1:2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace were two extremely important words in Paul's vocabulary. Grace is unmerited favor. Any time one is presented with a favor which he has not earned, that person has received grace. Such grace may come from men or from God. In this case Paul calls upon God to make his grace available to the Ephesian Christians. When one accepts this blessing of grace in humility and loving obedience the result will be peace. This peace is a condition of harmony with God and with God's universe. The person will be relieved of the guilt of sin and thus will be at peace with God. He will also refuse to initiate conflict with other humans. He may have to deal with friction brought on by the words or actions

of others, but he will not be responsible for promoting aggression.

Both the Father and the Son are involved in the pouring out of divine grace, and in the promotion of peace. The Father gave his Son that men might be brought into unity with Him. Christ gave his life to provide an example of humility. He demonstrated the power of peace over all enemies. Those who thought to destroy His influence by murdering Him find themselves in shame while He has risen to glory.

EPH 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

The term blessed is applied here to both God and men. Men, of course, can not offer to God anything in the way of material things that could increase His happiness. What men can do is to praise and glorify Him as He desires that they do. God is the source of all true blessings. Every blessing, either material or spiritual comes from the hand of Jehovah. Without Him we could not live, move, or have our being. But, especially important is the fact that the Christian has been blessed with all the spiritual blessings which are capable of making life full and complete. Those spiritual blessings come only through having become one with the Lord and Saviour.

I am not in complete agreement with those who say that since all spiritual blessings are found in

Christ, there are none outside of Christ. Men are spiritual creatures. It is certainly possible for one individual to love another without being in Christ, and love is a spiritual blessing. Nevertheless, if one desires to move from a few crumbs to the entire banquet of divine blessing, he must enter into the body of Christ. The difference is in the contrast between a dribble and an ocean. **All** spiritual blessings can only be obtained in Christ.

EPH 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

What kind of spiritual blessings does Paul speak of as having been made available to Christians? The apostle will go on to explain what is included. Before the world was ever created God determined that a holy and blameless people would be brought into being. It was God's plan that this holy people would come to Him through Jesus the Christ. God did not plan to choose those outside Christ. He chose those who would respond to both His own love, and to the love of His Son. These persons would love Him because He first loved them.

Before we go farther we must distinguish between God's choice of a group and God's supposed choice of specific individuals. God did not select certain individuals and take away their power of choice so that they were predestined to heaven or to hell. What he did determine was that the group of faithful and obedient saints would enter the gates of glory

despite all of Satan's efforts to devour them. There are three votes to be cast. God cast's his vote for man's happiness in heaven. Satan casts his vote for man's everlasting torment in hell. Man casts the third and deciding vote. Man may start toward heaven and later veer off course and find himself in hell. He may also start toward hell and later change direction and make up his mind to follow the Lamb of God into the heavenly places.

EPH 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Oh yes, God has predestinated us to be adopted as His children. But the "us" is not individual. It consists of that group of persons who hear and obey His call rather than that of the Devil. Any who are faithful unto death will receive a crown of life and, as the children of their Father in heaven, will receive the inheritance that any adopted child would receive from the father who adopted him.

The good pleasure of His will is that those who enter into Christ, and continue faithful, will be counted among his adopted children. I think we must spend a moment with the word "adoption." There is a difference between the "Only begotten" Son of God, and the rest of His children. Jesus entered this world through the womb of Mary. Mary was a virgin who became impregnated through miraculous means. All the rest of God's children are adopted. To become an adopted child of God, a person must become a follower of Jesus Christ, the "Only Begotten."

EPH 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Repeatedly in this chapter Paul explains the purpose of our creation and salvation. We have been privileged to become adopted children of God in order that we might offer praise to Him for the glory of His grace. Solomon once gave us one of the most profound truths of all time. The wise man said, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”*

This is not a selfish attitude on the part of God. He deserves our praise and service. If man could only realize that his well being rests in finding the true relationship between himself and his Creator, he would find life infinitely sweeter and more fulfilling than in his grandest dreams.

EPH 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

We are acceptable to God only in His Beloved Son. We are deceiving ourselves if we think God allowed Jesus to suffer and shed his blood for nothing. Every man who has ever sinned has earned the wages of sin. The wages are death. Christ died that we might live. The blood of Christ is applied when we unite ourselves with him by being baptized into him. His blood then washes away the guilt of

sin and we gain access to the full riches of God's grace.

What would we think of a person who had access to a bank account where fifty million dollars had been deposited, and which would be available through very reasonable actions on his part, but who was spending his life in abject poverty because he was unwilling to meet the conditions which had been established? This is precisely the condition of multiplied millions of persons today. The riches available in the bank of heaven are beyond the reaches of our imagination. The conditions require men to become Christians and remain faithful to claim them. Only a fool would turn away.

EPH 1:8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Through Christ, God has made these heavenly blessings accessible to men. It is necessary that the way be made clear and be followed carefully. That is what Jesus came to do. He has told us that he is the Way the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by him. This is wisdom. This is prudence. Any other search for a full and complete life here or in the world to come is doomed to failure. Hear ye him!

EPH 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

There are several mysteries discussed in the scriptures. Each of them has to do with information which was at one time hidden, but has later been made known. The mystery this time informs us of God's plan to bless men through his Son. It is not man's plan. It is one which God himself developed. He created it and he is pleased with it. Let no man attempt to substitute his own plan or modify the one God has revealed.

EPH 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

As time has passed, God has made careful preparation for the coming of the Christian age. He chose Abraham and his successors as the family through whom the Saviour would come. When all things were ready, God sent his Son to remedy the ills of the universe. That which is scattered and torn is to be collected and repaired. That which cannot be salvaged is to be destroyed. Both heaven and earth will be purified and brought into harmony with the will of Jehovah.

EPH 1:11 In whom 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:

Through Christ, and in Christ, the faithful are to be heirs of the Heavenly Father. They are not

simply drawing out of bank account deposited by a friend. This is an inheritance which will not fail. There are failures of banks on earth. There will be no failure of the inheritance of the children of God in eternity. The one who has all power and all wisdom has predestined that his children will receive that which he has willed to them.

I repeat that this predestination is not on an individual basis. It is there for that group of persons who are adopted in accordance with their obedience as true children. The individual may be disinherited. Those who remain faithful will find the inheritance waiting.

EPH 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Here are those same words again. The reason we have an inheritance waiting in heaven is not just that we may be pleased and happy. The primary reason is that God may be glorified. Our own happiness and pleasure will automatically follow.

Of course the one who first trusted in Christ is his Heavenly Father. He said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

EPH 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Christ was the one who revealed the mystery of godliness. He is the one who made known the good

news that men do not have to die and be separated from God forever as a result of their sins. Every man who has believed and truly trusted in Christ, including the Ephesians, has been stamped, or sealed, with God's marker. That marker is the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit was promised by the prophet Joel who declared that it would be poured out in the latter days. See Joel 2:28-32. On the day of Pentecost Peter pointed back to the prophecy of Joel and stated that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled at that very time. Those who were God's children would be sealed with the Holy Spirit that all might know God was giving life through obedience to the plan he had established from before the foundation of the world.

EPH 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit himself. The Bible is not the gift of the Spirit. When one becomes a Christian that person is born a second time. The first birth gives natural life. The birds of the air and the beasts of the field have natural life. In contrast, the one who is born of the Spirit comes to spiritual life. He or she is a new person, an adopted child of God.

The Christian, while on earth, is limited by the natural body in which he lives. There will come a time when that will no longer be true. At the time of the resurrection, faithful Christians will receive

a new spiritual body. The life which we now enjoy in Christ is only a foretaste of the wondrous blessings to be found in heaven. What we now have through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is only an earnest of what is to come. An earnest is a preliminary deposit which pledges that the rest of the promise will follow. The full gift of God is spiritual life in heaven. The earnest of that blessed condition is the satisfaction of spiritual life as the Christian enjoys living and walking with Christ here on earth.

EPH 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

One of the objections to this being an epistle written to the church at Ephesus lies in Paul's words here. Actually the words "in Ephesus" are not found in verse one. Since Paul here says he had heard of the faith of those to whom he writes, it has been contended that he did not know his readers personally, but that he had only heard of their faith. This is not a valid objection. It had been some time since Paul taught for years in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus. He could very well say that he had heard of their faith. He had every reason to rejoice in their continued true discipleship.

I wish I could say the same about those to whom I have preached in the past. Occasionally we do hear of the faith of those whom we have known in days gone by. Sometimes we are disappointed to find some of the sheep have gone astray and left the Great Shepherd grieving over their departure. Paul

was happy that the report on the faith of the Ephesians Christians was positive.

EPH 1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

The rest of this chapter is given to the prayer Paul offered for the disciples in Ephesus. He never stops giving thanks for their lives in Jesus Christ the Lord.

This does not mean he gave thanks for them twenty-four hours every day, seven days a week. The thrust of his comment is that he had never quit including them in the prayers he offered to God. I do not even suppose Paul had an individual prayer list in which he either mentally or verbally mentioned the name of every Christian whom he loved. Surely the reader does something similar to what Paul was telling his readers he did. We pray that God bless and keep all those who attempt to live according to His will. I personally pray every day that God will bless and keep both myself and those whom I love. I could not possibly mention each by name.

EPH 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The apostle begins his prayer by requesting that God give the readers the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself. I say this refers to God because verse twenty contains the “he”

which refers back to this beginning. It is true that the revelation of the mystery of godliness came by Christ, but it is God that sent the Christ to reveal the knowledge of God's plan.

This spirit is probably not the Holy Spirit. The translators of the King James Version did not capitalize the words spirit. They simply saw it as an attitude of mind such as a "spirit of love." Paul desired that his readers allow God to create in them an attitude of mind which would lead to spiritual wisdom and understanding on their part. This would cause them to come to a more complete knowledge of God's nature and of His promises to his children.

EPH 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

The eyes of our understanding are those faculties that allow us to comprehend that which is presented to the mind or heart of man. It is Paul's prayer that the Ephesians may come to a realization of the wondrous blessings which lie ahead for those who hear and heed the beckoning call of the Christ who urges whosoever will to "*Come and follow me.*" The disciples of Christ can only begin to envision the hope which is laid up in the heavenly places for those who are faithful to the end.

The word inheritance is used in two different senses. Christians are referred to as the inheritance of God. The blessings of heaven are referred to as the inheritance of the saints. Thus both God and

man are blessed by the arrangement God has made for his children. God inherits us, and we inherit all things through Christ. The apostle wanted the Ephesians to grasp these wonders insofar as they were able.

EPH 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

If the readers would receive such a spirit of wisdom and understanding, they might come to realize just how mighty and powerful God really is. Just what was it that they were to grasp that would cause them to come to this knowledge of God? Paul will explain.

EPH 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

God's mighty power is seen in the resurrection and ascension of his Son. The powers of the Devil had done all they could to bury Christ forever in the darkness of the tomb. Satan must have danced with glee when our Lord was wrapped in graveclothes and placed in the tomb of the rich man. The rebellious angels would have joined in the jubilation.

The celebration would not last. After three days Jesus conquered death, hell and the grave. The mighty power of His Father brought life back into that lifeless corpse and gave it the energy to walk the earth once more. Jesus appeared to numerous persons either individually, or in small groups. Then

he appeared to over five hundred at one time. He had risen. There was no doubt! He had been dead. He was alive again!

The apostles who scattered at the time of his crucifixion were so impressed with God's power they were ready to give their own lives as they preached the good news of salvation and freedom from the bondage of sin and death. Peter, who had denied his Lord three times in one night, stood proudly before the Jews on the day of Pentecost and called out for them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins.

EPH 1:21 Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

The dynamite of God's power not only lifted Christ from the dust of the grave to walk upon the earth; it blasted him all the way from the earth to the throne of God, where he took his seat on the right hand of the Father.

Christ is now the ruler of all things. Angels, demons, kings and presidents are all subject to him. It is true that not everyone acknowledges his authority. All will not be put under subjection until the final resurrection and the last enemy, death, is conquered. Then every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess his rulership. I ask the reader if it would not be wise to confess him now and praise his holy name rather than to wait and be told to *"Depart for I never knew you."*

EPH 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Verse twenty-two and twenty-three must be seen together. Christ has been made the head of the church. The church is his body. The head gives instructions to the body. The body carries out those instructions and brings them to fulfilment. The church will be the instrument through which Christ as the head brings the will of the Father to fruition. That which has been discordant will become harmonious. The harmony will be brought about as Christ works through his body, the church.

EPH 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

“This world is not my home. I’m just a passing through. If heaven’s not my home, then Lord what will I do?” When the powers of evil have been defeated and the new heaven and the new earth have replaced this present one which is so scarred by sin, Christ will have filled all with his fulness. All will be complete. The earnest of the Spirit will have been followed by the full inheritance in the new and endless day.

Chapter 2

EPH 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Chapter one was devoted to an explanation of the wonderful blessings which are available to those who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. The same power which raised Christ from the grave and lifted him to a place on the throne of God was said to be available to raise the dead sinner to life in the heavenly places.

In chapter two the apostle draws a contrast between the condition of those who are dead in sin with those who have been brought to spiritual life and have become a part of the church, which is the body of the Lord.

Death is a separation. One dies physically when the spirit of the person is separated from the body. One dies spiritually when the spirit of the man separates itself from the Spirit of God. One is not born spiritually dead, as some would claim. Jesus once told his listeners to "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Every babe is born as pure as the driven snow. It is only when that child trespasses and sins against the will of God that he separates himself from God. He will receive the wages of sin if this continues.

Therefore, those to whom Paul addressed his words had once been spiritually alive but had died when they rebelled against the will of God. You cannot be dead unless you were once alive. The belief

that every babe is guilty of the sin of Adam is contrary to God's statement that "*The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin (Deut. 24:16).*"

As God had quickened Christ, he had also quickened the Ephesians who had heard and obeyed the voice of their Saviour. They were now new creatures energized by the Spirit of God.

One last note on verse one is that trespasses and sins are not two separate categories. To sin is to miss the mark. To trespass is to tread in forbidden territory. Rebellion against the will of God both misses the mark and treads in forbidden territory.

EPH 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The course of this world is the path taken by those who are dominated by Satan. He is the "Prince of this world." He has always sought to destroy men by turning them from the paths of righteousness set out by God and to lead them into paths of selfishness and pride. He is the prince of power of the air in that he operates in a spiritual realm more powerful than that of humans, yet less powerful than that of Jehovah.

Satan is a spiritual being. He may well be the leader of the angels who rebelled against God as

described in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. Spiritual beings have the capability of influencing other spiritual beings. God influences men. Men influence other men. Satan influences men. The spirit of Satan works in the heart of those who disobey the Father in heaven. The children of disobedience are those who allow themselves to be controlled by the satanic spirit of disobedience.

EPH 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Why did Paul use the words “we all” when he spoke of those who had followed the course of this world? There are at least two considerations here. First, the Bible informs us that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. At some time in our lives all of us who have reached the age of accountability have missed the mark, or trespassed against the will of God. Each of us has sought to fulfil the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. In that sense each of us became a child subject to the wrath of the Jehovah. Those outside of Christ were still exhibiting that nature. Those who had become Christians had at one time or another exhibited that nature.

But Paul also had another thought in mind here. He was writing to Gentiles. He was a Jew. Christ had appointed him especially to preach to the Gentile

world. Both the Jews and the Gentiles had fallen victim to Satan's wiles. The Jew tended to see himself as more righteous than the Gentile. The Gentile hated the Jew because of his attitude of superiority. The truth was that neither of them was acceptable to God without the redeeming blood of the Lamb of God.

EPH 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

If God had been lacking in mercy and love, he would have eliminated man from his presence forever. Every man, both Jew and Gentile, deserved to die spiritually. God did not visit such a punishment upon all men. He provided a way for those who would demonstrate a penitent attitude to return to him.

The reader should note that if man does not show such an attitude of penitence, he will not escape the wrath of God. The Spirit of God convicts men of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Man then decides whether to ignore or to accept the offer God presents. The position that man does nothing to further his redemption is not true to the book of God. God offers a way back home. Man can take it, or he can leave it.

EPH 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

A dead person does not raise himself to life. Every

Christian required a source of power far greater than he possessed to escape from the spiritual graveyard. God made that power available through his Son. He raised Christ from *physical* death. He has raised the Christian from *spiritual* death. With the granting of new life, the Christian shares his new life with the Lord.

Paul added the words, “*by grace ye are saved*” to make absolutely certain his readers would recognize that they did not deserve the blessing of life which had been given to them. Grace is that which we receive beyond that which might have been expected. A gracious hostess serves a sumptuous meal when her guests were expecting much less than she placed before them. Men have no right to expect the gift of life. It only becomes theirs through the love, the mercy and the grace of a forgiving God.

EPH 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

This time Paul used the word “us.” Previously he had used the word “we.” All redeemed men have been raised up together that they might sit together in heavenly places with the Lord. But again, Paul has in mind the uniting of both Jew and Gentile in this togetherness.

We have the past tense. We have already been made to sit in these heavenly places. He is not talking about the time when Jesus returns to take his own to the mansions which have been prepared. The

heavenly places are in contrast to the state of those who walk according to the course of this world. We have been made new creatures. We live in a new realm. Of course we must live in the material world. But we have been born anew and have been united with Christ who sits at God's right hand.

EPH 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

There is a reason why God raised us up to sit with Christ. Throughout all time, unto the end of the world, we are to demonstrate to others the fact that we have been made rich when we did not deserve such. All men must be given the opportunity to see just how foolish it is to serve Satan, and how blessed it is to sit with Christ.

The ages to come does not refer to heaven after the judgment, nor does it refer to a thousand year reign of Christ on earth right after his return for the saints. It refers to all the existence of the faithful, beginning with their quickening in Christ and extending into eternity.

EPH 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Now Paul is ready to expand on the brief statement he made before. Once a man has separated himself from God he is helpless to find his way back

without the guidance of Jehovah. Just this morning my wife received a telephone call from our daughter. The daughter had been to the mall with her four children. While her attention was diverted to other matters her small two year old son slipped off and went on his own way. She soon realized that he was gone. In a sense of panic she sent the other older children to find him. She alerted the security personnel, in order that they might find the child. After about fifteen minutes one of the security men found the babe and returned him to his mother. When he was asked if he was scared he replied that he was not. He could take care of himself. That was not the case. He could never have found his way in the crowded mall.

The majority of men think they can find their way without God and without Christ. They are fooling themselves. If men are to be saved, it must be accomplished through obedient faith. Through His grace God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to seek and save that which is lost. Christ calls out for men to follow Him, for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He added that no man comes unto the Father but by Him. When one believes Jesus to be the Son of God and places his confidence in the directions Christ has presented through his life, his teaching and his continued guidance in the written Word, that person may be saved. Without the grace of God, Jesus would never have come to this world of sin and sorrow. Without confidently following Jesus directions no man would ever move from death to life.

EPH 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Be very careful that you do not fall into the trap of the “faith only” philosophy. James challenged his readers to show him their faith without their works and he would show them his faith by his works. A faith which is not accompanied by works is a dead faith. Even the Devil believes and trembles. Yet he does not do the “*works of Him that sent me.*” There is an obedience of faith. Without that obedience of faith a man is lost.

It is a tragic mistake to classify repentance, confession and baptism as works in the sense that this verse uses the term. Any man who would boast that his penitence over past sins, his confession in Christ as the Son of God, and his burial and resurrection from the dead through water baptism has *earned* the right to sit with Christ by his own efforts, is a deluded and deceived man.

The above are conditions God has set for obtaining the blessings He has offered. Such actions do not place God under obligation. They are actions that meet His requirements for the reception of his gift of life.

EPH 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Through Jesus Christ God has taken dead men and brought them to life. God is the architect of the

new creation. Man only uses his free will to decide whether to yield himself to the will of his Creator. Man works because it pleases God, not because he earns a new life in Christ. God has ordained that man is to work. Man works because God knows what is best for him.

EPH 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

Here we find Paul using the word “ye” in the sense that he has been using “us” and “we” before. As a Jew, he is writing to Gentiles in the church at Ephesus. He reminds them that the Jews had considered them to be outside the fold of God in the past. The Jews had been chosen by God as a special people through which He would offer a blessing to all men. God had established a covenant with these fleshly Jews in which all male children were to be circumcised in the flesh on the eighth day after their birth. This was a mark which set them apart from other people.

There are two kinds of circumcision, circumcision of the flesh and circumcision of the heart. Too many of the Jews had experienced circumcision of the flesh without a corresponding circumcision of the heart. Too many Christians today who should be circumcised of heart still have their affections set on the world.

EPH 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

The Ephesians had been in a serious condition. They did not have Christ and thus had no sacrifice to atone for their sins. They were not a part of the chosen people whom God had selected as his own nation. They were not a part of the covenant which God had established between Himself and the Jewish people. In this condition, they had no hope of redemption and no walk with God. They were both hopeless and helpless.

EPH 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Things had been changed drastically. While the Jews had been closer to God than the Gentile had in the past, the Gentiles now had the chance to approach Jehovah through the sacrificial blood of His own Son. The Jew of the past had approached God through the blood of bulls and goats. The Jew and the Gentile now had a far more satisfactory sacrifice which did not have to be made repeatedly but once offered continually cleansed those who would take advantage of it.

EPH 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath

made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Christ had created peace. This peace was with God and also with men. The Gentiles could come close to God because the sacrifice of Christ took away the barrier between God and penitent obedient men, and it also removed the barrier between Jew and Gentile.

God had commanded that the Jews keep themselves completely separate from all other people. They had specified diet. They had specified ceremonial rituals. They had a set of statutes and commandments that had not been given to any others.

The Gentiles were not allowed to enter into the temple of God. There was a court of the Gentiles. Beyond that court they were not permitted to go. Paul found himself in considerable trouble at one point because the Jews though he had taken Trophimus, a Gentile, beyond that point. See Acts 21:27-29.

When Jesus died on the cross, the law of Moses was fulfilled. At his death the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Both Jew and Gentile had access to the throne of God. No longer was there Jew and Greek. There was but one new man in Christ Jesus.

EPH 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

The commandments of the Law of Moses requiring the separation of Jew and Gentile had been taken away. God was ready to bless whosoever would come to Him through His Son. Take note that this verse says Christ made *in himself* one new man. When the Jew is baptized into Christ he becomes a part of that new man. When the Gentile is baptized into Christ he also becomes a part of that new man. One man is not expected to experience enmity between the various part of his body. It is expected that there will be peaceful coexistence.

EPH 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Christ made possible the reconciliation of the Jews to God. He also made possible the reconciliation of the Gentiles to God. The sin which set them at enmity with God had a remedy. To make the forgiveness of all the sins of all mankind possible there had to be a perfect sacrifice. That was found in the life and death of our Lord. Anyone who is willing to kill the old man and be baptized into the one body of Jesus Christ may have peace with God in Christ.

God did not save the Gentiles as one man and the Jews as another. He accepted the offering of Christ in order that both might be united in one.

EPH 2:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

Them that were afar off were the Gentiles. Them that were nigh were the Jews. Christ came and commanded that the gospel be preached unto every creature in all the world. Peter was commanded to preach to the household of Cornelius, a Gentile. Paul was commissioned to act as an apostle to the Gentiles. Our God is not a respecter of persons. Those who hear His word and obey His will are acceptable to Him whether they be red, yellow, black or white. Whosoever will may come. No man has a right to see himself as superior to any other man as far as access to Jehovah is concerned.

EPH 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Through Jesus every man has a right to approach God, if that man makes his plea through the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit acts as an intercessor, taking our thanksgiving, our praise and our petitions to the Father. The Spirit of God knows the mind of God and the mind of man.

All three of the persons of the Godhead are listed in this verse. God the Father waits in love for his children to communicate with Him. Christ the Son has provided the sacrifice which clears the way for redeemed men to draw nigh. The Holy Spirit then presents our communications and sees that all things work together for good to them that obey Him and are called according to His purpose.

EPH 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens

with the saints, and of the household of God;

From this point to the end of the chapter, the apostle uses three examples to show the nature of the new relationship which Christ has made possible for the new man.

First, the Christian is a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The Gentile had been like a foreigner before. Now he had as much right to claim citizenship in God's Kingdom as does the Jew. This new citizenship carries more privileges than any other. The kingdoms of earth rise and fall. They offer limited opportunities for a full and complete life. It is not so with the Kingdom of God. It lasts forever and it offers perfect life.

Second, the Christian has become a child of the Father in heaven. This is also a unique privilege. A busy man might well break into his hectic schedule to answer a telephone call from one of his children. God is never too busy to hear and take heed to the needs of his children. God is our Father. Jesus is our older brother. Every true Christian is an adopted brother or sister.

EPH 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Third, the Christian is a living stone in the temple of God. This is not a temple constructed of marble and wood. It is made of the spirits of the faithful.

It stands solidly on the chief cornerstone which is Jesus Christ, God's Only Begotten Son. The lives of the apostles and prophets provide solid support for the multitude of faithful lives which are framed together to form one complete temple.

EPH 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

A temple is a place where God and man may meet. The first meeting place of this type was the tabernacle of old. There, God's presence was made known to his people through acceptance of their sacrifices and their guidance by the cloud by night and pillar of fire by day. Later the temple in Jerusalem is known as the place where God had placed his name. The sacrifices were still brought there and offered. He guided men through the law and the prophets.

Then came the new spiritual temple made up of Christ as the chief cornerstone, the new testament apostles and prophets as foundation stones, and thousands of faithful Christians as building blocks in this wondrous edifice. God meets man in that temple which is the church. He accepts their lives as a sweet savor and guides them through the Word which has been inspired through his Holy Spirit.

As this chapter to clearly points out, no man is excluded from becoming a part of God's Kingdom, God's family or God's temple. Note that the verse informs us this is an unfinished temple. It continually grows as new living stones are added to it.

EPH 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitaion of God.

God lives within his church. He lives in the hearts of each of His children. He loves and cares about you my friend. He wants you to be a subject in His Kingdom, a child in His family and a part of His spiritual temple.

Chapter 3

EPH 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Since this chapter begins with the words “For this cause”, we must backtrack just a bit to determine the identity of the cause about which the apostle writes. He had been attempting to explain to the Ephesians that they were now blessed with new relationships to God and to God’s people. They were citizens in God’s holy nation. They were living stones in God’s holy spiritual temple. They were members of God’s spiritual family.

It was because of the importance of these new blessings that Paul had been committed to a Roman prison. The Jews had fiercely fought him at every hand to prevent him from preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. His imprisonment was but the outcome of his obedience to the command of his Saviour that he go to the Gentiles as Peter had taken the lead in preaching to the Jews.

Paul did not consider himself to be a prisoner of Rome. He viewed himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. To be a prisoner because of his dedication to preaching the gospel of Christ was not a disgrace. It was a privilege and a blessing. The Ephesians must not be discouraged because of his confinement. He was more concerned about their continuing confidence in the faith than he was about his own jailing. After all, a large percentage of what we read from his pen today was written while Paul was in jail for Christ. It was impossible to bring his influence to a halt by placing him in prison.

EPH 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

Any distress which Paul might have because of his confinement would be more than cancelled out by the fact that the Ephesians, as well as other Gentiles, might hear of the grace of God which had now invited them to become fellow heirs in the Kingdom of God. It was an honor to Paul that God had chosen him to tell the Gentile world about this new age in which all men may receive such an invitation.

The apostle had been far more concerned about the willingness of the Gentiles to hear and obey the gospel than he was about his own safety. There were rewards ahead that far outweighed any discomfort he was suffering because of his apostleship.

EPH 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

The gospel which Paul preached did not originate in his own mind. It was a mystery which had been hidden in past ages, but had been revealed to him by the Saviour himself. In fact, Paul had been fighting against any preaching of the gospel whatsoever, whether to the Jew *or* to the Gentile. He was turned around in his tracks when Christ appeared to him and caught him up to heaven where he had received the message which he was preaching to the Ephesians. Earlier in this present letter Paul

had discussed the mystery of the one church. He was only reminding them now of what he had said to them before.

EPH 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

It would not be difficult for his readers to discern the depth of Paul's message. It would be clear that it was not his own. If it had been his own concoction there would have been little urgency for them to accept it and conform their lives to its truths. But since it did come from the mind of God, it was necessary that they come to an understanding of its importance.

How sad it is that many theologians today feel quite free to tamper with the truths that were revealed to the apostles. They consider their own logic to be equal or superior to that which was presented to man by the divine mind. The reader should not be misled. The Bible itself is all that is needed to instruct men completely and furnish them to every good work. We need not add to it. We need not subtract from it. We do not need to modify it in any way. We may read and study it. We may teach and explain it. But, we must not alter it.

EPH 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

The “other ages” are the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. In those previous times God had not seen fit to make known those things which were now being made available. They were hidden in the mind of God and awaited the proper time when man had been tutored by the law and the prophets. Only after that took place was the mystery to be made known.

Both the prophets of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament had an important place in the revelation. The Old Testament prophets predicted the coming of a Messiah. The New Testament prophets declared his presence. Both the ancient prophets and those of the apostolic age received their information through the Holy Spirit of God. They did not manufacture these truths themselves.

EPH 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Paul returns to the nature of the mystery. It had been an abominable thought to him in the past that either the Jew or the Gentile should hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now he preached that both the Jew and the Gentile were offered the blessings of being children of the living God, and serving him within the church which is Christ's body.

Over and over, the apostle repeats the gracious nature of God in teaching his readers the wondrous opportunities which can be theirs if they will allow

themselves to be included in God's family and in his body the church.

EPH 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Note that Paul did not say the preaching of the mystery of God was something for which he had educated himself beforehand. He says he "was made" a minister of the gospel of Christ. Until his appointment by the Lord, Paul would have been one of the least likely candidates for such a task.

God had recognized the potential of this great man. He had worked behind the scenes to bring all things together in order that His grace could be made manifest to lost men. It was through God's grace and through God's wisdom and power that the Ephesians were now being offered a place in the Kingdom.

EPH 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Conceit was unthinkable to Paul. In his mind, there was no man on earth who deserved less than himself to be entrusted with the message he had been told to preach. When he considered his past behavior, he was ashamed of his opposition to God's Son. It was hard for him to believe God would have chosen him over thousands of others. It was only

because of God's grace and mercy that Paul was preaching the gospel and that the Ephesians were to read about it.

Unsearchable riches? Most certainly. As an heir of God's possessions, the saints look forward to an afterlife beyond description. Jesus spoke of mansions which are being prepared for the faithful. The book of Revelation presents as much as the mind can comprehend of the wonders that await God's true children. We can only serve and wait with patience for the new body, the new heaven and the new earth.

EPH 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

In the beginning Adam and Eve lost the close fellowship which they shared with God in the Garden. The imaginations of men soon turned to self service and human fellowship crumbled before greedy egos. For thousands of years God had worked behind the scenes to bring men back together and to lead them back to Him.

Fellowship with God and man was dear to the heart of the apostle. This fellowship, which came through the establishment of the church, was more precious than life itself. Since God had afforded Paul a place of leadership in rebuilding fellowship, Paul gave Him glory and honor for His great love.

There is something else we should note in this verse. We normally think of God the Father having created all things through the power of the Holy

Spirit. This verse informs us that the Son was also involved in the creation. The Son existed then as the Word of God. All things were made by Him (See John 1:1-3). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all active participants in the creation of the original heaven and earth. All three are also deeply involved in the new heaven and the new earth.

EPH 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

There are mysteries beyond this present world. The existence of both demons and angels is substantiated in the Word of God. Satan has taken the lead in a rebellion against Jehovah. He and his helpers are doomed to defeat. With the offering of Christ upon the cross, the head of the serpent was crushed. That does not mean he has ceased all activity. If one cuts off the head of a serpent, it will continue to writhe around while it dies. It is the same with Satan. The death stroke has been administered, but his activities have not ceased. Through the church, every rebellious spirit will be taught that God's plan for an eternal family will succeed. God's wisdom and power cannot be extinguished. Satan and his henchmen cannot win!

EPH 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

As the Word of God, Christ shared in the original purpose for the Father to have a family that would

live with him in eternity. That purpose has not been defeated. It is living and well. Through the preaching of the gospel and the fellowship of the church, God's eternal purpose will be carried out.

Christ is our Lord in that he has given the directions for approaching God, and has provided all things necessary to follow those directions. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

EPH 3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Without Christ's intercession no man would dare enter the gates of heaven. I am reminded of Esther's statement that she dared not approach the throne of the king. If he failed to hold out the golden sceptre, she would lose her life. Without the Son of God witnessing that we are presentable, we would be without hope. As it now stands, Jesus presents his own, and they may have perfect confidence that they will **not** be rejected and told to "*Depart from me. I never knew you.*"

Does this confidence arise through faith "of Him", or faith "in Him?" Faith "of Him" would be the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. It is the body of truth presented to the world by Jesus and His apostles. The faith "in Him" is the trust and confidence of His followers that results in their obedience to His commands. Surely both are involved in this access to God. If the faith "of Him" had not been delivered to the world, no man could find his way. If the faith "in Him" is not developed, man is lost in sin.

Let us thank God that we have received the revelation of the “mystery of God” and also that we are privileged to believe it and obey it.

EPH 3:13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

How interesting! Rather than grieving over his own misfortune at having been placed in prison, Paul expresses his concern that this imprisonment might cause the saints at Ephesus to lose heart. That must not happen. They must consider his plight as a crown of glory and not a stumbling block. He was not in the least discouraged. He did not expect them to show an opposite reaction. God would use every event in the accomplishment of his purposes and in the defeat of Satan and his allies.

EPH 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The apostle is ready to resume his prayer which he had started before he interrupted it with the glorious thoughts of verses two through thirteen. Because of God’s great mercy in granting a place in his family for the Gentiles, Paul is ready to praise His name. God has proven that He is not only the Father of Jesus Christ. He is willing to be the Father of all men who will respond to his call.

Is falling to the knees the only proper position for prayer? Certainly not! We find examples in the scriptures of those who prayed standing, of those

who were sitting and of those who fell on their faces. One of my former university professors, who had an earned doctorate in the field of psychology, always made it a point to sit at the end of the row when he was participating in chapel services. He would then quietly slip out into the aisle, and down to his knees, when prayer was being offered. Falling down where one can place the forehead against the ground is a common posture for the certain religious groups when they offer prayer. There is little doubt that kneeling or falling to the ground would emphasize the humble place of man and the grandeur of God. Yet, it cannot be proven that such are the only acceptable postures. Indeed, it is quite the opposite.

EPH 3:15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

This verse introduces a thought which I have never seen or heard discussed. It would seem that the family of God in heaven would consist of faithful angels. At the same time it says both the family in heaven and that on earth are named as one. Are the faithful angels Christians? Perhaps this only means that all these faithful beings are named as God's children. I leave the reader to give the thought whatever further attention it may deserve. The important thing is that God has but one family, and that both Jew and Gentile are a part of it.

EPH 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be

strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

It is out of the glory of God that we may share in his riches. It is also true that his riches are glorious within themselves. Because God loves men, he offers His Spirit in order that they may be strengthened in service.

Remember, my friends, that the Spirit is that which gives life to the body. Every Christian is a part of the body of Christ. Thus, every Christian is strengthened by the Holy Spirit which is given to him at the time of his second birth. When the inner man is strengthened by the Spirit, the outer man produces the fruit of the Spirit.

The inner man is the heart, soul, mind and strength of the individual. The outer man is the visible part. When Christ dwells in the inner man, the Spirit of God gives that man life and spiritual productivity.

EPH 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

The verse before us explains how Christ is able to enter into the inner man. He stands at the door of the heart and knocks. By faith we open the door to him and he enters. At this point I must also mention that the Spirit, the Word and the faith all play vital parts in the strengthening of that inner man. I do not believe any man alive can explain this entire relationship. I know faith comes by hearing,

and hearing by the Word of God. I know the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to produce the written Word. But, I am not prepared to say that neither Christ, nor the Holy Spirit personally dwell in the inner man. I do not know what physical life is. Much less do I know all about spiritual life.

Let us recognize that God may dwell in man. Christ may dwell in man. The Holy Spirit may dwell in man. And let us also recognize that we may dwell in God. We may dwell in Christ, etc. Then let us allow God to give life as He wills.

Two pictures are used to help us see the need for clinging closely to our faith. First, we must have deep spiritual roots. The Devil must not be able to pluck us out of the hand of the Lord. Second, we must have our spiritual foundation set on solid ground. The foolish man built his house upon the sand. It came tumbling down. The wise man built his house upon the rock. It stood!

EPH 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

The more firmly we are grounded in the faith, the more fully we will be able to realize the great love which both the Father and the Son have for humanity. Neither of them is willing for any to be lost. They both desire that all men might come to repentance and receive forgiveness of sins.

Paul is getting ready to fly off into space with another of his collection of superlatives. This time

he attempts to lift his readers to a higher level of appreciation for God's love. He speaks of it in four dimensions. It reaches up to heaven itself. It reaches to the end of time. It looks down from the cross to the most degraded of men and calls them to come upward. It is wide enough to include any man or woman, of any race or geographical location. How could any person be so ungrateful, or so foolish as to turn away?

EPH 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

No man alive will ever completely comprehend the magnificence of Christ's love. Christ knows that which we do not know about the future of the faithful. We can only stretch our minds to the limit and then admit that we have fallen short. Some men and women have made enormous sacrifices in the service of God. No man or woman has ever made the journey from heaven to the grave to lead others to glory.

There is a completeness of life that we cannot realize while in the flesh. We presently abide in the vestibule of heaven. There are a host of spiritual blessings in Christ. Nevertheless, there is a life which follows this one that is not limited by frail earthly bodies and the scars of an environment marred by the sins of the centuries. We must seek to enter into the throne room itself. There we will be filled with all the fulness of God.

EPH 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

On and on Paul goes! The Ephesian Christians must not become impatient. When we stretch our minds to the greatest extent we still have not begun to plumb the depths of the joy and blessings waiting for those who are faithful unto the end. Paul could not put it down in words. If he could not do so, neither can your present commentator. We can only wait, serve and remain faithful.

EPH 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The amen closes a long journey of praise to God. The church of Jesus Christ was established for the purpose of giving glory to God, and offering hope to men. That church will never be destroyed. It will be in existence when the Lord returns to claim those who have been called out. The children of the Father in heaven will continue to give both the Father and the Son the honor and the glory for ever and ever, as the faithful pass from the realm of time into endless eternity.

Chapter 4

EPH 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

At this point in the book of Ephesians Paul moves from a discussion of the nature and mission of the church to a charge that the Ephesian Christians must behave in a manner fitting to that church. Since God has been so gracious as to make arrangements for the establishment of the Christian system, men have the obligation to bring their lives into harmony with God's purposes. Chapters one, two and three of Ephesians declared the nature and purpose of the church of Christ. Chapters three, four and five will explain the expectations God has for men as they become vital members of the church.

The apostle does not let the reader forget that he has become a prisoner of Jesus Christ. This can be taken in two ways. Jesus had captured the heart of Paul. Because that was so, Paul must do the will of the one who had captured him. Under some circumstances this would have been a hated burden. With Christ as the captor, it was not so. It was a delight for the prisoner to do the will of the Son of God.

The second sense in which Paul was a prisoner of the Lord was more visible. He had been placed in custody by the officials of the Roman government. He could no longer move freely from one geographical location to another. This meant he must reach out to those whom he wished to teach by means of letters.

That is precisely what he was doing through this present letter. Although Paul could not visit the brethren in person, he could still encourage them not to disappoint the Saviour. They had been called out of the world to live and walk in heavenly places. They must strive to see that their lives matched the call they had heard.

EPH 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Moses was called a meek man. Jesus Christ willingly left the glory of heaven to offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men. The same pattern of behavior is expected from all of God's followers. Such persons have heaven as their goal. The conditions there will be vastly different from those on the present earth. At present God's children find themselves in the midst of men and women who have worldly ambitions. Many have riches and power as their ultimate aim. It is difficult to imagine a situation in which one would be surrounded by others who were attempting to give rather than take, and to throw off hate, greed and lust by replacing them with loving concern for the well being of others.

In this world, Jesus told us, there are many who walk in the broad way that leads to destruction, and there are but few who walk the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. Such will not be true in heaven. Those who are told to enter into the joys of the Lord will all have walked that narrow way. Each of us must see that we have learned to walk in that way.

EPH 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The Godhead operates in perfect unity. There are three and the three are one. The religious world leaves much to be desired. There are many religious bodies outside of those who hold to Christ as the Son of God. Among those who do claim loyalty to Christ, we find hundreds of contrasting and conflicting creeds. Hatred and enmity often prevail. Such conditions are not in harmony with the will of the Father in heaven.

Much of the remainder of the letter to the Ephesians will be devoted to mending these divisive attitudes. Those who expect to live in the presence of the Lord in eternity must follow in the footsteps of the Master and promote obedience to God and love for men. The Spirit of God did not leave us a plan which cannot be put into practice. He left us with both a book and an example that will bring peace and righteous living. It is our task to follow both the instructions and the example.

EPH 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

The one body is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. That body is not intended to be out of joint. Every Christian is a member of that one body. When one member of the Christian body fights against the others, the result is much the same as that of a person with cerebral palsy. In such a person, the

limbs do not work together. The arms and legs move in spasmodic fashion. The head may jerk around erratically. The individual spends much energy which a normal person can devote to more effective actions. The members of the body of Christ are not expected to oppose one another and thus prevent the proper efficiency of the body as a whole.

Nor is the body of Christ to be controlled by multiple spirits. The body of a human is dead without the spirit. The body of Christ does the work of God because it is directed by the Spirit of Christ. The fleshly body of Christ had the Spirit without measure. The life of the Saviour demonstrated unity of purpose. The teachings of Christ were non contradictory. Just as the Holy Spirit was the directing force in the life of the Son of God, it should also be the directing force of all of God's children in the church today. To whatever extent Christians will allow that to be the case, we will see peace and progress. To whatever extent Christians allow other forces to control their lives, we will see division and wasted energy.

Christians were not called out of the world to enter into a place where confusion reigns. Heaven will not be made up of little cells of sectarianism. The hope of the Christian should be an eternity of existence where all live in joy and peace.

EPH 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Is this one Lord the Father, or is it the Son? Both the Father and the Son are called Lord repeatedly in the scriptures. I believe the context indicates the

one Lord here is Christ, who came into our midst to lead us to heaven. But, you see, it really does not matter that much, because Jesus said, *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* *“I and the Father are one.”*

A lord is one who has the authority to give commands to those over whom he exercises lordship. The Christian does not receive conflicting commands from a multitude of lords. The directions for living the Christian life are clear and simple. The reason they sometimes appear to be cloudy and vague is that men have attempted to bend them to their own will. There is a desperate need to look past the leadership of glory seeking men and fasten our eyes upon the one who is truly our Lord; the one who is said to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. We do not have many faiths, all teaching opposing doctrines. We have one completely harmonious Christian system. All that is needed is for men to see Christ more clearly and follow his pathway more nearly.

The one faith is that complete and unified set of instructions for living according to the will of the Father in heaven. Through the scriptures men have the opportunity of being thoroughly furnished unto every good work. By a proper examination and application of the one faith, it is possible for men to possess one faith, and to live in harmony with others who also have like precious faith.

There are several baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. We find (1) the baptism of John, (2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, (3) baptism of suffering, (4) baptism of fire, (5) baptism for the dead, and (6) the baptism commanded in the great commission.

The only one of these baptisms appropriate to the present case is the baptism of the great commission. This baptism is the one which marks the translation of the one baptised from the old life controlled by Satan to the new life in the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. It is a complete immersion into water, followed by a rising up out of the water to live as a member of Christ's body, the church.

EPH 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

How many gods have been created by the imaginations of men! How simple is the Biblical affirmation that there is one God. We do not have a god of the rivers, another of the harvest, yet another of victory in warfare. We have but one who rules over all. He stands infinitely higher than the entire creation. It is through Him that we live and move and have our being. It is He who determines the laws of nature and who will judge all men when time comes to an end.

EPH 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

From Jehovah, the only true and living God, each human has been endowed with certain capabilities. Some bear children. Some paint beautiful paintings. Some have administrative talent. I think the grace which is given here refers not to miraculous gifts but to the talent and opportunities

placed within the possession of each individual. This will become more apparent in the next few verses.

Christ was involved in the creation of all things. Every man is expected to make proper use of that which has been placed under his or her supervision. Certainly the apostles and prophets of the first century had special opportunities and responsibilities. Although our own opportunities and responsibilities differ from theirs, we still have gifts from the gracious hand of our Saviour. They must be used wisely.

EPH 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

When Jesus Christ won his victory over death and ascended to the throne room to sit at the right hand of the Father, he broke the power of sin's bondage. We need never again be captives to Satan and his twin servants, greed and lust. Those who desire to find release may win the victory over sin and servitude to the father of liars.

The gifts Christ offers to men are freedom from sin, the joy of service to the Heavenly Father, and the possibility of eternal life in the presence of the Father. There are no gifts available to men that may begin to compare with the wonders of those offered by the Son of God.

EPH 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)

Christ's ascension to the right hand of God's throne in heaven was but the logical conclusion to his descent into the present world of sin on this earth. He came for the purpose of revealing the perfection of God before men. God intended that a family be established with himself as the Father of that family. Christ came from heaven to make it possible.

Note that Christ did not just descend from heaven to earth. He passed into the lower parts of the earth. He died and was buried. Only after he had conquered death, hell and the grave did he ascend once more to the side of the Father.

EPH 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

There are three dimensions listed here. They are down, up and sideways. Jesus came down from heaven. He returned into heaven. Only after that could his influence be expanded sideways to fill all things in heavens and on earth.

Paul said he had been caught up into the third heaven where he had heard things that were unlawful to utter. The first heaven would be where the birds fly. The second heaven would be the area where the stars and planets are found. The third heaven would be the abode of God. Is there a seventh heaven? Are there an infinite number of heavens. Whatever exists, we may rest assured that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has reached to the uttermost corner.

EPH 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Having received all authority in heaven and on earth, Jesus appointed those who could fill subordinate roles in God's plan for his eternal Kingdom and his family of redeemed men. Each of the positions listed in this verse play a vital part in the production of God's majestic plan for man.

The apostles were to reveal the truths concerning Christ's will for men. The completion of the written scriptures was their major contribution. Without them we would have no New Testament. We hear less concerning the new testament prophets. These persons predicted events which were to take place. Among these prophets were Agabus and the four daughters of Philip. One who claimed to be a prophet could be tested by watching to see if the prophecy came to pass. If not, he or she was to be rejected.

Evangelists were those who traveled about from one area to another preaching the good news of possible salvation for those who would hear and obey. Philip was an evangelist.

Pastors were the shepherds of the local flock of God's faithful. Not only were they called pastors and shepherds; they were also known as elders, presbyters, bishops and overseers. It is a sad thing that many in the present world see the bishops and the pastors as two separate offices. It is also a sad thing that the one man who fills the pulpit in present day ministries is often called "the pastor." In the first century church, several pastors, elders or

bishops served a single congregation. One bishop over several congregations was not a part of the original plan of God for the organization of His church. The Bible teaches a plurality of pastors over each local congregation.

EPH 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Three facets of God's developing plan are listed. The installation of the various officers above allows each of these functions to move forward according to the will of the Father. Each saint is expected to mature on an individual basis. The various offices within the church make such maturation possible. Each plays a vital part in the growth of every saint of God.

The work of the ministry involves both the addition of new members to the body and the care and support of those already incorporated into it. Just as in a human body, each part aids in the operation and health of every other part, each member of the church is expected to aid in the advancement of every other member.

When each member of the body cooperates fully with the other members, the church as a whole will be built up in knowledge and service.

EPH 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The end result of each member cooperating fully with every other member would be the development of the entire church toward perfect individuals, each member comparing favorably with the spiritual perfection of the Son of God.

This is never completed. Each and every member of Christ's body falls short of his perfect life. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Yet, that perfection is our goal. We may never be satisfied as long as we fall short of His fulness. This verse is one of your present writer's favorites in all the Holy Scriptures. As children of God we continually move forward in spiritual stature. At the same time we are kept humble by the realization that we are far short of perfection.

EPH 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Children are much more easily manipulated than mature adults. It is the same with the spiritually immature. Sadly, there are always those about who get satisfaction from leading these babes. Satan must take great satisfaction in observing the foolishness of both those who mislead and those who are misled.

As I write these words in July of 1998, the church is crowded with those who are susceptible to every new man made addition to the worship services. If we have been using one song leader, we must try using six song leaders simultaneously. If we have

been singing from song books, we must discard the song books and sing from memory. If we have been sitting or standing with our hands at our sides, we must raise them toward the sky and wave them around. If we have taught certain doctrines for many years, we must replace them with new ones. Whatever is new must be better than that which has been done in the past.

This is a dangerous attitude. Of course it is true that when we are on the wrong track spiritually, we have the sacred duty to change our directions. But this is not the way things are going. Intelligent men who should know better are taking pride in developing a discipleship that will follow them wherever they decide to lead. That is precisely why we are in our present divided sectarian mudpile today. We cannot afford to pile the mud even higher.

EPH 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

The truth is the saving power of God. When men are fed on pabulum they will continue to be babes. They will never grow up and they will be prey for every son of Satan who seeks a followership.

Christ is the measuring stick. He is the head toward which all men must grow. The head of a human baby is proportionally much larger than the body. As the child matures, the body grows faster than the head until it reaches the proper proportions. Each member of the body of Christ must strive to grow toward the maturity already demonstrated by

the Saviour. Speaking the truth in love will provide the nourishment needed by each member as this growth takes place.

EPH 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

In order for the entire church, or body of Christ, to reach maturity, every part of that body must mature. Each part of the body must be ready to perform its needed function. If the stomach of a human body does not properly develop, the rest of the body will suffer. If the task of any member of the church is not completed, due to the neglect of that member, the entire church will feel the negative effects.

Love is a key word. Love always seeks the welfare of those who are loved. The edification or maturation of the church depends upon every member demonstrating a concern for the welfare of every other member. Any shortage of love will handicap the entire church.

EPH 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Paul was writing to fleshly Gentiles. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. As he introduced Christ to

the Gentile world, he expected a change of both thought and behavior on their part. It might be understandable that the Gentiles who had not heard the gospel would walk in confusion. This certainly ought not to be the case with those who had been taught the principles of Christ. They are expected to walk in the light as Christ is in the light, rather than in the darkness under the rulership of the Prince of darkness. Vanity is emptiness. The mind that focuses upon the works of Satan will never produce that which is worthwhile. It will always wander aimlessly about without purpose.

EPH 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

The man who follows in the footsteps of the Devil will not be able to see ahead of him. His path will move in circles rather than having any direction. Such a man walks as if he had a blindfold covering his eyes. God is light. Before any man or woman can see where they are going, they must catch a glimmer of the True Light. That True Light is Jesus Christ who came into the world to guide the lost back to the Creator.

It has been said that there are none so blind as those who *will not see*. The spiritually blind are described as ignorant in that they *will not* see the light. It is not that they cannot see. They deliberately choose not to do so. As long as the heart is bent on living in darkness, there is little that can be done

to guide a man. He will continue to separate himself from all that could inform him of the wondrous blessings that may be discovered in the light of Christ.

EPH 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Has the reader ever had the experience of working side by side with the kind of person pictured in this verse? The Christian who comes into close contact with such a foul minded individual can only be amazed at the folly of such a life. Selfishness, filth of mind and suggestive speech seem to be the only goals such persons have. They fail to realize the end of the path they have decided to travel. The judgment will be a day of horror for them when they come to realize they have arrived at the pits of hellfire.

The saddest part is that they only laugh at what they call the piousness of those who try to warn them of the danger.

EPH 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

No, definitely not! When one has truly learned of Christ, and learned from Christ, walking in the darkness is unthinkable. The Son of God came and suffered in this world where spiritual darkness is so prevalent in order that men might catch enough of a glimpse of the glory of God and walk in the light of God's grace.

EPH 4:21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

It is highly possible that one might hear of Christ without having been taught by him. The masses of mankind know of the coming and teaching of Jesus. The problem is that they have decided to ignore his great sacrifice and continue on their way downhill.

It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps. The truth which leads to everlasting life and joy is found by hearing and believing that which has been provided from above. The proud and haughty do not find the truth which is in Jesus. They are much too busy basking in the limelight of their own accomplishments.

One may find truths of the physical universe through scientific investigation. He may discover truths of the social world by human logic. But when that man decides he can find the ultimate truth without the help of the Son of God, the man is destined to failure. The ultimate realities are found in the Light of the world.

EPH 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Paul thus urges those to whom he writes to turn from the path of darkness and walk with Jesus Christ. The word “conversation” here includes more than speech. It has to do with the entire manner of life of the man. The old man is destined to die in

judgment as he is eternally separated from God. He who is wise will put off that old man of sin as completely as one would take off an overcoat. The burden is too heavy to carry. Pride and lust have so rotted the old life that it must be thrown away.

Satan's enticements must be seen for what they are; poison to the soul. As one would put a bottle of deadly poison aside, one must abhor the lascivious, greedy and filthy way of life forever.

EPH 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

How important the mind is in obedience to He who created it! Thought always precedes action. Before one puts off the behavior of the old man and replaces it with that of the new man, he must first determine this will be done. We are informed that "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" The body is but an instrument that brings thought into action.

When one clears out the filthy and vile thoughts there is then room for the pure and the holy. However, it is very much necessary to kill the old man first.

EPH 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Paul writes as if the patterns of life we demonstrate to others are like suits or dresses. When we put on the new man which is created in the image of God, as it was meant to be in the beginning, we have dressed ourselves properly for the approval of God.

I have just finished preparing a Bible study lesson on Dorcas. This kind and generous lady made garments for others less fortunate than herself. Jesus has done the same. Because of His labor, we have the garments of righteousness and holiness which we may wear as we serve in the Kingdom of God. The new man is created in righteousness and holiness. We must see that he continues to wear that same clothing.

EPH 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every-man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Jesus is the Way, the Life and the TRUTH. One who finds it necessary to lie betrays the Master. He also threatens the safety of the other members of the church or body of Christ. It would be disastrous for the nervous system of the human body to break down to the point where one could not depend upon that which the five senses told him. It is far more serious when one member of the church cannot depend upon the truth of what another member says.

We make far too many mistakes when we do not realize our statements are false. The damage done when deliberate lies are told could cause souls to be lost eternally. Let us speak truth and abhor the lie.

EPH 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Do you like to be in the presence of angry persons? Anger very often takes away the ability to

see things clearly. It seems strange to read from the pen of an apostle that there are times when anger is to be displayed. Our best example is that of the Lord when he found the money changers in the temple and drove them out. He was angry. Did he sin? No, he did not! His anger was righteous anger. God was being insulted by the money changers. Jesus had not only the right, but also the responsibility to let his disagreement be known in very certain terms. That is what he did. There are also occasions when each of us should be angry. Let us be careful to control our anger; to be angry when we should, and to refrain from anger when such would be sinful.

The second part of this verse is equally important with the first. Festering anger may well build up until it bursts forth in violence. The Christian must do his best to deal with the source of his anger quickly and not allow it to consume him by leading him to irrational conduct and damage to both himself and others.

EPH 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

Where would the Devil like to have a place? Obviously, he would like to abide in the mind where he could control the behavior. He has no right to a place in either the mind or the actions of the believer in Christ. The best way to see that he does not force his way in is to fill life with that which is holy. We are told to resist the Devil and he will flee from us.

EPH 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working

with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

The recipe for taking away the place of the Devil is now to be shown. First, one refuses to steal that which belongs to others. Satan expects just the opposite. He delights in seeing men abuse the good name of others and seeing them steal other's possessions. To avoid the temptation to take possession of the belongings of others, it is best to work with our hands so we may give what we have to others rather than taking what they have for ourselves.

The Devil's child believes life is best when he can obtain that to which he has no right. The child of God delights in offering that which he has to the one who has less.

EPH 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

When one bad apple is placed in a barrel of good ones, the rotten apple may soon spread its corruption to the entire barrel. It is the same with corrupt speech. Curses and blasphemy are contagious. One person hears another use such terms, and soon the air is blue with foul language.

The tongue was meant to be used for uplifting speech. We can instruct others by giving them useful directions. We may comfort them in time of trouble.

We may commend them for good works. In contrast, we should never use our tongues in idle gossip, in boasting or in insults.

EPH 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit of God is concerned with the life of every person, particularly with that of the Christian. When the man of sin is cast off and replaced by the man of God, the Lord marks the newborn Christian with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit endeavors to aid that new man to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Father in heaven. When the Spirit is forced to observe a departure from the good life, he will be grieved. We have help from the Godhead when we commit ourselves to a Godly life. Why would any person choose to break that commitment and endanger the soul?

EPH 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

What horrible words these are! These are the kinds of thoughts and words one might not be surprised to hear if he stepped into the meeting place of a gang of hardened criminals. They are certainly not the kind to be expected pouring from the mouth of God's innocent children. Each word is

so graphic within itself that it hardly seems necessary to pluck each one out by itself to place it under a magnifying glass.

I spend just a moment on the last of the list. Malice is the attitude of one who desires the discomfort of another. It is the exact opposite of love. Love desires the well being of the one loved. Malice desires the destruction of the target of the malice.

EPH 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Note the relationship between verses 31 and 32. Rather than demonstrating malice and revenge toward one who has offended him, the Christian is instructed to be tender hearted and forgiving. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ extends a forgiving hand to those who have once walked with Satan and then repented, we are expected to follow his example. God is willing to forgive the penitent sinner for the sake of Jesus. If Jesus was willing to leave heaven and spend over thirty years attempting to save the souls of men, God honors Jesus desire.

The fact that the last part of this verse says God **has** forgiven you indicates the verse is addressed to Christians who have turned away from the hateful ways of sin. God is ever ready to forgive. But man must first believe, repent and obey.

Chapter 5

EPH 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Chapter divisions in the Bible sometimes lead us to ignore the continuity of thought. The word “therefore” in this verse ties the meaning of next few verses to that of those in the latter part of chapter four. Paul was talking about new life in Christ. It is a life that avoids bitterness, wrath and anger. It is a life modeled after the loving care demonstrated by the Father in heaven.

As children of earthly parents are expected to be imitators of those parents, God’s children are expected to be imitators of Him. We often see little girls walking around in their mothers high heeled shoes. We see little boys sitting behind the steering wheel of the family car, pretending to drive the car. Each is imitating a parent. Let us, who are the spiritual offspring of God, follow Him as dear children.

EPH 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Jesus Christ is our older brother. The example of love he placed before us is the supreme one. He gave his life as a sacrifice for our sins. None can do more.

But what does the sweet smelling savour have to do with Christ’s having given himself for us? In

the Old Testament one type of sacrifice was the burnt offering. When an animal was offered as a burnt offering the odor ascended toward God. This reminded the people that God would be pleased with the sacrifice. In a sense, it would smell good to Him.

Jesus body was not burnt upon an altar at the time of his death. Still, his death served as that which would take away the stench of sin from God's nostrils and allow Him to be pleased with the forgiven sinner.

If Christ loved us enough to offer himself and die for us that we might live as his spiritual brothers and sisters, we ought to walk in his footsteps. Walking in the love of God will cause men to seek out purity and holiness.

EPH 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Not only is the child of God expected to seek out purity, he or she is to avoid even the appearance of evil. God's children will abhor that which is evil and will cling to that which is good.

The list of evils which follow nearly turn one's stomach. It is not pleasant to even explain them. But such seems necessary to fully understand what Paul is telling us about the behavior of faithful Christians.

He informs us that even the thoughts and speech of the child of God should completely avoid certain paths. The sins he is about to list are inconsistent

with the beauty of holiness that should characterize the saints. A saint is one who has been separated from evil and has been dedicated to a walk of purity. His soul shines with the light of God's own glory. When the sins listed in the present verses are allowed to invade his life, that person becomes ugly in the sight of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the true brethren. The word "unbecoming" is no doubt a mild way of telling us of the appearance of such a person in the eyes of the Heavenly Father.

Fornication is sexual immorality of various kinds. Prostitution, lesbianism and adultery are certainly included. Even sexual relations with animals would be a form of fornication.

The word uncleanness has to do with anything that causes the mind or soul to be impure. It is related to our English word "catharsis". We take a cathartic to purge ourselves of undesirable materials in the bowels. To be clean is to be free from guilt.

Covetousness is an attitude of greed. It always seeks more than what it presently has, even if that means taking what belongs to others. A covetous person may seek another man's wife, another man's reputation, or another man's possessions, etc. This person is never satisfied.

EPH 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Filthiness is that which is base and dishonorable. It seems to be related to the other two words in this verse, and probably has to do with filthy speech and

dirty stories.

Foolish talking is taken from a Greek word meaning moronic. Wise speech is uplifting and constructive. Foolish talking is wasteful and destructive.

Jesting is translated from a word meaning “to turn.” It would seem we are dealing with cute double meanings that turn men’s minds from that which good and pure to that which is impure and evil.

EPH 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

God’s faithful children have an inheritance waiting for them in eternity. When a child of God turns away and becomes rebellious and walks in the ways of Satan rather than in the way of Christ, that individual forfeits the right to enter into the mansion prepared for him. The kinds of persons described in these first few verses of chapter five are proving they do not seek God’s inheritance. God will not force it upon them!

EPH 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

It is altogether possible for the Christian to be led from the path of righteousness to ways of sin

and death. Empty and vain words are often the culprit. The Word of God is full of meaning, and durable lives may be built upon such words. The lies of Satan and the deceiving speech of his disciples cause the crumbling of lives. When we turn from following the instructions of the Father and are caught up in Satan's deceit, we are building our house upon the sand. It will fall; and great will be the fall of it.

Disobedient children of earthly parents are chastised by their parents. God's rebellious children are chastised by their Heavenly Father. Sometimes they turn away from Satan. Sometimes they continue to follow him. Those who follow him to the end of life will burn forever along with Him.

EPH 5:7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

This verse is the conclusion of much which has just been discussed. God's children simply cannot afford to share in unholy thoughts, speech or actions. There is far too much at stake. The inheritance of God is too precious. The fires of hell are too horrible.

EPH 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Paul is addressing his words to the Christians in Ephesus. However; his instructions are apt for all Christians, in every place and in every age. Before we became a Christian, every one of us had to forsake

the darkness of sin and turn to God. “*God is light.*” The contrast should be as night and day.

The apostle goes a little farther than just saying Christians “walk in the light.” He says “*Ye are light.*” As I have spent many an hour in the classroom as a science teacher, I always enjoyed talking to the students about light. Light may be emitted, or it may be reflected. When Paul tells the Ephesians “Ye are light.”, is he telling them they are producing light, or is he telling them they are reflecting light. The moon reflects the light of the sun. The sun emits the light which the moon reflects.

Malachi predicted that the “Sun of Righteousness” would arise with healing in his wings. The Sun of Righteousness is obviously Jesus Christ. He is called also the “Light of the world.” Do I, as a Christian, shine with light reflected from that which Christ emitted? Or do I actually emit light myself? Let me remind you that Christ abides in the Christian. Not only is Christ called the “Light of the world.” His disciples are also told they are the “Light of the world.” Christians are the body of Christ. I leave the reader to answer my question. Does every Christian emit divine light, or does he only reflect it? Whichever is the case, Christians are to provide the light of truth to all who come near them. They are children of light. They must show the characteristics of their Father.

EPH 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

The children of God have been born of the Spirit of God. Since this is true, they are expected to be

activated by the Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit. The person who has determined to be obedient to God must have three important qualities. He must be good to his fellow man. He must be righteous in the sight of the Father. He must love the truth and teach it to others. The more extended list of the fruit of the Spirit is given in Galatians 5:22-26. The reader should compare the two lists.

EPH 5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

The word “proving”, as used here, means to put into action for the purpose of finding it’s value. No man has ever given himself to the production of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and found that fruit to be rotten. Truth, goodness and righteousness bring fulness of life. These are related to the light of the world. By applying them to life, one can see where he or she is going.

EPH 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Fellowship is a precious word when the fellowship is with dedicated members of the family of God. It is just the opposite when that fellowship is with those who revel in feasting upon the works of the flesh that Satan offers. Those works only contribute to the darkness in the soul. They leave the sinner stumbling around with no direction. The Way is in

the Son of God.

Not only must the obedient child of God refuse to participate in the works of Satan. He must make it clear to others that these works are deadly. The love that Christ had for the world must also be seen in his brethren. We can hardly see others lost in the mire of sin and go on carelessly about our business. Such persons must be taught, if they will listen. It is not easy to tell some men they are wrong. They will accuse you of hypocrisy, and of conceit. Those accusations must be faced. There will be some who will listen. Those who will hear must hear!

EPH 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

It is likely that most true Christians have little idea of the depths of Satan. They have not experienced such depravity, nor have they had the least desire to develop any appreciation for the works of the Devil.

Evil men often think their words and actions are hidden, and that they can wallow in their sin without being observed. There are no secrets to God. The eyes of Jehovah travel to and fro, taking in everything, everywhere. He knows both the good and the bad.

Christians would do well to cast these things out of their mind. Even talking about them may well infect the soul. Let the Christian think on things that are of good report.

EPH 5:13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

I believe this verse logically follows the previous one. Those things that are done in secret are made apparent by the light of God's Word. The Christian who lives a pure life causes the darkness to be seen for what it truly is. When one turns on the light in a dark room, it is possible to see spots on the carpet and cobwebs in the corners which could not be seen in the dark. The light allows the honest seeker for the way of life to see it more clearly and follow it more nearly.

EPH 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Death and sleep are two different things. Why does Paul tell those who are children of Satan to both awake and rise from the dead? The answer is not that difficult. Death is the absence of life. The sinner has, by his sin, separated himself from Christ. Since Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the sinner is spiritually dead. Since Christ is the Light of the world, the sinner has chosen the spiritual night rather than the "Sonshine" which God has provided.

The best advice to the sinner is to leave the darkness of his spiritual grave, and to walk in the light of God's Son. Christ would like nothing better than to see each of us blinking our eyes as we move

from the darkness of sin to the brightness of God's glory.

EPH 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

The word “circumspectly” is made up of two words. It means to walk around watching carefully. The foolish man does not look where he is going. He does not see the end of the road. He does not see the pitfalls on every side. He soon finds himself in the quagmire of the spiritual hogpen, as did the prodigal son.

The wise man finds that the beginning of wisdom is in the fear of the Lord. He has looked around carefully and accurately sized up the dangers. He has determined to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, for he knows there is safety and joy in keeping the commandments of his Creator.

EPH 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

It is true that we are surrounded by evil in this world. Our days are spent in the midst of wickedness and suffering. We must therefore be particularly careful to see that our own lives do not add to the wickedness. They must be of such nature that the wickedness will be reduced rather than multiplied. Time is precious. We do not have the right to waste it. Every moment must be dedicated to the spread of the Kingdom of God and to the salvation of souls, including our own.

EPH 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Paul has just described the condition of the foolish man. His readers must not fall into that category. They must be wise by becoming knowledgeable concerning the will of God. Then, knowing what God desires from them, they may avoid evil and walk in the light.

EPH 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Christians should feel good. But they should not feel good because they are drunk on alcohol. This is the escape route for the world. The sinner deliberately goes out on the town to either have a ball, or drown his sorrows. The effect is usually temporary and is replaced later by a hangover.

Your present writer once tried this method of drowning sorrow. He had failed several courses in his first semester at a university. His money was gone. His hope of becoming a chemical engineer was gone. Life appeared to be in shambles. A fellow student who roomed in the next room suggested an answer. It was Saturday night. Why not go out and paint the town. One couldn't feel any worse. Tomorrow would be better. The trouble was that it did not work that way. After drinking several mugs of beer, I began to feel a bit dizzy. My companion asked me if I thought I could make it back to my room. I said yes. By the time I got to the room I was

deathly sick. I vomited once. Then I got my trash can and sat on the edge of the bed with my head bent over the trash can and vomited until I thought my stomach was going to turn inside out. That never happened again; nor will it ever happen again. I was very fortunate that the amount of alcohol I consumed over that short period of time did not actually kill. It has done so to others on numerous occasions.

The above verse speaks of “excess” of wine. Does this mean one can drink alcoholic beverages in moderation and still be pleasing in the sight of God? After all, Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. We probably should remember that city water purification, such as we have in the twentieth century, was not available to the people of Paul's day. It could be safer to drink wine than to drink water. A very small alcohol content in the wine would act as a preservative.

Today we have supplies of pure water. There is no need to protect ourselves from bacteria by drinking alcoholic beverages. Some are convinced that a small percentage of alcohol has a calming effect and aids one in making decisions under pressure. The trouble is that many who begin in moderation end in rehabilitation facilities. They have increased the consumption to the point that the alcohol has become their master. It is best today to avoid even the appearance of evil.

Rather than to be controlled by alcohol, it is infinitely better to allow one's mind and body to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Do you want to feel

good? Hear the Word of God. Obey the Word of God. Live and walk in holiness, and life will be at it's sweetest.

EPH 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Taverns are known for rowdy singing. The songs are not of the type that would encourage one to praise God. They are quite the opposite. Taverns are also known for fighting and shootings. The Christian desires no part of such.

How does the Christian go about it to find his or her excitement and joy in life. It is done by singing praises to the Lord in heaven and to one another. Christians do not have to fill their minds with alcohol. They have far more permanent types of joy.

Note that nothing is said about playing on musical instruments. The instrument God desires that Christians use is the vocal cords. It is true that David instructed those of the Old Testament to praise God with stringed instruments, organs and cymbals. It is only necessaary to read Psalm 150 to verify that fact. But the contrast between the use of such instruments in the Old Testament worship, and the complete absence of any such mention in the New Testament, should alert us to the fact that God has altered His instructions. Where God has been silent, let us also be silent.

EPH 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Thanks for all things includes more than we normally consider. Let us give thanks to God for food, clothing and shelter. Let us thank Him for our friends and loved ones. We should also add thanksgiving for whatever degree of health we may have. We need to express our gratitude for the Bible and the establishment of the Church. The hope of heaven should add to our praises and glorification.

All this thanksgiving must be offered to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those who offer public prayer and do not include a statement that the prayer is offered in the name of Christ. When asked about such an omission, the person who has been praying will explain that he did not have to say the prayer was in the name of the Lord for it to be so. Whether or not that be the case, the one who leads a congregation in prayer should make clear that the approach to the throne of God is made through Christ. Otherwise, some will fail to recognize Christ as the Mediator between God and man. We dare not approach the throne directly. Jesus must carry our requests and thanksgiving.

EPH 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Christians are not to compete with each other for power over their brethren. We are not in a contest

to see who can exert the greatest pressure upon others. To the contrary, the Christian is to take pride in service. He that would become master of all must first become servant of all. The Lord himself gave us the prime example. We are all to serve each other. God is the supreme lawgiver. We are all subject to Him.

EPH 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Now we reach a very controversial point in our investigation. Wives are told to be in submission to their own husbands. A very large percentage of women at the time of this writing take issue with this command. They see no more reason for submitting to the headship of their husband than they see reason for the husband submitting to his wife.

Now if God had not had a special reason for adding this statement immediately after the previous requirement that all Christians submit themselves to one another, He could have simply left this verse out. Both men and women will be damaged if the will of God is ignored.

In the beginning God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone. Therefore, he made a help (meet, or suitable) for him. The man was not made for the woman. The woman was made for the man. Secondly, it was Eve who first fell victim to the seducing power of Satan in the Garden of Eden. Whether or not we agree with God's method of doing things, it behooves us to honor His methods. His mind is infinite. Ours is limited.

We need also to pay attention to the fact that the submission is to be to her own husband. Multiplied thousands of divorces have occurred because wives were willing to submit themselves to a man other than their husband. Neither God nor the husband will ignore that kind of behavior.

EPH 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

The head of the body gives directions to the rest of the body. A body that does not operate in harmony with the directions given by the head is not liable to be very efficient. We have all seen cerebral palsy victims who suffer from random movement of various parts of the body which the head has not ordered. The Christian wife is to depend upon her husband for leadership.

There is, however, another side to this matter. Along with her submission, she has the right to expect love and provision for her needs. The husband who does not offer such love and provision will probably find that his wife does not submit as well as he might like.

EPH 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Many members of the church do not submit themselves to Christ. That is not as it should be.

Christ prayed in Gethsemene that the will of the Father be done. Every Christian must have the same attitude toward Jesus. Every woman should seek to be subject to her own husband. It is highly unwise for God's order to be dismissed as if it did not exist.

This may be the best place to add a note of observation. Every man and woman are different from every other. No two wives have the same makeup. No two husbands have the same abilities or personalities. The circumstances of each individual home are also different. Consider, for example, a woman who lost her mother when she was but ten years old, and whose father was not a strong leader. It may well have been necessary for her to develop the ability to make decisions which would not have been required if her mother had remained alive and her father had been a natural leader. It will be much more difficult for the woman pictured here to allow her husband to be the major decision maker in the home.

Some men have grown up dominated by fathers with strong wills. Practically every move they made as youngsters was dictated by their father. When such a man marries a woman of the type mentioned in the above paragraph, the difficulty in the wife being submissive to her husband and the husband taking the leadership role will be very, very difficult for both. It may be that a husband has been stricken with either mental or physical infirmity. In such a case the woman may find it necessary to make almost every decision. God knows every individual case.

This does not excuse either that wife or that

husband from striving with all their being to respect the will of God. The husband must seek to lead. The wife must seek to be submissive. God will help both to fill their role.

EPH 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Loving husbands are much easier to submit to than are those who are inconsiderate. Women like to be appreciated. They like to know the meals they prepare are delicious. They like to know they are attractive to their husbands. They like to know their husband is grateful for clean shirts and socks, etc. Most women will respond to the love which their husbands demonstrate. The husband who truly loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it will normally discover that his wife is also willing to give herself to him.

It is a true statement that in their own sense, both the husband and the wife submit to the happiness of the other. Such a loving relationship will give us some taste of the marriage which is to take place in heaven when Christ returns to take his bride.

EPH 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

In the long ago, Ezekiel reprimanded Jerusalem for her unfaithfulness to God. He pointed out that

God had taken Jerusalem when she was a babe. He had swaddled her and washed away the blood. He had clothed her and fed her. She had become very special to Him. Yet she had been untrue. Jesus has done the same for the church. He has come to this world which is stained with sin. He has offered himself in order that it might be made clean.

It is most amazing that those who deny the cleansing power of water baptism will evade the power of this verse. The church is cleansed when men are taught by the word of God that they must “Arise and be baptised and wash away their sins.” Some are determined to make baptism that of the Holy Spirit rather than of water. Immersion in water is necessary to honor the commandments of Jehovah.

The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing only after he had gone down into the water, and then come up out of the water. The evidence is overwhelming that one is first taught by the Word. Then that person is lowered into the watery grave of baptism and raised to walk in newness of life. Baptism in water is essential to the cleansing of the soul.

EPH 5:27 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.

Christ does not desire a filthy bride. Every member of the church must be cleansed, even during the betrothal period. Not only must each member be made clean at the time of baptism, each member

must continuously be washed clean from day to day by the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. The spots and wrinkles of sin must be removed.

There are no ugly women at the time of their wedding ceremony. They may be thin or thick. They may be black, red, white or yellow. But each is beautiful as she is presented to her new husband. The church must prepare herself and keep herself pure as she awaits the meeting with Christ when he returns.

EPH 5:28· So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Men and women do not fully realize how much they are one until the mate is taken away. I feel terribly sorry for either the man or the woman who has enjoyed a proper husband and wife relationship for a period of time and then that relationship has been dissolved by death or other factors. A hollow place is produced in the soul of the individual. It is as though a part of the person themselves had died.

That man who realizes how much his wife means to him will not fail to love her as he would his own body. He will care for her and let her know of his affection constantly.

EPH 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Few men would deliberately take a knife and cut off their arm or leg. Failure to care for a wife is just as serious. That man who does that has cut her off from himself. Christ did everything within his power to demonstrate his love for the church which is his future wife. No one could ask for more than the Lord gave in leaving heaven to live and die for his own.

EPH 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

When Adam saw Eve in the Garden, he declared that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The Christian is to be so united with Christ that Christ could make a similar statement. The members of our body are to be instruments of righteousness. Although there are many members, they all belong to one body; that is the body of Christ. He has purchased us. We are to do his will.

EPH 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

How interesting it is that the flow moves back and forth in this discussion of a man and his wife versus Christ and his church. At one time Paul is using the husband and wife relationship to urge service to Christ. Right after that he may use the love Christ has for the church to teach husbands to love their wives.

As far as the Biblical record goes, Paul was not a married man. He had to receive the truth he taught through revelation from the divine mind. No matter what the source of the truth he presented, it was truth and it must be recognized as such.

I wonder how many times this verse has been quoted during a wedding ceremony. The passing of a ring from the groom to the finger of the bride is but a symbol. The uniting of the two as one flesh is all important. Fathers and mothers of the bride and groom must take a step backward and allow the new union to thrive.

EPH 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Yes, most truly there is a mystery in marriage. Man and woman were made for each other. Each comes a little closer to all they can be when cooperating with the mate. It is far more than a matter of the bedroom. Every phase of life is to become interwoven to such an extent that one plus one equals more than two.

God has arranged it so that the work of preparing souls for heaven lies in the hands of the church. Christ does not accomplish it alone. The church does not accomplish it alone. Working together, Christ and the church promote the glory of God and make possible the multiplication of the souls who are bound for heaven.

EPH 5:33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as

himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

If men and women would take to heart the truth taught in this verse, families would be happier and spiritually healthier. If the members of the church would submit themselves to Christ as their true love, souls would be snatched from the power of Satan and prepared to live with the Bridegroom in eternity.

Chapter 6

EPH 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

The apostle continues to spell out the proper relationships between leaders and followers. He changes now from the husband and wife relationship to that of parent and child. Parents are far more experienced than young children. They are more aware of the dangers and also of the opportunities facing their offspring. An insubordinate child is foolish and wicked. The behavior of parents who allow such rebellion is also under question. It is true that some children are more difficult to keep under control than others. But, it is the responsibility of parents to do their very best. God is the example. Even God, in all His wisdom and power, finds some of His offspring incorrigible.

There must be a partnership in order that children obey their parents. The parents must be willing to instruct and chastise. The children must be willing to receive parental discipline. When such is the case, children will mature to some day take their own place as godly parents.

EPH 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

Some of the ten commandments were accompanied by promises of blessings if they were observed. This commandment to honor one's parents

stood first in line. Few people enjoy seeing a child sass his parents, belittle them to the parents face, or even before others.

As a general principle, honoring parents leads to the improvement of life while growing up and also after the child moves on into adult life.

EPH 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Misery of many kinds is the lot of those who mock their parents. Obedience to parents generally leads to security of mind and health of body. The obedient child of a concerned parent is not usually shot in a bar room brawl. A host of other advantages come to that child who has honored his parents.

EPH 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It makes the obedience of a child much more palatable. The parent who continually harps at children, or applies unjustified physical punishment, is asking for trouble. As soon as the child is able, retaliation is likely to occur.

If the parent respects the instruction of the Word of God, the child will be shown firmness tempered by tender love. The nurture and admonition of the Lord can be found in the book of God. It can also be discovered in Bible study and worship services of the church. Parents who love their children will

see that they receive spiritual food and loving guidance.

It is important to add that the book of Proverbs repeatedly spells out the importance of firm discipline for children. This goes so far as to include corporal punishment. Notice the following admonitions.

PRO 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

PRO 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

PRO 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

PRO 23:13-14 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

EPH 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

There were a very large number of slaves in the Roman Empire in the days of Paul. How was a converted slave to change his life? Should he refuse to honor his previous master on earth? After all, Jesus said not to call any man “Master.” There is

but one Master and he is in heaven. There would be a temptation for the slave to deny any responsibility toward obedience to he who owned him. The apostle urged the slave to continue in obedience. In fact the slave was to obey his earthly master as if he was obeying the heavenly Master.

Slavery is a thing of the past in most parts of the world in these latter days. Men do not own other humans. Christianity has had such an impact that it is nearly unthinkable to envision buying and selling one's fellowman.

It is true, however, that we still have employer and employee relationships. Much of what Paul wrote to the Ephesian slaves is quite appropriate to this relationship. The Christian employee will respect his employer and will perform the tasks he or she is assigned to the very best of ability. He will not say he will do a job, and then fail to do it. When that job is done right, Christ will be pleased with him.

EPH 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Eyeservice is obedience as long as one is within eyeshot of the boss. If the boss is truly Jesus Christ, then one never gets beyond his ability to evaluate the service which is being rendered. Anyone who has ever worked alongside others in a factory or in an office will have seen numerous examples of lazy and irresponsible employees who cheat their employers out of a sizable fraction of the time they

should be working. The dedicated Christian will not act in that manner.

EPH 6:7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

It is refreshing to find one's self in a workplace where men whistle while they work. A cheerful attitude makes it easier on the worker who demonstrates that type of attitude, and also on those who labor with him. God will be pleased.

EPH 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

The faithful employee will usually be rewarded by his employer. If this is not the case, he need not feel that he is unpaid. Whether he is a slave or whether he is simply an employee, God is aware of his service and he will be rewarded. This reward may have to wait for the afterlife, but God has promised, and He keeps his promises.

EPH 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Must the newly converted Christian slave owner immediately free his slaves and begin paying them

wages? It is interesting that the Bible does not give such a command. In the case of Onesimus and Philemon, we find that Philemon was instructed to receive his runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother.

One reason why there is no commandment to free the slaves might well be that most of them could not have made it on their own. It could have been cruel treatment to turn them loose and expect them to survive. The master was expected to treat his slaves as a part of the same family of God to which he belonged. This would remove vicious threats and would promote patience toward the slaves. One day both the slave and the master are due to stand before the Creator in judgment. Each will wish to be treated justly and lovingly.

EPH 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Paul now moves to another topic. There is a need for far more strength than any man has available through his own efforts. Each Christian needs to reach out for the mighty outstretched arm of God. There is power and might in Jehovah which is more than sufficient to meet any and all enemies, even Satan himself. Without God, we will be defeated. With God, there is no force in heaven, on earth or under the earth that is capable of conquering us.

EPH 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Going into battle with a powerful enemy without the proper weaponry and protection is utter folly. This is especially true when the enemy is as wily as the Devil. God has provided everything the Christian soldier needs. But God is not going to force one to wear it, or make use of it. If we make use of that which has been made available, we will be victorious. If we fail to use it, we will be overcome.

The word which is translated into our english word “wiles” is the same word from which our english word “method” comes. Satan uses planned methods in his rebellion against the Creator. If we are going to stand tall and firm against him, we will need all the help we can get.

EPH 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

It is one thing to enter into competition with our fellow humans. It is quite another thing to enter into spiritual combat with “The Prince of Darkness.” It seems clear from the scriptures that the Devil is the leader of an entire company of angels who had the audacity to rise up against Jehovah. Angels can be far more powerful than we who are limited to bodies of flesh and blood. At one time a single angel of God was responsible for the death of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. This took place in one night. Does the reader truly think he can fight against the Devil and his angels without the help of God’s armor?

EPH 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Partial armor will not accomplish spiritual protection. It will require every piece that has been offered to us.

When is the “evil day” mentioned here? Is it the judgment day when the wheat and the chaff are separated, or is it some other critical time in the history of man, or in the life of the individual? I believe it is both. The evil day is the one in which it is necessary to stand before the assaults of the Devil. Jesus had an evil day when the Devil tempted him early in his ministry. He also had an evil day when he was placed upon the cross. Every man has days in which it requires special strength to avoid being devoured by the roaring lion.

But what is this whole armor of God which allows the Christian to be victorious over such awesome power and wickedness as the Devil presents? The apostle is ready to give a list of items.

EPH 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

First, we have the girdle of truth. Paul was, at the time of this writing, very likely chained to a Roman soldier who was charged with seeing he did not escape. All the apostle needed to do was look at

that soldier to see each of the items he desired to discuss. The soldier would have had a girdle around his waist that held the rest of his apparel in place. In the case of the Christian soldier, that girdle is truth.

If one searches through the New Testament to find all the occurrences of the word truth, he will find more than was expected. For instance, “Thy word is truth.” “The truth shall make you free.” I am the Way the Truth and the Life.” “Walk uprightly, according to the truth”, etc.

The neglect of truth is fatal. God warns of this danger over and over. We must not “*Turn our ears away from truth.*” We must not “*err concerning the truth.*” We “*must not lie against the truth.*” We must not “*resist the truth.*” Otherwise the Devil will find us to be easy meat.

EPH 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The promotion of peace is a powerful means of opposing the wiles of Satan. He takes great satisfaction in pitting men against God, men against other men, and men against themselves. Christ is the “*Prince of peace.*” Wherever the Devil reigns, chaos follows. Wherever Christ reigns peace is possible.

The feet of a person allow that person to move from place to place. God has charged that His soldiers go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. To whatever degree this is done, there will

be peace on earth, good will to men.

There are some few who refer to themselves as Christians, who appear to take delight in stirring up controversy. There is, of course, a time for controversy. However, when such controversy occurs between brethren, the Devil must flash a broad smile!

EPH 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

The shield of the Roman soldier protected his heart. One of the techniques of battle in those days was to shoot blazing projectiles at the opponent. When one of these darts sunk into the chest of a warrior, he soon died.

Paul declares that faith is like a shield against that which would penetrate into the heart of a Christian. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. This faith not only includes confidence that God exists, that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son, and that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Faith results in obedience to the will of God. If that is not true, that faith is dead. Living faith will allow the Christian to ward off the most vicious attacks upon his soul.

EPH 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

The soldier wore a metal helmet upon his head. This protected the brain which gave orders to the

rest of the body. In the case of the Christian, salvation serves somewhat the same purpose. The word “salvation” can be thought of from two different viewpoints. First, there is the salvation from sin which comes through the initial obedience to the gospel. When one hears the gospel, believes in Christ and His way of life, is willing to confess Christ before men, and is baptized into Christ; that person has put on the helmet of salvation.

But there is a second consideration. The blood of Christ continually washes away the guilt of sin from the Christian who strives diligently to do the will of God. Such a Christian looks forward to the day of judgment in confidence. This is the ultimate level of salvation. Even if his life must be laid down in service to the Lord, this person will resist the Devil and find that this enemy flees away.

Now we take a look at the last of the items making up the whole armor of God. This is the “Sword of the Spirit.” The previous pieces of armor were of defensive nature. This one is offensive. “The Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword.” With the Word of God one may conquer death, hell and the grave. Jesus Christ lived the Word. The Bible records the Word. If the reader has any doubts whatsoever concerning the importance of the Word of God, let him read the one hundred seventy-six verses of the one hundred nineteenth Psalm. Perhaps the heart of that great Psalm is found in verse one hundred five. *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”*

EPH 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Prayer must accompany every effort in contending with the forces and wiles of Satan. We must give thanks to God for his blessings. We must praise Him for His greatness. We must request His assistance as we serve Him. The Holy Spirit acts as an intercessor who takes our prayers before the Father and translates them into meaningful thoughts when all we are able to produce are unutterable groanings.

Our prayers are not to be selfish. We must be as concerned with our fellow saints as we are with our own welfare. Paul told the Ephesians to make supplication for their brethren and sisters. This was not to be done once and then forgotten. It was to be a matter of perseverance. Pray without ceasing!

EPH 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

The apostle thought of others first, then of himself. He could have wallowed in self pity. He wanted ever so much to be released from bondage in order that he might make contact with those who either had not heard the gospel, or who needed further instruction. He did not ask the Ephesian

Christians to pray for his comfort. He asked them to pray that he might be permitted to open his mouth and preach the truth to as many as possible.

I firmly believe Paul's pray was answered. How many do you suppose have read his letter to the Ephesians? Though confined physically in that Roman prison, God made a way for Paul to preach to multiplied millions from there to eternity.

EPH 6:20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

An ambassador is one who delivers messages for another. Paul had been charged by Jesus Christ to serve as apostle to the Gentiles. He had given himself completely in the attempt to obey his charge. Now he was an ambassador in prison. He longed for the time when he could once more speak out to others boldly and clearly. He was released from that first imprisonment and immediately went to work in presenting the mystery of godliness to his fellow man. Finally, he died for his efforts. We hope to see him in person after the judgment.

EPH 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

Paul was concerned about the confidence of the saints in Ephesus. They needed to know his situation.

Was he still alive? Had he been tortured? Was there anything they might be able to do for him? To soothe their minds, he decided to send one of his companions to let them know of his condition.

This messenger he sent to them was Tychicus. Very little is said about Tychicus. There are some persons in the Bible such as Moses, David and Jeremiah about which we have much detail. There are others who are listed very briefly. Nevertheless, would it not be nice if on your tombstone, or mine, the words above could be truly engraved?

A beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord.

Tychicus would carry the information about Paul's welfare to those in Ephesus.

EPH 6:22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Although Paul was in misery, he still thought of the distress of those who wondered about him. They needed comforting and he did his best to diminish their concerns

EPH 6:23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the source of both peace and love. Christ provided an example of a life built upon both peace and love. All three persons of the Godhead desire these blessings for all who live in obedient faith. Faith cometh by hearing the Word of God. When faith comes to life, men will fear God and keep his commandments. Peace follows.

EPH 6:24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

It has been suggested that since Paul usually mentioned grace before mentioning peace, he must not have been the writer of this book. They contend that the author of Ephesians was very probably one who knew Paul well and wrote in the same style, yet slipped here and reversed the order of these two words. How foolish! Paul very often changed wording arrangements when presenting the same thought in different letters, or even in the same epistle.

A second objection is raised as to Paul's authorship of the book. In most of his letters, Paul gave a list of names to whom he wished to send greetings. Such a list is missing from Ephesians. This is no more valid than the previous argument. The apostle spent some three years in Ephesus. He must have had a multitude of dear friends. If he had included all of them in a list at the end of this book, the list of names could well have been as long as the book itself.


Grace is that which God provides above and beyond what man deserves. If we received that which

we deserve, every man would be lost in hell forever. Because of the grace of God, men may be forgiven of their sins and live eternally in God's presence, and as heirs of the Father in heaven..

Some translations render this thought of love in sincerity as "love incorruptible." The word sincere is taken from a word meaning "without wax." Cracks in furniture were sometimes filled with wax to hide the defects." Furniture that had no wax was said to be sincere. Hypocrisy is abominable in the sight of God. A corrupt love is unacceptable to Him. Let us each see that we love God with a love that is sincere and incorruptible.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barclay, William, *Letters to Galatians and Ephesians*, Philadelphia, Pa., The Westminster Press, 1958.
- Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1949.*
- Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary with Critical Notes*, Vol. 3, New York, N. Y., Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1823.
- Coffman, Burton, *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Houston, Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977.
- DeHoff, George, *DeHoff's Commentary*, Murfreesboro, Tenn., DeHoff Publications, 1991.
- Elkins, Garland & Warren, Thomas (Editors), *The Book of Ephesians, (Getwell Church of Christ, Lectureship Book)*, Lebanon, Tenn. Sain Publications, 1984.
- Hodge, Charles, *Ephesians*, Carlisle, Penn., Banner of Trust, 1856.
- Johnson, B.W., *Johnson's Notes*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate Company,
- Shephard,, *Commentary on New Testament Epistles, Ephesians*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate, 1939.
- McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible*, Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.
- Wiersbe, Warren W., *Exposition Bible Commentary*, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1989.
- Zerr, E.M., *Bible Commentary*, Raytown, Missouri, Reprint Publications, 1954



**The Book Of
PHILIPPIANS**

Introduction

- I. The city of Philippi
 - A. Dates back to about 350 B.C.
 - B. Founded by, and named after Philip II of Macedon.
 - C. Was a strategic city on a major trade route.
 - D. Was very wealthy because of its gold mines.
 - E. Had a mixed population of Greeks and Romans
 - F. Philippi is today an empty city—A theatre and a temple.

- II. The founding of the Philippian church
 - A. Is revealed in the sixteenth chapter of Acts.
 - B. Paul had seen the vision at Troas.
 - C. Not enough Jews present to support a synagogue.
 - D. Lydia and other women seem to have been important.
 - E. The church was founded about 52 A.D.
 - F. Three people are very important in the record.
 - 1. Lydia
 - 2. A little slave girl
 - 3. The Philippian Jailor

- III. The book of Philippians
 - A. There is no doubt about Paul being the author.

- B. The letter was probably written about 62 A.D.
- C. Paul was extremely close to this church.
- D. They had been very liberal in their gifts to him.
- E. This is a personal letter and not easily outlined.
- F. It is one of four prison epistles, Ephesians, Phillipians, Colossians and Philemon.
- G. It mentions the idea of being in Christ and in the Lord often.
- H. It is sometimes called the “Epistle of Joy.”
 - 1. It reveals the importance of joy in the Christian life.
 - 2. It tells of a man who found that secret.
 - 3. It presents the source of joy as being “In Christ.”

Chapter 1

PHI 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Unlike many who fill highly recognized positions in the brotherhood of Christ, Paul and Timothy saw themselves as servants rather than as objects of glory. They were delighted that they had the privilege of serving both Jesus Christ and his brethren.

The Roman Catholic church confers sainthood on only a chosen few who are exalted above others. That was not the case with the apostles. They considered every Christian to be sanctified or set apart to holiness. Sainthood is granted by God to every man and woman who leave the world to follow the Messiah.

Note that if anyone is to be paid special credit, it is the bishops and deacons. These are very special servants of God. They receive recognition because of their shepherding of the flock and as a result of their concern for the needs of their brothers and sisters in the family of God.

PHI 1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words grace and peace are very special in the vocabulary of the Christian. Grace is the outpouring of God's blessings upon us, even when

we cannot possibly repay him for his favors. There is no way we humans can earn our way to heaven. We must be careful to dedicate ourselves to the service of God as completely as we are able, knowing all the time that he offers us infinitely more than we deserve. He will then see that we receive whatever recognition may be due.

There is a peace that surpasses understanding for the one who commits his life to the Lord and Saviour of mankind. Though all the world may lie in confusion and despair, the true Christian is able to see beyond the chaos to the eternal realm. He will pray for God to give him this day his daily bread. In the meantime he feeds upon the spiritual bread of life, and he drinks of the living water which leads to everlasting life. He can live in peace, and he can die in peace.

PHI 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Dear reader, can you look back with fond memories upon a host of fellow servants in Christ who gave you comfort and encouragement in righteous living? There are so many that most of us could never even begin to call off their names. The apostle and his companion had been uplifted on every hand. They were grateful for the assistance they had received and wanted those who had blessed their lives to know of that gratitude.

There are some persons who have a particular knack for making the lives of those around them a little brighter and happier. We should all make an effort to emulate such kindnesses.

PHI 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

What can we do to repay such kindness? One very important thing is the offering of prayer in behalf of our benefactors. Peter once said, *“Silver and gold we have none, but such as we have we give you.”* The prayers of godly men and women are worth more than silver and gold. It should be a source of joy to each of us that we can request God’s blessings to fall on those who have helped us along the way to heaven.

PHI 1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

A fellow is someone we share with. There is no level of sharing that stands higher than the brotherhood of the saints in Christ. The Philippians had helped Paul forward from the very first time he came into contact with them. They had been constant in that fellowship. Fair weather friends are worse than none. We must be able to depend upon others and know they will be there when they are needed. This is more true with respect to members of the body of Christ than it is in business, sports, or any other activity of life.

PHI 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

The apostle went even farther than to remember the past loyalty of the Christians at Phillipi. He added that he expected the same good works which they had manifested in the past would continue to be shown until the very judgment day. Would it not be nice to be able to say the same about those we have worked and worshipped with in our own lives? And would it not be nice if others could say the same about each of us?

PHI 1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Paul is obviously a southerner! He uses the term “you all” a number of times in his letters. His English is quite accurate. He wants to include each and every one of those who have befriended him in his efforts. To have them in his heart is to love them sincerely. He had suffered much persecution through the years. Not everyone appreciated his preaching of the Lord.

He had found it necessary to argue in defense of his positions. He had demonstrated the power of God through miracles which he had done in their midst. He had enriched their lives and they, in return, had enriched his own. The blessings of God had come upon all of them because of their mutual concern for one another.

PHI 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

The apostle was by no means shy of standing before the God of heaven and declaring his love for them. The bowels of Jesus Christ are the inner feelings which Jesus showed toward those who walked with him. Paul's love was patterned after the love Jesus demonstrated when he came to earth from heaven to seek and save the lost.

PHI 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Love is one of those things that never ceases growing. The more we know about faithful fellow Christians, the more we will love them. The more we love them, the more we will give them honor and assistance rather than criticism and downgrading.

PHI 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Some people are constantly looking for the rotten side of others. They have great difficulty seeing the upright and honorable aspects of God's children. A juicy piece of gossip is more important to them than a good deed. We ought to share with the apostle in his prayer that all might approve righteousness in

our Christian friends. That will encourage them to do even more than they have done in the past.

This does not mean one must overlook dangerous weaknesses of fellow Christians. That would also be wrong. It does mean we are not to overlook the fine things in our brothers and sisters. We must acknowledge them and express our appreciation.

PHI 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

The Lord told us that by their fruits you shall know them. An evil tree does not bear good fruit. A good tree does not bear evil fruit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit should be abundant in the lives of every servant of God. When this is true, God himself is glorified and praised. It is one thing to stand with uplifted hands and cry out, "Glory to God in the highest." It is quite another to back up those words with corresponding actions. It is better to "show me" than to "tell me."

PHI 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

The Christians at Philippi need not weep over the persecutions and imprisonment of Paul. God has his own way of causing all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called

according to his purpose. As long as the discomforts he had endured had caused the spread of the gospel, Paul had no regrets whatsoever. In addition, he wanted the saints at Philippi to know how proud he was of the effect his persecution had produced in the ones who had observed his difficulties.

PHI 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

Some prisoners disappear into the woodwork and no one hears much about them. They serve their time and are released without incident. It was simply not that way with Paul and those who were imprisoned with him. His preaching of the gospel of Christ made him a marked man. He was known from the lowliest of the guards to the highest of the rulers. The word spread from his quarters for miles around. My friends, how does your life speak out when things are going downhill for you? If you stand strong in the face of adversity, there will be those who recognize your faith and seek to copy it.

PHI 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Strong faith is contagious. It spreads from person to person very effectively. I know a Christian lady who has faced many severe problems in her life.

Rather than wilt under the pressure, she has been an example for her friends.

I know of a man who has been crippled for much, if not all of his life. At one time I was in a speech class with him. When it came his time to speak, those of us who did not know him wondered how he would manage to keep us from thinking more about his crutches than about what he had to say. He surprised us beyond measure! He leaned his crutches against the side of the rostrum. Then he placed the weight of his body upon his two elbows as he smiled at us from behind the stand. Then he said, "Classmates, I have a distinct advantage over the rest of you. Nobody is looking out the window!" That was not the last time I saw the faith of Granville Brown demonstrated. He has read the Bible through once a year for well over fifty years now. More than that, he has lived it out daily. He has taught young preachers in a school of Bible and Preaching. His faith, and that of others like him will never die. It will live into eternity.

PHI 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

It is a hideous thing to think that there are those who would promote envy and strife by their preaching. Yet it is a reality of life. Some get satisfaction from seeing others in confrontation. If they can point out a weakness in another preacher it does something for their own ego. This is about

as wrong as one can get.

Then there are others who lend a helping hand to their fellow preachers. It is a pleasure to be associated with the latter. It is pure misery to try to work around the wickedness of the former.

PHI 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Paul put a magnifying glass on both of them. He did not appreciate the efforts of those who did their best to destroy what he was trying to do for Jesus. They were seeking to find differences which they could point out to any who would listen. Paul was an extremely righteous man after his conversion. It would have been difficult to find serious flaws in his character. Nevertheless, these preachers of contention would find any point of weakness they could and hold it up. As a matter of fact, they did not have to find real weaknesses. They could manufacture imaginary ones if they found it useful in their opposition to the apostle.

One of the things his opponents did was to accuse him of ignoring the law of Moses. The Jews were particularly concerned that the keeping of the law would be neglected by those who united themselves with Christ. Envious preachers found this a point where they felt they could attack him.

PHI 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

In contrast to those who preached envy and strife, there were some wonderful and solid preachers who understood the importance of sincerely caring for their fellow workers. They knew full well that Paul was both a good man and an able man. They would give him whatever help they could.

PHI 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

The hypocritical and envious preachers were actually still spreading the word about Jesus Christ. As long as that was the case, Paul would rejoice. He had done so before and he would continue to do so. It would have been preferable for all to work in unison for the Master. But if this could not be, then one must still look on the bright side. Throughout history God has shown his ability to take those who were not what they should be and turn their efforts around to his advantage. Don't make him have to do this with your life. Incorporate the finest of Christian qualities into your thoughts, words and deeds and let God work with you rather than around you.

PHI 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

The same two tools Paul spoke of here, will still work. When things are not going well we must not

forget to tap these sources of strength. Prayer is our way of communicating with God. We can thank him for his past and present assistance. We can also request that he continue to guide and provide for us in the days to come. The supply of the Holy Spirit is forever abundant. It will never run short. Study your Bible. Jesus promised that if he went away he would send a Comforter to take his place. This promise did not cease with the death of the last apostle. Although we will not bring the dead to life, we can fill ourselves with the Word of God, and thus with the Spirit of God. We can burst with spiritual energy and let it cause us to shine for Jesus.

PHI 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

The apostle was confident that he would never be sorry that he had taken the course he did in becoming a Christian. He was ready to live for Christ, and he was ready to die for Christ. His body was but an instrument by which he could serve the God who gave it to him. If it meant that he could use his body to preach the wonders of his Lord, he would. If it came to the point where he would be murdered for his faith, he would. We have every reason to believe that is just what happened. We hear much more about his life than his death. But, it is likely

that his life was taken from him by enemies of the cross.

PHI 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

This life is but a testing ground for the Christian. Those with good judgment will observe that the best pattern of living while here on earth is God's way. It may be difficult at times. It may appear that the losses outweigh the gains. The writer to the Phillipians knew better.

Not only is the way of righteousness the better way in this life; it is infinitely better when Christ comes back to receive his own in glory. Then the gains will become clear to both the good man and the evil man. Heaven will surely be worth it all.

PHI 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Should one wish to live, or to die. To live is to have the opportunity of service to God. There will be fruit produced. This fruit will be found in the spiritual life of the one who remains alive, and will also be found in the lives of those whom he persuades to accept the Christ. It is not easy to make such a choice.

PHI 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Paul wanted so desperately to close out his sufferings and his hard labor on earth. Few men have endured more than he did. When he began to list the difficulties we begin to wonder if he will find them end of them. He desired to die and be with his Lord. As far as his own comfort was concerned the advantages were all on that side of departing and being with his Lord.

PHI 1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

However; if God desired that he remain alive and in this present frail body, he would accept the will of the Father. This would result in the conversion of sinners and the strengthening of the saints.

PHI 1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

Realizing that his continuance on earth would assist others was sufficient to satisfy the apostle. He would be happy to have a part in the growth and happiness of his brethren.

It is a very pleasant matter to see the development of those you have caused to devote their lives more fully to God. It has been your author's opportunity to teach in a school of Bible where young and developing Christians were preparing to preach, or to serve the Lord more fully. Watching the service

of these individuals later on brings joy to the heart. Both the teacher and the taught share in the profits. No one knew this better than Paul.

PHI 1:26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Paul wanted to see the Christians in Phillipi again. He knew very well that they would also be delighted to see him. There was still much work which could be done through their partnership in Jesus.

PHI 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

The word “conversation” in this verse is not limited to speech. It encompasses every activity of life. When the New Testament uses this word it is talking about the general behavior of a person. The Christians at Phillipi were being urged to let their light shine for the Master. Only a godly life adorns the beauty of the gospel. If Paul was able to come to them again, he wished to find them living faithful lives. If he was not able to come to them, he wanted to hear only the finest report of their activities.

He prayed for their unity of mind and spirit. Christians who stand in each other's way and

interfere with the efforts of their own brethren are a pitiful sight. They will answer to God for their indiscretion. It is good to behold Christians working together in peace and harmony.

PHI 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

The adversaries may make life difficult for the moment. But, they cannot stand before the face of God. Their rebellion against the Creator will ultimately cause them to be told to “*Depart from me. I never knew you!*”

The fate of the faithful is quite a contrast. There is forgiveness of sin today and hope for heaven tomorrow. The slight interference cause by the enemies of Christ will someday be forgotten in the bliss of the everlasting day.

PHI 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

It is almost as if Paul considered it a blessing to be permitted to suffer for his Lord. The Phillipians were reminded that if men took the opportunity to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, they could then count it all joy to suffer for his name.

PHI 1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The conflict which he mentions here is that conflict between the desire to live for Christ and the desire to close out the hardships here and live in the presence of God and His Son for ever and ever.

Chapter 2

PHI 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

This is not really a question from Paul. The answer is obvious. There is consolation, there is comfort and there is fellowship of the Holy Spirit in Christ. There is also deep felt concern as well as mercy toward others in the family of God.

PHI 2:2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

It would make Paul very happy if he found the saints at Phillipi working together as a unit. This was the same thing that Jesus prayed for when he asked that all might be one, even as he and the Father are one. It is a wonderful sight when we find the members of Christ's body forgetting self and promoting the cause of our Lord.

PHI 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

This verse causes one to recall the prayer of Solomon when he became king of Israel. Because Solomon asked for wisdom to rule well, and did not ask for wealth and fame, God gave him the wisdom

for which he asked. But then he gave Solomon both wealth and fame. Personal glory is not the chief purpose of the children of God.

It is likely that God has not changed. The one who genuinely seeks the good of the entire church of Christ will be assigned glory and honor in the sight of God. That is far more important than any accolades which men may heap upon us.

PHI 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

The perfect example of this is the attitude of Jesus. He gave everything for you and I. He did not have to do this. He could have remained in the heavenly places. He left heaven and came for us.

PHI 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

This is one of the greatest passages in the entire Word of God. The mind of Christ was filled with love. Love is the willingness to sacrifice one's own welfare for the good of that which is loved. It is the exact opposite of selfishness which seeks its own gain at the expense of any and all.

PHI 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

None of us are able to completely comprehend what it was like in the Godhead before Christ became

a man. There are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are told that no man has seen God at any time. The closest we can come to seeing God is to look upon the body of Christ. As one of the three in the Godhead He saw fit to show how God intended for man to live when he created him.

Jesus was God. One of his names is Immanuel which means “God with us.” He had every right to consider himself equal to the other two. All three are God. There are three, and the three are one.

PHI 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

How far down from his original glorious position did Jesus come? He came all the way from the grandeur of heaven to be born into the family of a carpenter, and to be placed in a manger from which the cattle fed. Later he was to say that the birds have nests and the foxes have holes, but the Son of man had no place to lay his head.

PHI 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus did not immediately set out to claim a high position among the kings of the earth. When Satan offered him all the kingdoms of earth if he would

fall down and worship him, Jesus replied that his worship would be directed toward the Father in heaven.

Even to the time of his death he continued to humble himself. He could have called ten thousand angels to deliver him. Instead, he went to the cross as a lamb, dumb before the shearer. His entire life was a living sacrifice. When we are told to present our bodies as living sacrifices, we are not asked to do anything he did not do before us.

PHI 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

What is the reward for such humility? It is to be exalted by our Father. As a result of his willingness to obey the will of the Father, even to the death on the cross, Jesus received a crown of glory and a name higher than any other name pronounced by the lips of men. Remember, friends, God has told us also that if we are faithful unto death he will give us a crown of life.

PHI 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Not all men bend the knee before the Christ. That condition will not last! The time will come when those who are too interested in self exaltation to humble themselves before the name of Jesus will bend that knee. But then it will be too late. The

everlasting darkness will have come and they will be cast into it.

PHI 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Not only will the proud knee bow, but the boastful tongue will then cry out in anguish for Christ to save them from eternal damnation. They will then offer their confession, but again it will be too late. The confession must be made while the time is ripe. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation!

PHI 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Some persons must be constantly watched in order to assure that they will do that which they know is right. When the boss is away the mice will play. While Paul was with the Philippian Christians they had observed the commandments of the Lord. He is now concerned that they not cease to render obedience while he is absent from them. A word of commendation is usually wise. By offering his commendation of their past behaviour, Paul expected them to move on with their loyal service.

Are works essential to salvation? This verse seems to indicate that they are. We certainly cannot work

hard enough to earn a place in heaven. This would require perfect effort and absolute obedience at all times. We will not do that. Nevertheless, we will not arrive in heaven if we do not work. Even Jesus said, *“I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. For the night cometh when no man can work.”* Much is said about the necessity of diligent labor in the vineyard of the Lord. Do not disappoint the owner of the vineyard.

PHI 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

When the Christian does service to his or her fellowman he is showing forth the will of God. We can do no work without God's help. When the chance to work for Him is seen it is wise not to overlook it. Let us seek to please Him in all things. Doing anything less only places our eternal home in jeopardy.

PHI 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

Nor should we be constantly complaining when we do the work of God. Human employers do not appreciate the worker who comes in with a frown on his face and keeps it there until quitting time. There is good reason for the Christian to rejoice in the service of his Maker. It is unthinkable that any of us would serve begrudgingly.

PHI 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

There is no man who has not sinned and come short of the glory of God. The only way one can be blameless and harmless is that his soul is being constantly cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. When that is the case he walks with his Father, and in contrast with the wicked of the earth, the true Christian shines as a beacon in the night.

PHI 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Many of these Philippian Christians were no doubt converted by the preaching of Paul. Above all things, he desired that they let their light so shine that those about them would be enabled to see and hear the truth. If that did take place the apostle could feel that he had not wasted his time and energy while he was with them.

PHI 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

The obedience and service of the saints at Philippi was, in a sense, the sacrifice which Paul had poured

out before the Lord. When they were faithful he delighted in being able to present them to his God above. Both he and they could rejoice together.

PHI 2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Just as he rejoiced in their godly lives, they should rejoice along with him that they were a worthy sacrifice.

PHI 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Paul could not be everywhere at once. He would like to have been with those he had converted in many places. Since this could not be the case, he sometimes sent a companion to represent him. This time it was his faithful brother Timothy. Timothy would provide a double portion of satisfaction. He would tell the Phillipians of the welfare and achievements of Paul. He would also determine the condition of the Phillipians and relay them to the apostle.

PHI 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

There were others who could have been sent, but his confidence in the rest did not measure up to that which he had in the young man Timothy. Timothy

would show the same concern for their spiritual welfare as Paul himself would have done.

PHI 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

He uses the word “all” here. Let us hope this is just a figure of speech for the majority. Did everyone who traveled with Paul seek only their own profit? Surely not! At other times he gave a hearty commendation to several others. Still, Timothy seems to have stood very high in his estimation as an unselfish messenger.

PHI 2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

At times Paul spoke of Timothy as his son in the gospel. He did this because, as a son is expected to be obedient to his earthly father, Timothy had been dedicated in his service to the one who had begotten him in the gospel.

No earthly father ever thought more of his own son than the apostle did respecting this son in the faith. He could hardly have given Timothy a higher commendation than he did here.

PHI 2:23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Paul was a prisoner at the time he wrote this epistle. It was difficult to know what the future

held. He could have lost his life. He could have been released. As soon as he felt confident of the turn things would take just ahead, he wished to send Timothy to them.

PHI 2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Even though there seemed to be little hope that he might visit with the Phillipians himself, he felt that God would somehow intervene in his confinement and make it possible for him to visit with them in person.

PHI 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

As was stated above, there were other companions of Paul that demonstrated a Christian concern for others. When he used the word “all” he certainly had not included Epaphroditus. This was a good man who had worked with him and had worn the Christian armor with dignity. Although Epaphroditus had seen to various needs Paul had while in prison, he would now leave Paul behind and carry greetings to Phillipi.

PHI 2:26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

Epaphroditus had been sent to Paul from Phillipi. While there and ministering to Paul's needs, he had become ill. The Phillipians were much concerned about him because of his sickness. Epaphroditus knew they were worried and that made him sad and heavy hearted.

PHI 2:27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

The man was not only ill. He nearly died. God was with him and allowed him to recover from his sickness. This had been a great relief to Paul who would have been full of grief if the man had lost his life.

PHI 2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

We use the word "carefully" a little differently than Paul did at this spot. What he means is that he cared greatly for both the Phillipians and for Epaphroditus, and therefore he sent him back to them.

PHI 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

The Phillipian Christians were expected to be happy when their messenger returned to them. In addition, they were expected to hold the man high in respect for the service he had performed in assisting Paul.

PHI 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

It was Paul's belief that Epaphroditus would not have contracted the serious illness which almost killed him if he had not come to help him. Since the Phillipians could not all come to him, they had sent him to see that all that could be done for Paul would be done.

Chapter 3

PHI 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

I wonder how many times Paul used the words joy, rejoice and rejoicing in his communications with his fellow Christians. In spite of the fact that he was in danger constantly, he never forgot the fact that he was blessed beyond measure to have been forgiven of his persecution of Christians and to have been made an instrument in the salvation of others.

He often repeated the same admonitions and instructions to those in various places, and even to the same persons he had previously instructed. This did not bore him. He knew it was necessary. Any effective teacher knows repetition is priceless. It is very easy to feel that once a fact, command or promise has been stated, it should have been absorbed to perfection. It is not so. All of us have had the experience of failing to pay proper attention, or failing to remember that which we have been taught. This should cause us to realize the importance of telling the old old story again and again.

PHI 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Today we normally consider a dog to be a pet. We feed our dogs, pet our dogs and generally enjoy

having them around us. It was not so with the Jews. Dogs were scavengers who frequented the garbage dumps and sometimes attacked humans who came too close to them. To the Jew you could not place a much worse name on a person than to call him a dog. We sometimes hear men call others “sons of bitches.” We can understand from such language just how Jews felt about dogs. Now the Jews felt they were the chosen people. Gentiles were often referred to as dogs because they were not Jews.

Paul turns this around and calls those who have snapped at him and his teaching dogs. The faithful were to be careful of these vicious people who sought to ruin all he was trying to do for Jesus. The word concision meant mutilation. The Jews thought that because they had been circumcised they were approved of God. The fact of the matter was that the spirit they had indicated they had no right to claim God's approval. Rather than bragging about their circumcision, they had really only mutilated themselves when they cut off the flesh of the foreskins.

PHI 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Paul's point was that the cutting off of the flesh of the foreskin meant nothing at all if the Jew had determined he would fight against Christ and his disciples. The true circumcision which would be approved in the mind of God was the cutting off of

the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

PHI 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

He went on to say that if there ever was a Jew who could claim preference as one of God's chosen ones, he qualified. If salvation came about by works of the fleshly man, or of human merit, he stood first in line. He could not think of any person who had better credentials through the keeping of the law of Moses than he had.

PHI 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

He had been circumcised physically on the eighth day of his life, as the law commanded. He was an Israelite who could trace his ancestry back to the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jacob's son Benjamin. If anyone could claim to have the proper blood lines, he could. Even more, he belonged to the religious group known as the Pharisees. You will recall that the Pharisee stood and prayed thanksgiving to God that he was better than other men. They were sticklers for keeping the letter of the law, though not always that careful about the spirit of the law.

PHI 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

And Paul had put every ounce of energy he had into persecution of the Christians because he felt the church was opposed to the law of Moses. His life had been dedicated to the keeping of the finest details of that law.

Again we come to that strange word, blameless. No man keeps the law perfectly. He is only speaking of an extremely high degree of obedience.

PHI 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

All of those qualities he had listed might have provided him a high reputation among men. They would have been gain from a strictly human standpoint. They all disappeared into thin air when he considered what Jesus Christ offered to him. The best of his efforts did not punch his ticket to heaven. The life and death of the Saviour provided what all of his efforts could not provide. His sins could be forgiven.

PHI 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Everything of which he had been so proud in the past was worthless when compared with the blessings offered through faith in the Son of man. The apostle could have all of those things taken from him and he would not object, if he could claim salvation through the Saviour.

His language is about as strong as it could have been made. One would not pay a very high price for manure, particularly that which he had produced himself. We take great care to cleanse ourselves of any trace of such filth. Paul's past honors could be easily parted with if he could find the freedom from sin which came through the Lord.

PHI 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

His own human pedigree, and his personal righteousness which he sought through the keeping of the law of Moses meant nothing. The righteousness which came by faith in Jesus was most precious. He knew the Jews needed to learn that very valuable lesson.

PHI 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Above all things the apostle wished to know Christ in the very deepest sense of the word. He

wanted to feel the power of Christ, lifting him from the condemnation of hell to the hope of heaven. He wanted to offer himself as a living sacrifice. He was willing to walk with Jesus through the valley of the shadow of death if that is what it took to be approved by the Father in heaven.

Christ died to this world and rose again. Paul was quite willing to give up the things of the world in order that he might be lifted up to spiritual life in his Master. This would, of course, mean believing in him as the Son of God, repenting of his sins, being willing to constantly confess him as God's Only Begotten Son, and being baptized in water and raised to walk in newness of life.

PHI 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus was raised from the grave to die no more. Paul wished to follow in his steps. He desired to be among those who will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be told to "*Enter into the joys of the Lord.*"

PHI 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Was he perfectly confident that he had already done all that he needed to do to someday hear those precious words? Not at all. He very well knew that

the Christian life is a constant challenge. Satan never gives up. But Paul was going to give it all that he had in the effort to reach the goal which God had set up before him. God wanted him to be with him in eternity. Paul was going to try to be there.

PHI 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

The one who has been forgiven of his sins by being born the second time by water and the Spirit is clean when he rises from that watery grave. He must then ever press forward. He must not look back and long for human achievements and fleshly satisfactions. They must be replaced by stretching out the hand to join it with that of Christ who forever reaches back down to earth to lift us up to glory.

PHI 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

It is as if every Christian is running a race. At the end of the race is a trophy representing everlasting life. One runs the race, not to brag about his own achievements. He runs it because he desires with all of his heart to receive the prize which only God can give.

PHI 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing

ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Once forgiven of our sins through the blood of Christ, the Christian must forever maintain that same mind which Christ had. Just as he pressed forward to going home to his Father, we must also press on. We should constantly study and pray in order that any shortcomings which we have may become evident and be avoided. No Christian should ever close his or her eyes and ears to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. They are the directions for attaining the mind of Christ. If we reject their admonitions, we may well stumble and fall before we reach the prize.

PHI 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

If the Christian has already traveled a portion of the way in an acceptable manner, he must be very careful not to risk losing what has been gained. Christians must labor together, following the same instructions and keeping the same goal in all of their minds. By uniting our efforts, each of us may finish the course.

PHI 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Could Paul have been instructing his fellow Christians to follow him rather than to follow the

Saviour? I think not. It was Paul who said men were to follow him, only as he followed Christ. They were to carefully observe the different walks of men. There were some who walked with Christ, as Paul did. They were to be joined with in the Christian race.

PHI 3:18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

There were others who did not walk as they should. Paul's heart bled for those who fought against Christ, and also for those who were in danger of being influenced by them. They placed both themselves and those who followed them in serious danger.

PHI 3:19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Whoever these persons were who worshipped their belly and who took pride in shameful actions, they were moving directly toward the perdition of their souls.

I remind you that Paul was not talking about those who boldly proclaim there is no God. He was talking about persons who claimed to be God's servants. They were hypocrites of the highest order. They attempted to use the mercy of God as a license to sin. These are the real "dogs" Paul was talking about at the beginning of the chapter. They only

mutilated their flesh in circumcision. They had not the slightest idea what was meant by circumcision of the heart.

PHI 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Conversation here means a complete way of life. The genuine Christian uses his body as an instrument in the service of God. He will not produce the works of the flesh. He will ever seek out the example of Jesus and try to live as he lived.

PHI 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Christ was given a fleshly body for his use while he was here on earth for those three and one half years. Then, when he rose from the grave, he received a new and glorious body which will never grow old. If we, as Christians, run the race to the very end, we will find that this present fleshly body will one day be replaced by a spiritual body similar to his.

Christ, in his new and glorified spiritual body has the power to bring every enemy to his knees. When God created the universe, all things were subject to him, then sin entered and chaos arose. In the end, chaos will turn to order and sin will be confined to the outer darkness of the pit of hell.

Chapter 4

PHI 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Again and again Paul addresses the saints at Philippi in affectionate terms. In this single verse he calls them dearly beloved twice. He calls them brethren, longed for, joy and crown. What more could he say to reveal his love?

It is a matter of tremendous concern to Paul that they remain steadfast in Christ. These are the precious gems of the Father in heaven. It would be a tragedy of the highest order if they were to be lost. The more faithful the saint, the more important it was to the apostle that they never turn back.

They were Paul's crown in that every convert and every true brother or sister in Christ served to adorn not only the Father, but also the great race Paul was running.

PHI 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Euodias and Syntyche appear to be two women who had been at odds with each other. Paul begs them to reconcile their differences and work together in the service of the Lord.

Women who disagree can do enormous damage to the work of a congregation. Often, their husbands have difficulty in healing the trouble. Each of the

husbands tends to side with his own wife. Others in the congregation then line up on one side or the other and major division exists. Time and effort are wasted in trying to regain unity. This time and energy could be used in the conversion of outsiders.

PHI 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

We do not know the identity of the true yokefellow. It could have been any one of a number of persons who had served with Paul. The plea is that anyone who has an intense interest in the progress of the Kingdom of Christ will do whatever is possible to promote unity among those who have personal differences.

The business of the Lord simply cannot flourish when his workers are working against one another. If our names are written in the book of life, we will someday find ourselves in eternal presence of others whose names are also written there. The heavenly city could hardly be the perfect place which has been promised if any sort of friction existed among its citizens.

PHI 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Paul wrote these words while in bonds. What a magnificent spirit is shown! He must have chafed

within like a wild animal which has been caged. Yet, he calls for others to rejoice. He uses the word twice for emphasis.

Of all men, Christians have reason to rejoice. Though racked with disease, oppressed by men, or deprived of possessions through earthquake or tornado, the Christian lifts his eyes to the day of resurrection and the glorification of the saints. All will be well then. He can wait.

PHI 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

The Christian is constantly in control of himself. There are many things which are proper when done in moderation. Those same things are wrong when done in excess. Examples are eating and working. Good health requires a moderate amount of work and a sufficient supply of food. When these are overdone, we have gluttony and workaholics. Various emotions are useful when found in moderation. When allowed to break through the bounds of moderation, these same emotions may destroy self as well as others.

There are two senses in which the Lord may be at hand. He is never far from the Christian. He knows both our mind and our works. It is well to remember this and act accordingly. But this phrase may also mean he is nearer than we might think in our future meeting. Death is unpredictable. We have only shadowy knowledge of what takes place just beyond. Nor do any of us know the day nor the hour of his coming. Paul was very likely thinking of the possible termination of his own life.

PHI 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

This verse is certainly not advice to act in reckless fashion. It has to do with the need to lay our burdens on the Lord. He will hear our prayers and appreciate our thanksgiving. He will not ignore our requests. They may not be answered in the fashion we desire. However, they will be answered in the sense that all things will work together for both the individual and the Kingdom of Heaven.

PHI 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There is a peace which reaches deep into the soul. When a person makes the decision to rest his life in the arms of the Father in heaven, he finds himself at peace with God, at peace with himself and at peace with his fellowman.

This peace is not just the absence of violence. Just a short time before the Lord was nailed to the cross, he said, "My peace I give unto you." He had the ability to look down from the cross and say, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" That is the type of peace one achieves in Christ. It is a peace which keeps the heart and the mind poised and competent.

PHI 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are

honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

The mind of man can dwell on vastly different classes of thought. If it constantly fastens itself on the impure, the unjust and the ugly, the actions of the individual gradually move in that direction.

If the mind is attracted to that which is pure, just and holy, the individual moves in that direction. It is a pattern of thought which edifies and builds one into the image of Jesus Christ.

PHI 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Paul had striven diligently to teach only those things which were true to the revelation he had received from the Godhead. Not only had he taught such things, he had also done his best to live them out in his life. How many of us could call upon others to follow our speech and actions in confidence that if others did so, they would be pleasing to Christ.

Thinking upon the things Paul had suggested earlier would be the key to securing the peace he described. Dear reader, do you enjoy peace of mind and heart. Paul had the secret.

PHI 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me

hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

The Philippians had no doubt cared for Paul's needs many times in the past, while he was with them. The apostle had to move around freely in discharging his duties to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He moved from city to city without calling any one of them his permanent home. While he was absent from them it was impossible for them to attend to his needs as well as when he was present.

I do not know why he says their care had now flourished again. Perhaps they had sent goods and love through a messenger. He excused them for any lack of action by saying he knew they would have done so if they had found the opportunity. The opportunity must have shown itself again after a period of inopportunity.

PHI 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Very few of us have learned Paul's secret. We clamour for more and more. Any new possession whets our appetite for another.

It is this writer's experience that some of the happiest people in the world are those who have the very least of this world's goods, prestige or power. They very often place their faith in God whereas those with much of this world's possessions tend to lean upon their own ability.

PHI 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul experience both extremes. There was a time when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel that he lived in the lap of luxury. He stood at the highest level of scholarly achievement. There were no enemies ready to stone him to death. He knew how to abound.

Later, he suffered every kind of trial and tribulation. He had been hungry, shipwrecked, stoned, beaten, and mocked. He knew how to be abased.

It might be a valuable experience for all of us if we could find ourselves in both abundance and in poverty at some time during our lives. We would then better understand both our potential and our limitations.

PHI 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

We must be careful with this verse. The Christian does not wish to do some things. There are other things which God has not placed in his power. What Paul is saying is that the Christian can do all things which God desires and expects him to do. In many cases this may be far more than the individual ever dreamed he might be able to do.

How does Christ strengthen his followers? No doubt it comes through his teaching and his example.

When one sees what Christ suffered, he then realizes how much he can also endure. When one sees what Christ accomplished, he also is encouraged to accomplish more than would have been possible otherwise.

PHI 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

What was Paul's affliction? Other places he spoke of a "thorn in the flesh." It is much more likely that the affliction mentioned here is his imprisonment. It appears that Philippians had sent some type of financial or material support. It is reasonable to believe he was fed adequately by the Roman government while imprisoned. Yet, he appreciated the concern of the Philippian brethren for his welfare. It was quite in line with their Christian profession.

PHI 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

Paul's memory is plain and clear. The Philippians had given him provisions from the earliest days of their association. When he left Macedonia for other areas, they were the only church which sent him on his way with aid. Men of Christian character do not forget those who have assisted them in the past.

The principle still holds true. Missionaries should remember with affection those who have made it possible for them to preach the gospel of Christ. They should be well supported. They should express their gratitude for that support.

PHI 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

We do not forget that the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonika. Paul may have been in dire need while in Thessalonika. He speaks of **his necessity**. This would indicate a very strong need for the help the Philippians sent.

PHI 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

It was not that Paul felt a personal need for aid. His motivation was that souls might be saved. This would bring a reward to the Philippians. God would see that it was posted to their heavenly account. It was not that God keeps a set of books on which we must have more assets than liabilities. It was that God is pleased when men support the saving of souls.

PHI 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Paul is delighted with his lot. Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with a gift from there. They were like pleasant perfume. The Philippians had given up personal benefits in order that others might have the gospel preached to them. This is living in the image of the God who created us. He was pleased with the Philippians. He will be pleased when we follow a like pattern.

PHI 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

As the Philippians had supplied the need of Paul, God would supply their needs. Now that is a pleasant thought. It is always well to invite God to shower his blessings upon us. The Philippians were poverty stricken when compared with God. His supply of riches is infinitely greater than any group of persons on earth. The Philippians could rest assured that they would receive far more than they had given.

PHI 4:20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Our giving is not for the purpose of self-glorification. It is for the purpose of glorifying God. We need not worry about being glorified. God will see to that in his own good time. Jesus spoke of allowing men to see our good works that they might glorify the Father in heaven. Those words are just as true today as they were when the Saviour spoke them.

PHI 4:21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

It is not sufficient for Paul to pick out a few of the most influential of the congregation in Philippi. He would have every saint saluted. He does not wish to neglect those who were faithful to him while in bonds either. Although not inspired, they were very important to the encouragement and support of Paul's work.

PHI 4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

How interesting it is that there are Christians in the very household of Caesar! Are they there simply because of Paul's personal efforts to convert anyone with whom he came into contact, or had Christianity made such inroads by this time that it had passed from person to person until it reached into the palace of the emperor?

One cannot help but wonder how the emperor felt about the presence of Christians in his own household. Roman emperors had not been all that friendly toward the Way, the Truth and the Life.

PHI 4:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was the all important ingredient in the Christian life. Though destitute of all other goods, the man or woman who

has placed themself under the approving eye of the Lord can never be truly poor. They may still abound, though like Paul they might even be under a prison guard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barclay, William, *Letters to Philippians and Colossians*, Philadelphia, Pa., The Westminster Press, 1958.

Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1949.*

Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary with Critical Notes*, Vol. 3, New York, N.Y., Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1823.

Coffman, Burton, *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Houston, Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977.

DeHoff, George, *DeHoff's Commentary*, Murfreesboro, Tenn., DeHoff Publications, 1991.

Johnson, B.W., *Johnson's Notes*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate Company,

Shepherd J.W., *Commentary on New Testament Epistles, Ephesians Philippians and Colossians*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate, 1939.

McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible*, Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.

Wiersbe, Warren W., *Exposition Bible Commentary*, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1989.

Zerr, E.M., *Bible Commentary*, Raytown, Missouri, Reprint Publications, 1954





**The Book Of
COLOSSIANS**

Introduction

I. The City of Colossae

- A. The city had once been very important.
- B. The Romans then redirected the road and Colossae dwindled.
- C. By the time of Paul Colossae was of lesser importance.
- D. Today it is difficult to be sure exactly where it was located.
- E. It was at the junction of Hebrew, Greek and Persian religion.
- F. It was located near Hieropolis and Laodicea, 100 miles east of Ephesus.

II. The founding of the Colossian church

- A. Many believe Paul had not seen the people in Colossae. See 2:1-2
- B. Epaphras may have founded the church there.
 - 1. He is called their faithful minister (1:7)
 - 2. He brought a letter from them to Paul.

III. The book of Colossians

- A. There is almost no doubt about Paul being the author.
 - 1. There was no question about it until the 1800s.
 - 2. The main criticism today is from source critics.

- a. It contains a number of Greek words only found here.
 - b. The number of “ands” is unusual.
 - c. Neither of these criticisms is a serious argument.
- B. The letter was probably written about 62 A.D.
1. It is one of the prison epistles, along with Ephesians, Philemon and Philipians.
 2. It was sent by the same messengers, Tychicus and Onesimus.
- C. There are many similarities to the book of Ephesians.
1. Of the 155 verses of Ephesians, 78 are nearly the same in Colossians.
 2. Many words occur in both, such as **wisdom, knowledge,fulness, mystery and Principalities.**
 3. It is sometimes called a “Twin epistle” to Ephesians.
- D. There are some differences, however.
1. Ephesians is more grand and oratorical, whereas Colossians is more forceful.
 2. Ephesians is more positive, simply presenting sublime truth, while Colossians is more argumentative, refuting error.
- E. Colossians is similar to Philemon in showing concern for Onesimus.

IV. The Purposes of the book of Colossians

- A. To present Christ as the supreme Son of God.
- B. To purify the lives of Christians.

- C. To remove intellectual snobbery.
- D. To divorce them from the law of Moses.

V. Important Topics Discussed in Colossians

- A. The nature of the Son of God
- B. The powers of darkness
- C. Singing as worship
- D. Principles of Christian living
- E. The importance of the cross
- F. How to be good soldiers for God
- G. Knowledge and faith
- H. The role of members of the family
- I. Scriptural authority

VI. A Brief Outline of Colossians

- A. Introductory Matters
- B. Doctrine concerning the Son of God
- C. Warnings concerning false teachers
- D. Exhortation to proper spiritual development
- E. Instructions to various classes:
 - 1. Husbands and wives
 - 2. Parents and children
 - 3. Masters and slaves

Chapter 1

COL 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

Paul did not speak as an ordinary man. He continually made it clear that the things he wrote were the result of the inspiration of God. Only on occasion did he report that what he was saying was his own opinion rather than the result of inspiration. He had been chosen by the God of heaven to be a spokesman for instructions in righteousness.

It was Paul's practice also to include the names of those who worked and sacrificed along with him in the preaching of the gospel. Timothy was one of those persons. Although Timothy did not have the same level of authority as Paul did, he was a fellow worker, and Paul was proud to mention his name side by side with his own.

COL 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The saints at Colosse were the recipients of the letter. A saint is one who has separated himself from the world and has dedicated himself to a holy and godly life. The saints are not a group of super Christians. Every faithful brother or sister in Christ is a saint. It is sad that some religious groups have taught that the word should only be applied to a

select few who are designated as saints by church officials.

Paul assures the saints at Colosse that there is grace and peace available from both the Father and the Son. Grace is unmerited favor which we do not deserve. It is only through the grace of God that men can be saved from their sin. No man deserves forgiveness of his sins. The peace which comes by having one's sins washed away is a peace beyond understanding. It is peace with God, and also peace with one's self.

The world around the Christians may be in utter chaos. It may include thievery, murder, sexual immorality and infidelity, as well as a host of other disturbing Satanic influences. In spite of this, the Christian may claim an inner peace. It was while Christ was being murdered that he looked down upon those who were taking his life and said, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

COL 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Like the apostle, all Christians should thank God and praise him for the existence of others of like faith. Fellow Christians make it much easier to fight the good fight of faith. We should not only thank God for them; we should pray earnestly for their physical and spiritual welfare.

COL 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

The faith of his brethren in Christ was especially precious to Paul. Also, when he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians, he included the famous thirteenth chapter of that book, emphasizing the preeminent place of love in the Christian's life. He declared that there are three vital characteristics of a Christian; faith, hope and love. Then he said the greatest of the three was love.

COL 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

We are in the middle of a very long sentence here. It began in verse three. Notice that faith, hope and love are all connected in this one sentence. When one hears of the life of Jesus Christ, and comes into contact with his teaching concerning the mansions that are laid up in heaven for those who are faithful into death, hope grows with the heart.

COL 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

Christ had commanded that the gospel be preached unto all the world. Paul later said it had been preached to every creature under heaven. Although the new world had not yet become a part of his thinking, it was true that the gospel had reached the world around the Mediterranean Sea. Wherever it had been taught there were those who

heard it gladly and began to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Colossians had heard it and responded positively. Having heard and heeded it they had at least begun to comprehend the wondrous love that God has for man.

COL 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Remember that the apostle was in prison at the time this letter was written. There were those who carried messages from him to the saints in various places. Messages were also returned to him from such places. Epaphras was one of those who had conveyed information in this manner.

COL 1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

What a source of satisfaction it must have been to Paul to hear that he had not been forgotten. Those whom he had taught in days gone by were still concerned about his condition. Epaphras was a diligent “mailman” who was no doubt a welcome sight when he brought greetings from those the apostle had once taught.

COL 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Does it truly make a difference that we pray for others to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, and that we gain an understanding of the truths he has revealed for our spiritual maturity? Paul thought it did! He went farther than to simply say he had prayed for them. He said we “do not cease” to pray for you.

We very likely have little grasp of the power of prayer. It would seem logical that once the gospel has been presented, the matter of absorption would be completely up to each individual and would not be subject to alteration by the prayer of a third party. But Paul prayed that these Christians might allow themselves to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. Let us follow his example and pray for others to increase their knowledge of God’s will. We may pray that those who are outside Christ might recognize their dangerous condition. We can pray that those who are already Christians might grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

COL 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

It is not enough to know the will of God. One must embrace it and walk within it. The prayer that Paul had prayed was that there be constant growth and increasing maturity among these Colossians. They must first learn the will of God. Then they must incorporate that information into their lives.

COL 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

This is spiritual strength rather than physical strength. God offers the same kind of power to us that he offered to Paul and the other apostles. That strength is sufficient to carry the Christian through every trial and temptation, even if it must be with one all the way through the valley of the shadow of death. Was it not Paul who said he had learned in all things to be content? The joy of the Christian life must be manifested when patience and longsuffering are required in high degree.

COL 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

How grateful we should be that God has made it possible for us to someday share in the inheritance that has been laid up for us. Only the saints, who walk in the light of Christ, may look forward to the enjoyment of that inheritance. Do you not wish to enjoy the blessings of being a part of God's family on earth, and then inheriting a fortune greater than all the gold and silver in the entire world?

COL 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Darkness prevents one from seeing truth. When one attempts to walk in the middle of the night

without a light it is very difficult to know what dangers are nearby. It is far worse when the darkness is spiritual in nature. Without the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ one may fall into many pits of temptation. It may seem that all is well when the exact opposite is true.

But one does not have to walk in spiritual darkness. The light of the Son of God shines from the heavenly places. All that is needed is for the man who gropes and stumbles to open the window of his or her heart and let the Son-shine in. When that is done the person can be translated from the terrors of Satan's kingdom into the brilliant flood of truth which illuminates every step of the way of life. Our gratitude to God should be never ending.

Heaven is often associated with glorious light in the holy scriptures. When the faithful saint arrives in heaven, some of those things which are so difficult to understand here will be made clear.

COL 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Jesus life was given in order that our life might not be extinguished. Just as the blood of the lamb protected the firstborn of the Israelites, causing the death angel to pass over without touching the precious life of the eldest child in that family, the blood of Christ, when applied to the heart of a penitent, baptized believer protects that soul from eternal damnation.

COL 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

In these mortal bodies men are not capable of gazing directly upon the glory of God. Since that is true, Jesus was sent to earth in order that we might see, to whatever degree it is possible, what it means to be godly. The word firstborn means two things in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to that which was born first in point of time. The eldest child in a family was the firstborn. But it can also refer to that which stands higher than all others. Christ is the firstborn of God in both of these senses. He is the first and Only Begotten child of the Father. He is also the one who stands higher in the family of God than anything in the entire creation.

COL 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

This verse sounds much like the first verses in the gospel according to John. There we find that *“In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made”*

Some of the created universe can be seen by human eyes. At the same time there are very important things that cannot be seen. Some of these

are physical things such as radio waves. Some of them are spiritual things such as the souls of men. Regardless of the category in which they fall, each and all of them were brought into being through the influence of the Word. Kings, Governors and Presidents exist for the purpose of serving him. Any time they fail to fill that purpose they have given up the reason for their being.

COL 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

He was here before all else. He stands above all else. Every natural law operates under his watchful eye. Every life is continued through his power. Without him all would die.

COL 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Particularly important is the fact that he has a body in the present world. We are all aware that Jesus had a fleshly body and lived in that body for about thirty-three years before he was crucified. When, however, that body was raised to the right hand of God in heaven, a new body was provided for him to do his work on earth. That body is his church.

Every Christian has become a member of that body. Each member of Christ's body is expected to serve according to his will. He is the mind which has the right to control every member of the body.

COL 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

A life outside of the body of Christ is empty. It has no meaning. It is walking in darkness and is headed toward hell. Only when the power and might of Jesus is allowed to penetrate us can we find the completeness and meaning that God intended for us. Without him all is futile. With him all is glorious.

COL 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

The cross was the greatest example of self sacrifice which ever appeared on earth. Rebellion and sin separated man from God. In order that man be brought back to God, a perfectly obedient man had to be sacrificed to make possible the cancellation of the sins of all other men.

May I take the liberty to go a step farther. This verse may even be saying that the blood of Christ is capable of removing the guilt of rebellious angels who repent. What are the things in heaven that may be reconciled by the blood of Christ? I will not be dogmatic, but it is a most interesting thought.

COL 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

To be alienated from God and to be an enemy to God is a complete disaster. It is impossible to fight successfully against the will of God. Sin kills. Christ can make alive again. Thank God, we can turn away from our wicked works of rebellion and allow ourselves to be returned to our Father's good graces.

COL 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight:

One day you and I will stand before the throne of God in the final day of judgment. We will either wish with all of our heart that we **had** made friends with him before that time, or else we will be deliriously happy that we **did** make friends with him. At that time there will be no way to retrace our steps and make amends. We will either hear the words, "Depart, I never knew you." or we will hear the words, "Enter into the joy of the Lord."

COL 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

This letter was written to Gentiles. Paul was given special responsibility to see that the gospel of Christ was made known to the Gentile world. He did a remarkable job. The Colossians heard it in his day. We are still hearing it today as we read such epistles as this one.

We will only be able to take advantage of the reconciliation if we continue to be faithful after we have been reconciled. It will do no good if we come to him and then turn back away like a dog returning to its own vomit.

COL 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

I would personally have a problem in rejoicing over being able to suffer for others. The thing Paul saw that made it possible for him to rejoice in suffering for others was that he was continuing the work which Christ was doing when he died. Every man who is working diligently in the church is completing the unfinished work of our Lord. The body which his spirit inhabited while he was here was resurrected and returned to heaven. But, he still has a body continuing his work today. I am a part of that body. I am an instrument of righteousness, living out his will.

COL 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

The apostle was not the only one who has been made a minister. Each Christian has a similar charge. The Word of God has been passed on to us. We must see that it reaches the end for which it was sent out.

COL 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

The mystery of which the apostle speaks has to do with the reconciliation of man through the blood of Christ. The blood of bulls and goats pointed in that direction. But only when Christ, the perfect man, gave himself that we might live was the mystery made clear. The Christian understands the complete futility of making friends with God without taking the blood of Christ with him when he approaches the Father.

COL 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

While the Jew was once God's chosen man, such is not true at present. The mystery of godliness has been presented to Gentiles that they might share in the hope of a heavenly home. Today we can all be one in Christ Jesus if we have believed, repented, confessed the name of Jesus and been baptized into his body.

COL 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

It is that mystery which is now made clear through the sacrifice of the Son of God that Paul

delighted in preaching. He wanted both Jew and Gentile to be united in one spiritual body. As a part of that body every man could be cleansed and made perfect.

COL 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

This made all of Paul's work and all of his trials worth while. It was not he that worked. It was Christ who worked in him. He, like the faithful today, was a member of the church of Christ. As a member of that body, he served the Father and preached his good news to all men.

Chapter 2

COL 2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

The conflict which Paul mentions is the one which he found it necessary to wage against those who would seduce the Christians into leaving the truth and going after false doctrines. It was a constant concern for him. So much time and effort had gone into the conversion of men from the clutches of Satan that he felt a need to fight fiercely against any efforts to undue the progress.

The concern was not limited to those whom Paul had personally converted, or with whom he had become acquainted. It extended to all who had committed themselves to service in the Kingdom of God.

COL 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Hearts that are in upheaval and are torn between truth and error are not apt to find the peace that passes understanding. Nor are they apt to calm troubled waters among Christians. The hearts that are disturbed must be calmed and brought into

harmony with others who are serving Christ faithfully.

The mystery of which he speaks is that which was once hidden, but has now been revealed through the Son of God. It informs man of the interest which all three members of the Godhead have for the welfare of men's souls. When men come to an understanding of the riches which are made available to them, they will come to God and they will remain true to the will of God. They will be knit together as brethren in God's family, and they will love the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each of whom loved them first.

COL 2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It was the task of Jesus Christ to come into our midst as an example of what God intended man to be. He is the fountain of all spiritual wisdom and knowledge. Men may possess partial knowledge and partial wisdom. But in Christ we find that which is perfect.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. One may have enormous knowledge of various kinds. However, if he does not have the wisdom to make application of that knowledge, it will be of no value. In fact, the knowledge may be used for destructive rather than constructive purposes.

COL 2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

To beguile is to deceive one into turning from that which is true, to that which is a lie. There are men who are artists in the use of persuasive words. Satan is the great beguiler. He demonstrated his artistry in this area when he deceived Eve into partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had said the eating of the fruit of that tree would result in death. Satan persuaded Eve that she would not surely die. God had only denied her that fruit because he did not wish to share it.

There were those in Colosse who would have turned the saints there from the truth to lies. We shall see more about the nature of this deception as we move through the chapter.

COL 2:5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

It was difficult for Paul to maintain the care of all the churches. He could not be everywhere at once. At the time this letter was written he was confined to a prison cell. That did not prevent him from joining the Colossians in spirit. He found it a source of joy when he heard that they were marching for Christ in an orderly and steadfast manner. The Greek here is related to the military. As soldiers would march in an orderly and progressive manner, Christians should do the same.

COL 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

The Colossians had been taught the truth. It would be a tragedy for them to leave it after once having believed it. How foolish it would be for a Christian to leave his walk with Christ and walk out into the darkness where he is not able to see spiritual danger.

COL 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Notice the two degrees of development mentioned in this verse. In order to avoid being beguiled by the deceivers, one must first set his spiritual roots down deep into the fertile soil provided by the Word of God. Then he must grow, or be built up and established in that new life. Once taught, the Christian must offer constant thanksgiving for God's wondrous grace. He must take full advantage of it to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

COL 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The last part of the word philosophy is a close cousin to the word "sophistry." Sophistry has to do with clouding issues to the point where one is

accepted because he has overwhelmed the listener or reader with argumentation rather than leading him to truth. All too often the philosopher is a sophist who is more interested in propagating his own thought system than in finding the truth. Such deceit glorifies men and not God.

That which is rudimentary is incomplete. No man is capable of offering a complete and perfect thought system. The wisest of men are but infants when their philosophies are compared with the mystery of Christ which he declared to men through his preaching and his life.

COL 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

In comparison with the rudimentary thought patterns of the wisest of men, the wisdom and knowledge provided by Jesus is sufficient to completely equip men for life in both this world and the world to come. In Christ we see and hear God, for Jesus was “God with us.”

COL 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Human incompleteness is replaced by perfection when it is supplemented by the fulness of Christ. One need go no farther than God’s own Son to find the source of all goodness. No spiritual being stands higher than he. No organization is capable of dominating him. No real truth can be found that

will contradict the truth which he delivered while in the flesh. To whom shall we go if we ignore Christ? There is no other final answer.

COL 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

The Jews in Colosse were clearly attempting to teach Christians that in addition to baptism they must undergo circumcision of the flesh. Paul strongly insisted that there is now a far more important circumcision than that which the male babies of the Jews experienced on the eighth day of their life. That more important circumcision is the cutting off of the desire for the pride and pleasures of the world. It is a circumcision of the heart, or the inner man.

COL 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Baptism is a burial. The denunciation of the pleasures of the world is so complete in the converted Christian that he can be said to be dead to them. As God raised Jesus from the grave, he can also raise the sinner to a new spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

Faith is not completed without baptism into Christ. This baptism is by burial in water. The Ethiopian Eunuch said to Philip, "See, here is water.

What doth hinder me from being baptized.” Those who claim that this baptism is an invisible baptism into Christ, and has nothing to do with water, are seriously mistaken. Baptism without faith is just dunking. Faith without water baptism is not faith. The candidate for new life in Christ must believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He must repent of his sin and turn from it. He must confess Christ. And, he must be buried in water and raised up to walk in newness of life. The diligent student will not fail to compare the early part of the sixth chapter of Romans with the present passage.

COL 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Neither the Jew, nor the Gentile, who was uncircumcized in the flesh had turned his back on spiritual life. The man or woman who had met the above qualifications arose from the baptismal water as one who was dead to sin and alive in Christ. His sin was washed away. Circumcision of the flesh was, and is, unnecessary for approval as a child of God today.

COL 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

When the nails were driven through the hands of Christ and pinned him to the cross, the ordinances

of the Law of Moses were annulled. This was a day of rejoicing for Christians. Before the death of Christ every man who had sinned was under the sentence of death. The blood of bulls and goats did not take away sin. It only rolled those sins forward to the time when Christ offered his perfect life as a sacrifice for the sins of every man who followed God's directions in the age in which he lived. Today we have been made free from the law of sin and death.

COL 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

There are strong disagreements among Bible students as to the identity of these principalities and powers over which Jesus triumphed. Some believe they were the Jewish leaders who fought against Christ and tried to maintain the ordinances of the Law of Moses. Others contend that these are the powers of darkness over which the Devil reigns.

I see no reason why both of these cannot be included in the list of those vanquished by Jesus sacrifice. The eighth chapter of Romans gives a lengthy list of such opponents of the Lord. Then it is said that none of these are capable of separating men from God if these men will stand against temptation, and hold tightly to the hand of God.

COL 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

The Scribes and Pharisees who castigated Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, and for eating with his disciples from the corn which they plucked on the Sabbath were incorrect. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Even the first day of the week is not parallel to the Sabbath of the Law of Moses. It is not wrong to work on the first day of the week, as long as that work does not prevent one from assembling with the saints for worship on that day. It is not a holyday. It is a day for meeting together for worship of Jehovah.

Peter was shown a sheet in which there were both clean and unclean animals. He was told that it was permissible to eat any of them. That which had been unclean was now clean. The man who ate pork was not different from the one who refused to eat it.

COL 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The Law of Moses served a valuable purpose. It acted as a shadow of the reality which was to come in Christ. Every lamb sacrificed under the Mosaic law pointed forward to the reality of Jesus sacrifice. Every Sabbath looked forward to the rest which Jesus provides for faithful Christians after the judgment. The law was but a schoolmaster to bring us to the Christ.

COL 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and

worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Now we have arrived at one of the distortions the vain philosophers had foisted upon the Christians in Colossae. They were suggesting that only by bowing one's self before the angels was it possible to reach Christ and then reach God. Those false teachers were dealing with things about which they had insufficient knowledge. They had manufactured a hierarchy of angelic beings who stood between the Christian and the one Mediator between God and man. That one Mediator is Christ. There is no need to pray through either angels or a Pope. Those who create such hurdles are dealing in beguiling and vain deceit. They are puffed up by minds that do not rise above the pomp and pride of Satan's kingdom.

The reward in heaven should not be forfeited by glorifying either men or angels and placing them as barriers to prayer and providential benefits.

COL 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

A body without a head is about to die. The random and frantic movements of a chicken whose head has been separated from its body by the edge of an axe lead nowhere. Similarly, the motions of a body of Christians who do not follow the directions of their

Head, Jesus Christ, are bound to demonstrate only chaos.

COL 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

The law of Moses was rudimentary to the fulness of Christ. The vain philosophies of men who would worship angels were rudimentary and false when compared with the worship of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

COL 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Being careful not to touch unclean things had its place in God's preparation for the plan of salvation. Refusing to eat of pork and scavenger birds also had its lessons to teach concerning feasting upon the living water and the bread of life rather than on the filthy teachings of evil men. Those rudimentary principles fell short of the mystery of Christ which would be revealed in its own time.

COL 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

The only teachings which will withstand the test of eternity are those that were presented by our Lord. The philosophers who so proudly show off their

mental gymnastics will one day kneel and confess their folly. When all the foolishness of men has faded away, the brilliance of God's way will shine eternally in the land of endless day.

COL 2:23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The chapter closes with a condemnation of three serious errors. One is will worship which is worship according to that which men will rather than that which God has commanded. The second is the foolishness of humiliating one's self before angels when Christ is the sole Mediator between God and man. The third is what we call ascetism. Ascetism places value on punishing the body or neglecting its needs in the futile belief that it must be tortured before God will be pleased.

It is certainly true that the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh must not be allowed to take control of our bodies. Such appetites were given to us as instruments to be used in the service of God. But to deliberately mutilate and torture the body only misuses and damages that which could otherwise be employed in Christian service.

Chapter 3

COL 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

In verse twelve of chapter two Paul made it clear that those who were baptized had died to the world and were risen with Christ. When one comes up from the waters of baptism that person has been united with the Lord and is expected to pursue a different course of life than would have been the case if he had not been buried with Jesus. As Jesus was raised from the grave of the earth, the one who has been immersed in the watery grave of baptism is raised to walk with him.

The Christian does not cherish the lowly and despicable things of this world. He longs to rise ever higher and always toward the holy throne of God.

COL 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Our **affections** are always directed toward that which we hold to offer the richest rewards. The things of earth offer only temporal benefits. The pleasures and lusts of the world are but for a day. The eternal blessings in the heavenly places are infinitely more valuable, both from the standpoint of quality and of durability. Why place our affections on those things that delude, and then fade away?

COL 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The man of God has become spiritually alive. In addition to having been born of the flesh, he has been born of the Spirit of God. If one limits his attentions and affections to that which is pleasing to the flesh, he will be dead to Christ. If, on the other hand, he sees beyond the flesh and cherishes the things of the Spirit of God, he will kill that life of the flesh and will hide his life with Christ. The fleshly life will be seen no more. It will have been replaced with the life which comes through Christ. Remember, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the **life.**”

COL 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Christ has been raised from this earth to sit at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. He will remain there until the day of judgment, when he will return to take his own to be with him forever. Then the Christian will find that the life he leads will be far more glorious than the one which might be temporarily enjoyed by concentrating on the fleshly desires and ambitions.

COL 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

The word “mortify” here is one which means to kill. If one is to live for Christ, that person must

deny himself and follow in his steps. The stomach, the sexual passions, etc. will be controlled and will be utilized only for the glory of the Father. They will not be allowed to control the mind and the body of the man of God.

All of the items mentioned in this verse are the works of disobedience to the Heavenly Father. The man who spends his time and energy feeding himself upon such things is truly guilty of a form of idolatry. He has replaced the True God with that which is but a part of the creation.

COL 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

It has been argued that the carrot is a much better motivator than the stick. One can get more done by offering reward than by threatening punishment. This has caused some to think religion should be strictly a matter of love and never a matter of wrath. According to that line of thought, Jehovah could never pour out punishment upon the wicked. This is a dangerous position. God has demonstrated again and again that while he rewards the faithful, he also punishes the disobedient.

If one desires proof, all that would be necessary would be to have a short session with the army of Pharaoh which was drowned in the Red Sea, Nadab and Abihu who were devoured by fire from the Lord, or Ananias and Saphira who were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. The fires of an eternal hell wait for those who continue in disobedience until it

is too late. The Christian is to walk in holiness and purity, not in filth and wickedness.

COL 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Vast numbers of persons have spent months, or even years, walking with the Devil. They then lived his life. They walked in darkness and did not see where they were going. But, when they came to their senses and recognized Jesus Christ as the light of the world, they turned from Satan and followed the True Light.

COL 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

The words “put off” are used here to describe the action taken. One commentator illustrated it by comparing what happens when one exchanges filthy garments for a brand new suit which has never been worn. The anger, wrath, malice and evil speaking are left behind just as filthy garments would be cast off and replaced by the new and clean ones.

COL 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Several of the sins mentioned in the previous verse, and also in this one are sins of the tongue.

However, the sins which can be so easily observed through the words are always originated in the heart or mind of man. If the mind is made clean, the words and deeds will be those of the new man in Christ, and not the old man of Satan. Lying, slander, and blasphemy are not evidence of the presence of the Spirit of Christ. They are proof that Satan has control of the heart.

COL 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

One should not run around naked. After the old man has been put off, the new man in Christ must be put on. The old life has been hidden. The new life in Christ must be seen by all. It is certainly true that even the new life in Christ is in a primitive stage. In one sense it is also hidden until the glorious appearance of the Son of God. When he appears, it will reach full bloom.

The new man must constantly grow. When Jesus was here on earth, he grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man. The new spiritual man will not be full grown when he is first formed. He will find it necessary to constantly feed upon the Bread of Life and drink of the Living Water which Christ provides. Then he will steadily move toward the image of God who created him. Man was created in God's image. It is right that he seek to be true to that image and to display it before his fellow man.

COL 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The Greek looked down on the Jew. The Jew looked down on the Gentile and the master looked down on the slave. The Scythians were considered to the scum of the earth by those of culture. All of this was to melt away in the body of Christ. We, as Christians, are to be one new man in the Lord.

I would like to present the reader with a personal question. Do you despise those of other races than your own? Do you think of those who live in very meagre conditions as scars upon society? This is a precarious attitude. There may be differences in mental ability. There may be differences in bank accounts and possessions. There may be black, while, yellow and red complexions. However; once those with these contrasting characteristics are genuinely converted to life in Christ, each is as precious as the other in the eyes of God.

Let us recognize every person for what that person does with what he has. We have all seen mentally retarded Christians who gave more to the work of the Lord than some Christians who held high positions in large corporations. Let us be one in Christ!

COL 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

The elect of God are those who have elected God over Satan. The election is God's as well as that of the Christian. Christians are also those whom God has elected as his own. The two elections go hand in hand. When we elect God, He also elects us. When these two elections are working together the qualities in the present verse should be manifest in those elect persons.

The bowels are found in the inner man. This is but another way of talking about the heart of man. The true Christian will not be unkind or haughty. He will be merciful and forgiving. He will be meek and longsuffering toward others. This will be true in respect to his relationships with all men. But, it will be especial true with respect to his relationships with others in the family of God.

COL 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Forbearing and forgiving are closely related. The one who is forbearing will take the ridicule and offensive behavior which is placed upon him by his fellow man. He will not render evil for evil. Even if he is terribly mistreated he will follow the example of Jesus as the Lord hung on the cross and uttered those unexpected words, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

COL 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

While the Christian is dressing himself in the beautiful garments of the new man, he must be careful not to neglect the most important one of all. That is love or charity. According to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, love is the foundation of all Christian behavior. We are told there are three qualities which abide. They are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. One writer compared love to the girdle which holds all of the other garments in place.

COL 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Grace and peace both come from God. If the Christian will adorn himself or herself in the clothing which God has made available to the new man, that Christian will find a peace which passes understanding. We are called to enjoy that peace and we should be thankful for it and hold to it tightly. We must do all in our power to see that others in Christ's body enjoy that same peace.

COL 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

The Word of Christ can dwell in a person in more than one way. First, one can become aware of what is taught through the Word, or can even memorize

large portions of it, without making proper use of that which is learned. The Pharisees could quote the law in the time of Christ. They were a long ways from making the proper application of the information to which they had exposed themselves. The wise use of the Word of Christ will apply its facts, principles and commands in the most appropriate manner possible.

One of the finest means of teaching others spiritual truths is through singing. Certainly singing is an enjoyable experience for the dedicated Christian. But the songs we sing may teach and admonish others, as well as to strengthen ourselves and praise God.

God did not have to say, “Do not use musical instruments in praising me in the New Testament age.” He limited it by telling what to use. We are to pluck the heartstrings, not guitar strings. The earnest student of the Word of God will certainly notice such passages of the Old Testament as the one hundred fiftieth psalm. There God’s people were told to praise him on a variety of instruments. But that same student will note that not one word is said in the New Testament about praising God on instruments during worship services. He left them out. We must follow his lead.

COL 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

The entire life of a Christian is to be dedicated to his God. Everything he does should be done with

the distinct belief that he could invite Christ to join him in the activity. In fact, since he is united with Christ and is the body of Christ in action today, he is acting and speaking in Christ's presence.

Jesus is our Mediator. When we speak to the Father, we speak through the Son. This is true whether it be asking for his blessings, or thanking him for the ones he has already given to us.

COL 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

The books of Ephesians and Colossians are written by the same author to people with the same needs. They contain much information which should be compared. This section on interpersonal relationships is one of those portions where such comparison is valuable. The student is urged to compare the fifth and sixth chapters of Ephesians with the present instructions.

When God created woman she was to be a helper to her husband. The woman is to allow the husband to take the lead in the household to whatever degree this is possible. Sometimes men are timid and hesitate to take the lead. The woman may take up the slack when this is obviously necessary. Nevertheless, it is extremely unwise for any wife to usurp the authority which God gave to her husband. Both will be happier and more productive if such is avoided.

Also we must observe that it is her own husband to which she is to submit herself. The woman who allows herself to be used by a man who is not her

husband is asking for disaster. She is flying in the face of God's plan. Women can be close friends with men other than their husbands. That is far different than developing a submissive attitude toward that other man.

COL 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Husbands are to love their wives even as their own bodies. Any man who treats his wife as a slave who must do his bidding at all times with no affectionate expressions of gratitude for her partnership is just as foolish as the woman who refuses to submit to her husband's leadership.

As a small child I once witnessed a horrible argument between a man and his wife. The man worked as a hired man on a farm we owned. He came in one day from working in the field. His wife had also worked hard in the house. When he met her at the door she started to tell him how many things she had done. Rather than commending her for her hard work, he said, "You didn't do anything you were not supposed to did you?" Though he may have been tired from his own work, he had no right to be rude and ungrateful to her. The physical brawl which followed was not pleasant. It left an indelible memory upon the mind of this writer. This man was bitter against his wife. God is not pleased with such behavior.

COL 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Impertinent children are a disgrace to their parents and a sore on society. God intended for parents to control children, not for children to control parents. The child who learns how to obey his or her parents during the early years of life will find it much easier to accept supervision from a superior in mature adulthood. The standard is not whether obedience is pleasant. The proper standard is whether obedience is expected from God.

COL 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

It is a difficult matter to discipline children. Just how much guidance should be given? Am I rewarding enough? Am I punishing in the ways I should and to the degree I should? Some parents are altogether too fearful that they will hurt their children's feelings. Consequently they do not chastise them when it is needed. Other parents seem to enjoy the fact that they are in control and take undue advantage of their position. Children must not be kept in a state of constant anger because they are being scolded or spanked when such is uncalled for. Children know these things and sometimes carry their resentment with them, even after their parents are dead.

COL 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

Most of the world today does not see slaves. Labor is ordinarily hired in our day. In Biblical times slaves,

who were owned by their masters, were common. A proper attitude of the servant was to obey his master. He was not to keep his eye on the master in order to cease work when the master was not looking. God was always looking. He must serve the master as if he was actually serving God.

COL 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

The life of the slave or servant was to be energetic and loyal to the man who owned him. He must realize he was not working for a man. He was working for God.

Of course there is another side to this coin. The master who owned the slave was not to treat him in an inhuman manner. The slave was a man made in the image of God just like the master. He deserved to be treated accordingly. When Paul returned Onesimus to his owner, he told the owner to no longer treat him as a servant, but as a brother in Christ. That is what the Christian master and servant are; brothers in Christ.

Though slaves are not common today, the employer and employee relationship should receive the same admonitions. The worker who slacks off when his boss is not looking is displeasing to God. The boss who gloats over his power to mistreat an employer is just as displeasing.

COL 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

The pay the servant receives on earth is only the beginning. Since he is working for the Lord in heaven he may look forward to fantastic rewards in eternity. The slave did not receive an inheritance. It was the children who received inheritance. If the servant is faithful here as a servant, he may look forward to inheritance later in heaven as a child of the Father in heaven.

COL 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

On the contrary, that master or supervisor who mistreats those over whom he has power will find that he will receive no inheritance. He will lose his position of power and will find himself in a far worse condition than those he abused while on earth.

At the time of judgment it will do no good to threaten God. Nor, will it help to appeal to those who can throw their weight around. When God says, "*Depart from me.*" his pronouncements will not be altered by either threats or pleadings.

Chapter 4

COL 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

It is unfortunate that the chapter division was misplaced between chapter three and chapter four. This verse marks the close of Paul's instructions to several pairs of interrelated groups. He had just finished telling servants how to behave toward their masters. This is the reciprocal of that advice.

Masters are to treat their servants as they would like to be treated if they were a servant. This is directly in line with what Jesus advised. He said, "*As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.*" One day each of us will stand before God. It shall then be measured out to us as we have measured to others.

COL 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

There are two ways to look at this verse. One might continue for a lengthy period of time in the same prayer, or one might never cease going to God in prayer. Of course the latter view is what is being considered here.

The Lord taught two very strong parables on this point. In one a man was awakened in the middle of the night and repeatedly asked for bread by a neighbor. Although he did not at first respond, he ultimately gave the neighbor what he requested to

allow himself to go back to sleep. The teaching is not that God must be pestered in order to get a response from him. It is that God hears the persons who make it a constant practice to ask for the blessings needed and to thank him for the ones which have already been bestowed.

COL 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

It is worth notice here that Paul was not primarily concerned about his own chains. The reason he wanted the prayers of the Colossian Christians was that he might have the opportunity to preach the gospel to those who had not heard. He wished to tell as many as possible about the wonderful news that God had prepared for centuries; that Jesus Christ could forgive men of their sins and guide them to eternal life.

It was because of his insistence on preaching the mystery of Christ that he had been imprisoned. The Jews despised the thought that God would extend his blessings to the Gentile world. When one such as Paul, who had all of the proper qualifications as a leader of the Jews, reversed his field and began inviting Gentiles to share in God's grace, he found himself persecuted by the Jews.

COL 4:4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

The truth of the gospel had been hidden. Now it was time to let it shine out to those of every nation. Christ had given Paul the responsibility of moving out into the Gentile world and spreading this joyful news. He was truly the apostle to the Gentiles. He would not shirk his duty.

COL 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Them that are without are those who are outside of Christ. The same advice which Paul gave here is in order for every Christian. NonChristians are usually converted by the abundant fruit of the Holy Spirit produced in the lives of those who are already Christians. Debate and argumentation may be needed at times. But all the debate and argumentation in the world cannot overcome foolish words and actions on the part of Christians. The nonChristian is more often impressed by what one does than by what one says.

COL 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

We must never forget, however, that tactful and powerful truths must be presented. Salt causes food to be more tasty. Speech flavored with salt will have the same effect in the conversion of those who are without.

Most of us have come into contact with persons who have been repelled by the arrogant attitude of

some unwise believer in Christ. It is most difficult to deal with a person who has found Christianity distasteful.

COL 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

The apostle would not make his letter lengthy by telling all the details of his present imprisoned condition. Tychicus, who bore the letter to Colosse would be able to fill in all such matters.

Tychicus was a trusted servant upon whom Paul could depend to deliver what he had written to the Collosians. According to Ephesians 6:21 he was also the one who delivered the letter to the Ephesians.

COL 4:8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

Tychicus had cared for and comforted Paul. He had good reason to believe the man would do the same for the Collosians. It would be pleasing to Tychicus to deliver the letters and to see how these Christians were faring in the service of God.

COL 4:9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

The apostle had converted Onesimus, who was a runaway slave. He had sent Onesimus back to the area from which he had come and he had instructed Philemon to receive him back as a brother in Christ, and not just as a servant. Onesimus was one of them for two reasons. He had lived in the area. He was now a Christian. For both reasons the Collosians were to receive him warmly. Both Tychicus and Onesimus would provide information concerning Paul's welfare.

COL 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

Over and over again Aristarchus was present when Paul faced the greatest of difficulties. He was there during the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19). He was there when Paul was sent to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27). He was now with Paul as a fellow prisoner. He sent his greetings along with those of the apostle.

Mark is the author of the account of the gospel which goes under his name. He started to go on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. Then, he quit and returned home. Paul had so much trouble with this that he and Barnabas parted ways when Barnabas wished to take Mark with them on the second journey. Now we find that he is with Paul and is recommended by him. Mark appears to have redeemed himself. He is to be commended for

his turnaround. Paul is also to be commended for his willingness to speak positively about him.

COL 4:11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

We know nothing about this Jesus who is called Justus, except what we read in this verse. Too few of the Jews could be called fellow workers in the Kingdom of God. Those above were special. Each of them had provided encouragement to Paul and helped make it possible for him to continue in his labors.

COL 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Some see Epaphras as possibly a minister of the gospel serving Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. I do not read that in these verses. The three towns were close together. He may have simply been a strong Christian who knew and cared for his fellow Christians in each of those cities.

COL 4:13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

Whatever his relationship was with the Christians of the three towns, Epaphras cared greatly for them and was ready to do all he could in their behalf.

COL 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Luke was a doctor. He did not have to give up his profession to preach Christ. There are some physicians who believe in the healing of the whole man. We take off our hats to those good men. It is satisfying to the Christian to be able to enter the office of a doctor who is also a fine servant of God. This kind of man will have studied hard. He will be honest in his advice to the patient. He will not be exorbitant in his charges. Luke was not just a physician. He was a “beloved” physician.

Demas had the opposite experience from that of Mark. Mark quit and then returned to the faith. The last word we have about Demas is that “*Demas has forsaken us, having loved this present world.*” Paul had added some positive remark about the others above. This time he only mentions Demas name. Could Demas already have begun to turn cold?

COL 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Laodicea was one of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation. There they

were described as being neither hot nor cold toward Jesus Christ. They were lukewarm. They were so nauseating that God was ready to vomit them from him. This condition seems to have developed after the time of this letter. They were to be saluted by those of Colossae.

One of the Laodiceans was singled out for special recognition. He, or she, offered their house as a place of worship. Today we have fine church buildings. In the early days of Christianity worship was normally held in private homes. It is possible that the “house” mentioned here is a household rather than a building. If that is the case the salutations are offered to those of the family of Nymphas who have become followers of Jesus.

There were other references to churches in the houses of Aquila and Priscilla and of Philemon. See Rom. 16:5 and the second verse of Philemon.

COL 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Both the letters to Laodicea and to Ephesus were carried by the same messengers. I believe Paul thought the information in each of these letters would supplement the other and that it would be helpful for both towns to read both letters. There is much in common between the two epistles. Some have called Colossians “baby Ephesians.”

COL 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

Each Christian is a minister of God. Anyone who, as a Christian, cares for the needs of his fellowman fits the description. A godly woman who ministers to those who are sick is a minister of God, though she never stood in a pulpit in her life. The command to Archippus to take heed to the ministry he had received from the Lord should ring in the ears of all of God's faithful.

COL 4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul had some problem which apparently made it difficult for him to write personally. His letters were often dictated to another man, after which he signed them. That appears to be the case here.

He is not spending himself in grief over his chains and imprisonment. He does not ask them to weep over his plight. He does want them to do what he cannot do. They are free to come and go. He is not! He prays that the grace of God will rest upon them and that their lives will be made rich and productive through that grace.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barclay, William, *Letters to Philippians and Colossians*, Philadelphia, Pa., The Westminster Press, 1958.

Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich., Baker Book House, 1949.*

Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary with Critical Notes*, Vol. 6, New York, N.Y., Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1823.

Coffman, Burton, *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Houston, Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977.

DeHoff, George, *DeHoff's Commentary*, Murfreesboro, Tenn., DeHoff Publications, 1991.

Elkins, Garland, & Warren, Thomas (Editors) *Getwell Lectureship Book, Colossians*, Lebanon, Tenn., Sain Publications, 1986

Johnson, B.W., *Johnson's Notes*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate Company,

McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible*, Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.

Shephard J.W., *Commentary on New Testament Epistles, Ephesians Philippians and Colossians*, Nashville, Tenn., Gospel Advocate, 1939.

Wiersbe, Warrjen W., *Bible Exposition Commentary*, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1989,

Zerr, E.M., *Bible Commentary*, Raytown, Missouri, Reprint Publications, 1954