



**Bible Study By** 

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## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 1

Let Me Introduce You

1:1-6:24

Let me say this right at the start. We are here to study **Christ.** Not to study Ephesians. To see **the Lord**, through the wonderful book of Ephesians. Each book in the Bible gives a revelation of Christ in a different way, each emphasizing a different aspect of His glory. In the book of Ephesians, there's a picture of the Lord Jesus, not found anywhere else. I speak as a fool, but let me ask this question, "If God were to dip down into your Bible, and remove Ephesians. What would you be losing? What does God give us in Ephesians, He doesn't give anywhere else?

In order to catch the Holy Spirit's emphasis, I believe it helps to get a bird's eye view of the whole book. What's on God's heart? What passion is burning in the heart of the Holy Spirit? What does He want us to know? How does He want us to see Christ? What, does God want to accomplish in our lives, in the study of this marvelous book?

Turn to chapter 3:8, the key verse of the entire book,

### "The unfathomable riches of Christ."

The King James says, "The unsearchable riches of Christ." "Unsearchable" comes from a couple of Greek words meaning, " to track out". The "un-trackable riches of Christ". The idea in Ephesians is this, there are unlimited resources and unbelievable wealth in Christ. Unsearchable doesn't mean, "don't search here", or "it's forbidden". It's not that. The idea is, search all you want, because you'll never come to the end. The riches in Christ are absolutely inexhaustible. His riches are as unfathomable as the ocean, and as vast as the cosmos. That's the great theme of Ephesians.

Why does the Spirit of God want us to see the unfathomable riches of Christ? What is He going to accomplish, by showing us how rich Jesus is? Christ is rich, and you are in Christ. Therefore, you are rich in Christ. I like to word it this way, "Every Christian is a **multi-billionaire** in Jesus Christ; rich, rich, rich." I remember one time in a Bible class, the

teacher wrote the word "CHRISTIAN" on the board. And then took the letters from the word "Christian" and mixed them up.

#### RICH SAINT

That's good. That's what a Christian is! And that's the message of Ephesians.

Of course the riches we are speaking of are spiritual, "Kingdom of God" riches. Jesus asks us point blank in Matthew 6 concerning material things, "Why do you worry about what you eat and wear?". He tells us "the Father knows we need such things". "The gentiles (unbelievers) seek these things". "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added." Seek, knock, and bang on God's door for spiritual things. Trust God for material things.

The life that's presented in Ephesians, is not just for a **selected few**. Our riches in Christ are not esoteric. You don't have to be initiated into some special group. There's no circle of spiritual hotshots. The way Ephesians is developed, everyone who is in Christ, is spiritually rich. For example, you are only three verses deep, look at 1:3,

### "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who hath blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places in Christ."

Alright, who's in Christ? The answer is, every Christian. Who is blessed with every spiritual blessing? The answer is, every Christian. Christians, that have dedicated themselves to full time service. Christians, who have to work eight hours a day. Christians, who have limitations and can't read or write. Christians, who are confused and mixed up. Backsliders, and rebels. Believers who are angry with God, resist his dealings in their lives, or have a controversy with Him.

The Apostle Paul, was not one spiritual penny richer than Lazarus who begged at the rich man's gate. They were equally rich in union with Christ. Both Paul and Lazarus were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Adding to the confusion, is this idea that God has an inner circle of special people. A little mystical group, who have special access to Him. We invent titles for these groups like, "The Deeper Life". Doesn't that sound spiritual? People say they are going to read books on the "deeper life" or go to a "deeper life" conference. Do you have

life, or do you have the deeper life? There's something awfully pretentious about that.

Sometimes it's called "Union Life". I know a group from the mid-west who call themselves, "Union Lifer's". They've entered into a wonderful truth of God and decided to label it. Are you a Christian? "Yes." Are you a Union Lifer? "I don't know. What's a Union Lifer? I know I'm a Christian, but I'm not sure if I'm a Union Lifer". Do you have the deeper life?

Some people call it the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit". "Did you receive Christ?" "Yes, I know I've been saved." "Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?" "I guess so. I think so. I don't know." They present it in a way that implies, there is something else in addition to Christ. The Bible teaches consistently throughout, and I don't have to clear my throat when I say it, every Christian is a **multi-billionaire** in Christ.

I'm not exempt from this snare of throwing titles around. I like the word "remnant". I also like, "the great congregation". But I also know that, using these "catch phrases", can infer something very wrong. Some people will question, "I'm in the family of God, but am I in the remnant? Am I in that special little group?" There is no special little group! There's many ways to promote the **false** idea that some Christians are rich, and others are not. But the Bible doesn't teach that! It's for all of God's children. Ephesians puts an end to that nonsense.

I used to teach this, that all Christians have life, but not all Christians have abundant life. I don't teach that anymore, since I learned this life altering truth. **Life** is a **Person!** He said, "I am the Life." All Christians have life, because Life is Jesus. It's Christ, and all Christians have Christ. **Abundant** life, is also a Person. It's Jesus. God doesn't give you Christ and something else called "Abundant Life". He only gives you Christ.

Of course, you're going to say, "Wait a minute. I know there's a difference." Yes, there is a difference between **having** riches, and **enjoying** riches. Between entering into those riches, and spending those riches. I'm saying, Ephesians tells us that we **all** have it. I'm not saying that we all, **spend** it. Or, that we're all **entering into** it. Or, that we are **enjoying** it.

Not all Christians are **appropriating** what God has given. In our study of Ephesians, God wants to teach us how to enter in. To receive and spend, all of our fabulous wealth.

Are you familiar with Schaeffer's Theology? He asked himself this question, "What happened to me, the moment I got saved?" When he finished his study, he listed 33 things. I don't know if there are 33 things, or 3,333 things. What I do know is this. However many things take place when you get saved, they take place in every Christian. We're all the same. It is tragic to see Christians living in spiritual poverty, simply because they haven't seen their wealth in Christ!

That's the theme of Ephesians. Chapter 3:8,

#### "Unfathomable riches in Christ."

Unfathomable riches, for every Christian, who is in Christ. Before I leave this wonderful theme, look at chapter 2:6,

### "He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

There's an expression in the book of Hebrews that is often repeated, "He sat down." What did it mean, Christ sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high? He sat down, because His work was finished. He sat down, because He was done. He sat down, because He was satisfied. He sat down, because He was resting in a work that was well done, and accomplished.

What does it mean, that Christian's are seated with him in heavenly places? Simply this. He sat down because He was enjoying His finished work. We sit down with Him, because **we are enjoying** His finished work. It means to rest with Him, and to be satisfied with that, which satisfies Him. Christians can sit down, because the work is **done**.

In Watchman Nee's little book on Ephesians, called "Sit, Walk, Stand", he points out the necessity to begin, with sitting. It's not "Walk, Sit, Stand", or "Stand, Walk, Sit". It starts with sitting, because you can't walk until you've learned to sit. Many people try to learn to sit, by walking. "If I can only learn how to live the Christian life, then I can rest." No, you don't learn to live the Christian life, in order to rest. You start, by sitting. You start, by resting. That's the emphasis of God in Ephesians. When God burns the message of Ephesians into your heart,

what will you learn? Someone might say, "I'll learn how to sit down with Christ." No, you won't learn that. No place in the Bible does God tell you to sit down with Christ. There's a tremendous bondage in **trying** to sit down with Christ.

Did you ever try to rest? It doesn't work. The more you try, the worse it gets. If the Holy Spirit begins to burn the message of Ephesians in your heart, you won't learn how to sit down. You'll learn that you are already seated with Christ, in the heavenly places. That's not just language. That's a different direction. You don't have to do anything. It's already done.

One thing, that God is going to do in this study, is to open your eyes wide. He's going to show you, what is already true, and what is already fact. You've already been seated with Christ. It's not an act to do. It's a **fact** that's done. When God begins to anoint our eyes with this message, then we'll see where He has placed us in Christ.

In the book of Ephesians, God uses a recurring expression you won't find in the Old or New Testament. Five times in the book of Ephesians is the expression, "In the heaven-lies", or "Heavenly places". I suggest that these four words, include all five ways it's used.

### "The unseen spiritual world".

That's heavenly places. There are different aspects to the unseen spiritual world. But what he's saying is, our riches are **spiritual riches**. We're not talking about the **wealth of this world**. When we say we're rich in Christ, we're not saying, He's going to provide your rent. Give you bread, a job, put clothes on your back, and gas in your tank. That's not what we're talking about. It's bigger than that. It is spiritual riches, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 2 Blind but Rich 1:17-23

What makes Christians differ? Let's look at chapter 1:17-23,

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling; what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the workings of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all."

According to that wonderful prayer, when you received Christ, you received everything. Everything except??? Everything, except, **eyes to see**. That's the only thing, you don't have as a Christian. God gives revelation and illumination to the blind. Remember Jesus said,

### "If you were blind you would see. But because you say you see, your blindness remains."

Jesus inferred, that their blindness was due to confusing physical and spiritual eyesight. How could they claim to see, when they called "The Light" (Jesus), standing in front of them, "Darkness". Revelation and illumination is given to those who know that they are spiritually blind. God wants to show us His Son. Every Christian is equally rich, but not everyone sees it, or believes it.

I heard a story some time ago. There was a ship called the "Central America" out in salt water for very many days, that ran out of fresh water for the crew to drink. They became desperately thirsty. Without realizing it, the ship drifted into the mouth of the Amazon River. About to die, they sent out a distress signal which read, "Help, we are thirsty."

They got back a reply, from a ship who knew exactly where they were. It was a single word, "Drink!" They were in fresh water, dying of thirst.

What an illustration of God's people. The message of Ephesians shouts "Drink! You are rich in Christ! Drink! Enter in!" You've got to see it. Every Christian is in fresh water, yet many are dying of thirst. They just haven't learned to let down their pail. They haven't learned to sink a well in God. They haven't learned, to drink from God Himself. It's a shame to starve to death, while sitting at a banquet table. Thousands of Christians, full of spiritual riches in Christ, are living poverty stricken lives.

In order to get this book before your heart, let me suggest the reason God put it after Galatians, and before Philippians. I think as you study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you are going to see that God has providentially arranged every book in the Bible. Each book is in its "right" place. They are **logically** arranged, not chronologically arranged. God is concerned about His message and purpose. Not the actual order of events. The Bible was written to tell the story of God's redemptive purpose, Jesus Christ.

One reason Ephesians follows Galatians, is that Galatians declares "Jesus only". It says, "Just Jesus. Don't supplement Him with anything". That's what legalism does. It adds to Christ. Galatians says "Jesus alone". Someone might come along and say, "Well, that's an over simplification. You can't say Jesus only." Yes you can, because of Ephesians. Why can I say "Jesus only"? Because, everything, is in Him. That's why it's Jesus only. Nothing is missing. Unfathomable riches in Christ.

Look at chapter 1:10,

### "The summing up of all things in Christ."

That's why you can say Jesus only. And in Him, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You don't miss a thing when your eyes are on Christ. Galatians leads you right into Ephesians. Galatians says, "One thing", and Ephesians says, "All things". Then after you get that into your soul, you can move on to Philippians where you learn to rejoice. Once you see that there is one thing. Then, see that in Him you are rich. You can move on to Philippians, and rejoice no matter what. In

order to get any book before your heart, you've got to get an idea of the books content. Let me suggest a little outline we can follow.

Almost all commentators divide it up the same way. Chapters 1-3 they call "Doctrine", and chapters 4-6 they call "Application". One of my favorite outlines says, "Chapters 1-3 is God's Work **For** us, and chapters 4-6 is God's Work **Through** us". I think that nails it down — God's work for us, and God's work through us.

Ephesians is perfectly balanced. One half doctrine, and the other, application. Ephesians is such a lofty book, taking you up so high, that you are tempted to never come down. You are tempted to stay in the first three chapters and say, "My, I love this! It's the Holy of Holies. Heavenly places!" But then, God brings you right back down to earth. He doesn't want you to live dreamy eyed, in some kind of a mystical trance. The Christian life is practical. If you just had the first three chapters you'd be a hermit.

You've heard the expression, "You are so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good." Well, Ephesians won't let that happen. Ephesians is going to make you heavenly minded alright, but then as Vernon McGee says, "It's going to bring you down to where the rubber meets the road". Since everybody else had their own outlines, I will present mine.

- **1-3: "Resources Unlimited".** Webster defines "resources", as "something that lies ready for use and can be readily drawn upon at any time". That's the first three chapters.
- **4-6:** "Responsibilities Unlimited". God has done so much for you in Christ Jesus, He expects responsibilities in terms of that wealth.

### Luke 12:48, "And from everyone who has been given much, much shall much be required."

Now don't get the wrong idea. Don't think, "I'm dead. I have so much responsibility. I'll never do it. I'll fail. I'll blow it! I'll never be able to live the Christ life." Not so! Chapters 4-6 are the out workings, the fruit of 1-3. In other words, the more you enter into chapter 1-3, the more 4-6 will be true in your life. You don't have to **work** on the responsibilities of 4-6. They are **automatically true** in your life. One is an outworking of the other. If 4-6 is not true in my life, then I

need to return to chapters 1-3. Receive the seed, then wait for the harvest.

Have you ever heard the term, "Dead Sea Christian"? The Dead Sea is dead because it has an inlet, but no outlet. It is the lowest spot on earth at about 1,300 feet below sea level. They say that 28% of the water is solid matter. It has been called "the asphalt sea". Some teach that many Christians are like that. They take it in, but they never give it out. So they become stagnant. That sounds good, but it just isn't true. It is not possible. Ephesians shows that there's no such thing, as a "Dead Sea" Christian. 1-3 is the inlet, resources unlimited. 4-6 is the outlet, responsibilities unlimited.

If you really take it in, you will really give it out. If you are not giving it out, it is because you have not, taken it in. Faith works. If it doesn't work, it isn't faith. The sun shines. If it doesn't shine, it's not the sun. The wind blows. If it doesn't blow, it's not the wind. When God burns this truth into you, it will affect all of your relationships. In heaven, and on earth.

## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

### **Chapter 3** Resources and Responsibilities 1-3 & 4-6

Here is what God gives us in Ephesians. First, He gives us God's viewpoint. A survey according to what God sees. Then, He gives man's view from the level of earth. Let me set it down in analysis like this:

#### 1. 1-3. Resources Unlimited

- a. Chapter 1 God's viewpoint
- b. Chapter 2 Man's viewpoint
- c. Chapter 3 How to appropriate the riches/ how to enter in

#### 2. 4-6, Responsibilities Unlimited

- a. Chapter 4 God's viewpoint
- b. Chapter 5 Man's viewpoint
- c. Chapter 6 How to enter in

That will give you a general idea of how we will develop it. Let me show you how the background of the book, sheds light on the message, "Unfathomable riches in Christ". I'll give you a principle of Bible study as we get into this. Ask God to make you a scholar, IN the book, and not a scholar, ABOUT the book. You would be amazed at how many volumes have been written about the book. Remember, the only background necessary, to get the revelation of Christ from a passage, is found in the Bible already.

There are a few passages in Acts, which shed light on the message of Ephesians. The first is from Acts 19:17-20. Paul had a ministry in Ephesus and great results followed.

"And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So, the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."

50,000 pieces of silver in Paul's day is about \$250,000 in our money. They were heathen books, magical books, witchcraft. They burned them! What a bonfire! What a testimony this must have been to those observing. When God begins working in our hearts, there will be a great bonfire of what was precious to us, before we saw our wealth in Christ. Our idols become fuel for the fire.

Any criminal in Ephesus, was safe from prosecution. You can see that by sheltering them, Ephesus attracted the worse criminals. It was a city of idolatry. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, says that Diana was the goddess of fertility. You have probably seen pictures of Diana. She had rows and rows of breasts. The temple was full of priestesses who were ceremonial prostitutes. Lust arousing damsels, using sex as an act of worship. Ephesus was entirely corrupt. Full of idolatry, witchcraft and immorality! How does this background from Acts 19, help get the message of Ephesians into your soul?

God never lowers His standards because of the environment, culture, or, the impossible situation in which you live. We sometime hear, "Now we can't expect too much from so and so. He came from a broken home". Or, "Don't expect too much from her, her father molested her when she was a child". Or, "God doesn't expect much from them, because they live in the slums." Oh yes, He does expect more from us. That's the point of the dark background of Ephesus.

In Ephesians, God gave the Highest for the lowest. The high revelation of Christ, for those living in the worse possible situation. Well, look at the people of Ephesus. They had an awful background. But they were multi- billionaires in Christ. God expected them to live up to the full responsibilities of such wealth. There are no excuses! We can't blame our environment if we are not entering into our union with Christ.

There is another piece of background, that helps get Ephesians into our hearts. In 3:1 He calls himself, "The Prisoner of Christ Jesus". In 4:1 he calls himself, "An ambassador in chains". This was one of Paul's prison epistles. He wrote four letters from jail; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. It doesn't matter if it was from Caesarea or Rome. The point is, that the message WORKED in Paul's life. He not only wrote about the wonderful things we have in Christ, but he was enjoying them himself.

When you read Ephesians, you would never believe that this man is in prison. He's so full of Christ, so self-forgetful. His heart is poured out for others. If you are in jail, or having severe troubles, you think folks should be waiting on you. Paul was living as a multi-billionaire in Christ. He had entered into the truth of the unfathomable riches of Christ. I love Eph. 1:20-22,

"Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the Church."

When I read this I ask, "When Paul was in jail, who was on top? Who was on the bottom?" On the level of earth, it looked like Nero was top dog and Paul was eating scraps. That isn't what Ephesians 1:20-22 says!!! It says Paul was ABOVE all dominion — FAR above!

Many years ago, I was on my way to clean carpets in a very dangerous neighborhood in Brooklyn. As I sat at a traffic light, with some fear and trepidation in my heart, a 747 flew over my head. I sarcastically said to the Lord, "That's the safe way to travel through this place!" He quickly straightened me out saying, "Your flying much higher than that. You're seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." OOPS! I needed His eyes to see.

I used to think of poor old Paul in shackles, looking to big powerful Nero. NO! NO! NO! It's just the opposite. Paul was a multi-billionaire in Christ. He was looking down at Nero! Paul was far, far above Nero. Infinitely, above Nero, and every name that is named. I wonder if this is your testimony. Are you looking down on your problems? How are you doing?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Ephesians will show us how far above our circumstances, we are in Christ. This is part of our inheritance. Jail was not a hindrance to Paul's life. No! He saw the soldiers in their Roman armor and said, "Now, that's just what a Christian looks like, all dressed up in God," and he urged us to put on the "Whole armor of God"!!

I wouldn't trade anything for those two words in 1:21, "Far above". I love them. Pray for Christians in trouble behind the "bamboo" and the "iron curtain". But remember, that every Christian is in Christ, "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named".

Ephesians is perhaps the greatest book in the New Testament concerning the **Church**. So prominent is the Church in Ephesians, that many commentaries take it to be the theme of the book. When you say the word "Church", you are in a great arena. Everybody registers something different. To some it is an organized republic. To others, it's almost a monarchy. Many see it as an organized group, managed through an elaborate machinery of human officers. There's a movement in our country today, to get back to the "New Testament idea" of church. We hear of "the local church", "corporate life", "body life", or "house church".

For many Christians, the church has become a nasty word. It is a distasteful, hard place, where hypocrites dwell. It is often narrow, legalistic and official. And in some cases, downright "tyrannical". But church, as it is used in this epistle, is inestimably precious. Take down these references describing the Church,

3:10 "Teaching angels", 3:21 "Glory given to the eternal Father in the church", and in 5:23-25, 27, 29 & 32, "The Spouse of the Lord".

In Ephesians, we only have the "**Spiritual Church**". Not once is it described as, localized. Never is it an organization, or a denomination. It is the ideal Church. The invisible Church. His Body.

We are about to study a wonderful book. John Calvin called it, "His favorite". John Knox read it on his death bed. John Bunyon based his "Pilgrim's Progress" on it. A. T. Pierson called it, "Paul's third heaven experience". Martin Luther referred to it as, "The Holy of Holies". J. Sidlow Baxter calls it, "The Alps of the New Testament". Hodge says, "Ephesians, preeminently surpasses all Paul's other writings in sublimity." Moule calls it "The celestial letter". Harris calls it, "God's deepest depths and God's highest heights." F. B. Meyer calls it, "Preeminently the Epistle of the inner life." May God open our eyes, as we look deeper into our unfathomable riches in Christ!

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 4

The Church 1:22, 3:10, 5:23-27

Ephesians is full of the Church. The fundamental thought of Ephesians is the Church. 1:22.

"Gave Him as head over all things to the Church." 3:10, "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the **Church** to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places." 3:21, "To Him be the glory in the **Church** in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the Church." 5:24, "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." 5:27, "That He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless." 5:29, "No one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the **Church**." 5:32, "The mystery is great but I'm speaking in reference to Christ and the Church." The Church, the Church, the Church!

A great confusion has settled upon the people of God when the word "Church" is spoken. Sometimes the word conjures up strange things in people's minds. All sorts of emotions well up. There's tremendous confusion around the word "Church".

In the book of Ephesians you have the foundation of the Church, the full mention of the Church in the New Testament. You say, "Now, wait a minute. There's a lot in Timothy about the Church". Yes, but everything in Timothy, is based on Ephesians. You might say, "There's a lot in Titus about the Church." Everything in Titus about the Church, is based on Ephesians. You say, "There's a lot in Corinthians about the Church." Again, all based on Ephesians. There's a lot about the Church in Acts. But nothing, that's not based on Ephesians.

The Timothy's and the Titus's, are expressions of the Church. In the book of Acts you have an illustration of the Church. In Corinthians you have the **purpose** of the Church. But only in the book of Ephesians, and nowhere else, do you have the **doctrine** of the Church. The explanation of the Church, and the **foundation** of the Church.

Without the truth of Ephesians, the truth in Timothy, Titus, Corinthians and Acts falls apart. Unfortunately in many cases, that's what has happened in the world. The Churches are not built on the truths of Ephesians, so they can't stand. Let me set this before you by way of principle, so you know exactly what I'm talking about. What is the Church, as the Spirit of God gives it to us in Ephesians? Let me state it in these words, "In the book of Ephesians, you only find, the **spiritual Church**." You don't have a word in there about membership, officers, sacraments, Church policy, Church government, organization, meeting together, and not a word about ministry. And yet Ephesians speaks of the full Church.

You might ask, how you can leave those things out, and still have the Church. It's because the Church in Ephesians, is a spiritual Church. An invisible Church. Church in, and of, the heaven-lies. The Church in Ephesians is **every** Christian, regardless of their sectarian association. Every Christian, in union with Christ. The Church in Ephesians has its roots in eternity past. Even before the foundations of the earth. And it raises its head in eternity future, at the throne of God. Right now, it lives in unclouded **union** and **relationship** with the living, ascended Christ.

What we can see with our natural eyes, are only **expressions** of the Church. Not the Church. To the degree that God burns the message of Ephesians into individual lives, is the degree to which it will be expressed in this world. But **outward expressions**, are not the foundation. If any local Church is not manifesting the doctrine, the life and principles laid down in the book of Ephesians, it has **no legitimate** reason for existing. It should go **out of existence**, for the sake of the Kingdom. Oh that God would raise up local expressions, and assemblies, that display the message of Ephesians, for all to see! That God's people, multi-billionaires in Christ, united with a common head, would express, their intimacy with Christ, to this sin sick world.

I don't want to get too far afield. I want to stick to the foundation.

We're going to be looking at the Church only as God deals with it. Not the local Church you can find down the street. That's another book. We'll look at the high view of the Church. Before we leave this, let me share a few of God's passionate descriptions. I want you to taste the high and holy way God describes it.

Mark these wonderful expressions. Chapter 1:14 "God's own possession," verse 18, "His inheritance in the saints." Chapter 2:10, "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

His workmanship. His possession. His inheritance.

Then 2:21 & 22,

"In Whom the whole body being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also, are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

His possession, His workmanship, His inheritance and the dwelling of God. That's the New Testament Church. The "Spiritual Church". The word workmanship, is the Greek word "Poiema", meaning, "Masterpiece". It has to do with "a created work of beauty". What He is saying is, "He ain't done with us yet".

I'm His, and He's not finished. I'm His workmanship. He's still working. He has a design, and a plan. He's working in me by a process, by discipline, and by pain. He uses sorrow, pruning, refining, and the problems of life. In every situation, whether buffeted by Satan, or the old sin nature, He is working. He's molding. He's the potter, and I'm the clay. That's the Church. That's a lot bigger than, "Where do you go to Church?" 2:22,

## "In Whom you are also being built together into a **dwelling of God** in the Spirit."

We are His dwelling, His habitation, His **Home**. We had a little girl come into the house last week, and her father asked her, "Where does Jesus live?" She said, "The Church." Now, I know what she meant. She meant her local Church. But she couldn't have been more right. Where does God live? "The Church". That's where He lives. That's His home, and that's His address.

Let me give some of God's illustrations, and then we'll begin chapter 1:1-14. There are many descriptions as you go through Ephesians about the people of God, 2:10 "His workmanship". 2:12 "A commonwealth" 2:14, "A temple". 2:19, "A household". 2:20-21, "A building". 3:6 "fellow heirs". 3:15 "A family". 5:22&23, "A bride".

What do all of those descriptions have in common? It's these three words: "Union with Christ". Every description about the Church in Ephesians, takes you back to the truth of oneness with Jesus. All of our wealth, is described in terms of being united with Him. "Relationship is the essence of God's nature".

The Holy Spirit seems to have some favorite themes, when describing our intimacy with Him. First, is the **human body**. I think that must be the Holy Spirit's **primary** illustration in the Bible. In Ephesians, five out of six chapters, refer to the Body of Christ. Why am I rich in Christ? Why are you rich? Why are we as the Church rich? The answer is, because you **are** the Body of Christ. We have union life. The same life that flows in this physical head of mine, flows in this physical hand of mine. I can move my hand and fingers, because the life in my fingers is the life in my head. The life in my arms, is the life in my head. One life. Union, through connection.

Why can the Church live, and move, and have its being? Because, the life in the members, is the life of the Head. Christ is the head. He's the **Life**, of the Church. Look at these verses, please. Chapter 4:15-16,

"Speaking the truth in love; we are to grow up in all aspects into Him Who is the head, even Christ, from Whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building of itself up in love."

If God's people walked in the revelation that we are His Body, they could solve most of the problems in the local Church. Especially because the body illustration in Ephesians, throws a flood light on what is called "Christian Unity". You hear a lot from Christians about unity. Always distinguish the difference between the spiritual unity of God, and man's idea of togetherness through mutual agreement. Here's what I mean by that. Unity is not cooperation. Great day! You can cooperate with somebody for a hundred years, and still not have unity.

It's deeper than that. Cooperation is an **expression** of unity. Someone might say that unity is proximity, geography, living together. There are many husbands and wives who live in the same house, and trust me, there's no unity!

Unity is not social gatherings. I feel sorry for groups that are deluded, thinking that through fun and social occasions, they are creating unity. It's always used in church youth groups. "Let's get the young people involved. We'll go bowling, skating, or have a pizza party." You'll attract them for fun times and food. But it can't create Christian unity. Unity **expresses** itself in cooperation, in proximity and social occasions. But those things are **not** unity. There are a million and one other things you could add to the list. Christian cliques based on similar doctrines. It's what Tozer rightly called, "Cookie Cutter Christians!"

The book of Ephesians, gives you the true definition of unity. "Mutual Headship". If you can understand unity, based on the Headship of Christ, you will be delivered from legalistic efforts, that can only produce "pseudo unity". Suppose at this moment, Christ, is my complete Head. And I am living for the pleasure of my Head. Now let's say, Christ is your complete head. And you're living for the pleasure of your Head. Because Christ is my complete Head, and Christ is your complete Head, we have perfect unity. That's Christian unity, mutual Headship. When my right hand, works for the pleasure of my head. And my left hand, works for the pleasure of my head. There is no conflict between my hands. They serve the same master in perfect agreement.

I don't have to gather a "members meeting" in the morning to say, "Okay, here's the orders; right foot, you go first. Left foot you follow. Hand, make sure you do this, and then make sure the other arm does that." When the people of God are living in relationship with the head, they are all getting along fine. That's unity, as God gives it in the Church. Let's say there's a Christian out there in the heart of Africa, and he has Christ as his complete head. You may never meet that brother or sister, but do you realize that you are in complete unity. That's the spiritual Church. That's the Church in Ephesians. Christ is the head and we're the body.

All of this talk about loving one another, caring for one another, or

getting involved in each other's problems. Most of that is totally superficial. It's just chopping off weeds at the surface. It will work, as an **expression** of unity, but never as the **source**. This is your foundation. This, is the basis of the spiritual Church. Everyone who is right with Christ, is automatically right with others. If you have a problem on the horizontal level, social relationships. It's because you aren't right vertically, you are out of sorts with the Lord. It's a dead giveaway. It's always, a **spiritual** problem.

There's a second illustration that He loves to use. The "Temple". His wonderful idea, that we are His habitation. That we, are His home. When you read chapter 2:20-22, and other verses on the "Temple", don't miss the thrill of it. We're so far removed from that time period, it's hard for us to understand the Temple's significance to early Christians. They had a temple, and it was beautified, and enlarged by Herod. It was overlaid with gold, and probably the most beautiful building on earth. It was so dazzling in the sunlight, that if you stared at it, you might go blind. It was rich and plush. When they thought temple, they thought riches, brilliance, magnificence and awe. That earthly beauty and wealth, was just the tiniest picture. So when He said, "You are My Temple". All they could see, was that magnificent Jewish Temple. He meant, that which you see physically, you have spiritually. "You are My home and I live in you".

There is one other figure in chapter 5:25-27. The Church is "The Bride". What an exalted picture of the spiritual Church. Do you realize that the moment you were saved, you were married to the Creator and Redeemer of the Universe? I remember when I married, pledging to share my worldly goods. Fortunately, it only meant my guitar, because that was all I had. Fact is, when I got married, I was in debt. Fact is, I didn't have a job. It meant very little, when I said to Lillian, "With all my worldly goods, I thee endow." But watch. The moment you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, the Lord Jesus said to you, what the groom says to the bride, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow." He's rich, and you are rich, in **union** with Him.

Why am I so rich, and why are you so rich, and why is the Church so rich? The answer is, we are His **Body**. We are His **Temple**. We are His **Bride**. Everything that belongs to Him, is now ours!

## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

### **Chapter 5** Meaning of the Whole Bible 1:1-

We're going to be looking at chapter 1, 1-14. I think this sentence summarizes the whole book of Ephesians. I'm almost ready to say, "It summarizes the **whole** Bible". There are three terms, I want to point out. If we can get these, we will get God's heart concerning us. First of all, "The **Blesser**". Then, "The **Blessed**". And finally, "The **Blessing**".

He begins by calling attention to, Who is doing the blessing. And who is blessed with His tremendous wealth. Eph. 1:1-14,

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

When you read Ephesians 1:1-14, your head swims, and you have to say, "Where do you begin?" Do you realize that verses 3-14, are the

longest sentence in the Bible? It's the summary sentence of Ephesians, and probably the whole Bible. The King James breaks it down into three sentences, 6, 12 & 14. The New American Standard breaks it down into four sentences, 6, 10, 12 and 14. But in the Greek, it's **one long sentence**. Grammarians tell us that a sentence should never have more than 30 words. Well, tell the Holy Spirit about that, because there are 270 words in this one. Why is it so long?

It's so long, because he can't stop telling us how rich we are in Christ. The longest sentence in the Bible describes "The unfathomable riches of Christ". I challenge you to try and read verses 3-14 in one breath. You can't. I guess that proves one thing, it's a "breath taking" sentence. When you see the majesty of your wealth, your jaw will drop in amazement.

We could talk about blessed, chosen, predestined, adopted, enlightened, access to the Father, enriched, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, and indwelt. All mentioned, in this one sentence. You could write an entire course on theology, with just those words. The apostle is struggling with the inadequacy of human language. That's why he's putting dashes, commas, semi colons and parenthesis. He's trying to pour it all out. With black ink on white paper, he's trying to communicate the infinite riches of God.

We're all toddlers. We're at ground zero, when it comes to knowing Him. We have no standard for computing infinity. And infinity, is the realm where your riches lie. We can only look at them with awe and wonder. Bowing our hearts, in silence and praise, before God.

Who's the Blesser? In verse 3, it's no accident that this wonderful sentence begins with these words, "Blessed be God." And it ends with Him in verse 14, "To the praise of His glory." It not only begins and ends with God, but His Name is mentioned in every single verse of this 270 word sentence,. Thirty times in this sentence God is mentioned by name. Verse 3, "In Christ". Verse 4, "In Him", and, "Before Him". Verse 5, "Through Jesus Christ", "Through Himself", "His will". Verse 6, "His grace", "In the Beloved". Verse 7, "In Him", "Through His blood", "Riches of His grace". Verse 8, "He lavished". Verse 9, "He made known, "His will", "His kind intention", "He purposed", "In Him". Verse 10, "In Christ", "In Him". Verse 11, "His purpose",

"His will". Verse 12, "In Christ", "His glory", verse 13, "In Him", "Sealed in Him". Verse 14, "God's own possession", "Praise of His glory".

I don't think it's possible, to have a more "Christ-centered" sentence. You might say, "I can't wait to read about my blessings in Christ." God hasn't presented it, in such a way, to make you "blessing-centered". It features our Jehovah Jireh, the Giver, of all blessings. The Bible never presents blessings, in a "blessing-centered" way, or experiences in an "experienced-centered" way. Ephesians is "God-centered", from start to finish, and so, is this amazing sentence.

Often we stress our blessed experiences. It's not wrong to celebrate experiences, if we do it in a "God-centered" way. Ephesians is going to tell us how rich we are, but it doesn't start there. It starts, "Blessed by God." Look at the fullness of God expressed here. Verses 3-6, deal with the Father. Verses 7-12, deal with the Son. And verses 13-14, deal with the Holy Spirit.

Let me make it simple. The Father planned it. The Son did it. And the Holy Spirit, applies it to our heart. That's the Trinity, our great "Blesser". One of the first things you encounter when you come to Ephesians, is the Trinity. These truths can only enter through your heart. If you try to use your head, you will be flooded by a theological tsunami. Predestination, foreordained, in Him before the foundations of the world, Calvinism, Armenianism, Trinity. You'll throw your hands in the air and go away discouraged. God doesn't present the doctrine of the Trinity as a problem. God presents the doctrine of the Trinity as the solution, to all problems. That's not just a change in language. That's a change in direction.

Every time I've ever heard anyone mention the Trinity, it was in terms of a problem. "How do you explain three in one? One God, three persons?" The truth of the Trinity is to be **enjoyed!** Not explained. After you appropriate it, you'll get a little understanding. But surrendered receiving, always comes first. He presents Himself, without clearing his throat, as "The Trinity". God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Before I leave this idea of the "Blesser", let me say this. When you come to the truth about God, remember that in God's revelation of Himself, He has made **Christ central**, in the Godhead.

What do I mean by that? Sometimes I feel guilty because I spend so much time with Jesus. "Am I neglecting the Father"? I realize that there is no jealousy in the Godhead. I certainly don't want to offend the Spirit of God. If you don't want to neglect the Father and the Spirit, spend all your time with Jesus. When you've seen the Son you've seen the Father. The fact is, if you concentrate on the Father, you will actually neglect Him. If you spend time with the Spirit, and spiritual gifts, you are neglecting the Spirit. You are frustrating His purpose. He wants to reveal Christ to your heart. That's the purpose of the Spirit. That's His ministry. Jesus told us in John 16:13-15,

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

You'll never neglect any part of the God-head, by spending time with the Son. That's His revelation of Himself. The Blesser, is God Himself. Don't try to understand that. Just believe it. They say the problem with clearing the bar in the high jump, is going over "head first". You'll knock the bar down every time. You've got to go over "heart first". Then let your head follow. Well, that's a good way to study the Bible. Go in with your heart first, and let your head follow. Ephesians 1:4,

### "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love."

Have you ever meditated on that? You are one of God's eternal thoughts. Forget the Calvinist and Armenian arguments. Forget, what is God's part, and what is man's part? Just come to this chapter with simple faith. Remember that He's behind all your repenting, receiving, believing, trusting, depending, praying and seeking. **God is behind it all**. It's His sovereign grace. Just leave it there. The glowing mystery of everlasting love. Behind your choosing Him, is His covenant, His purpose, His decree and His will. I don't understand it, but I know that God is the Blesser.

Just think, of the first verse in your Bible? Is it Genesis 1:1? That's not the first verse in my Bible. Ephesians 1:4 is! Listen to Genesis 1:1,

#### "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

But way before God said, "Let there be light", Ephesians 1:4 says,

### "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes"

That's what's first in my Bible. I'll tell you why. It's true! Just come with your heart first. Before the foundation of the earth, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, had an eternal thought. **And you were it!** He never started to love you, and He never started to think about you. You are older than the ocean and the sky.

Do you realize that before the foundation of the earth, and before you were born, He knew all about you. He knew how many times you'd blow it, falling flat on your face. How many times you'd rebel and sin. He knew the seasons when you would argue with Him. Grow cold and indifferent. He chose you anyway. Isn't that marvelous! It's too big for anything but faith! Let God burn that into your heart.

Wouldn't it be shocking, if an archaeologist found his name, address and phone number, carved in some ancient rock? You ought to be more shocked than that! Your name is written on the **Rock of Ages**. Before the foundations of the world, your name, was written in God's heart.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 6

God Only Gives Christ

1:1-14

God has given us this book in order to accomplish a very wonderful thing in our lives. Let me read from Job 22:23-26,

"If you return to the Almighty you will be restored. If you remove unrighteousness from your tent and place your gold in the dust, the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brook, then the Almighty will be your gold and choice silver to you; then you will delight in the Almighty and you will lift up your face to God."

Eliphaz missed the boat in many ways, but got it right here. Ephesians teaches us how to place our gold in the dust. Ephesians teaches us that the **Almighty** is **gold**, and choice **silver** to us. Ephesians teaches us how to delight in the Almighty.

Don't get the idea that Jesus did something to make an unloving God love you. That isn't the point. God didn't love you, because Jesus died. **Jesus died,** because God **loved you**. That's not the same thing. That's a different direction. This passage is so rich, it seems impossible to take in. We are afraid to approach these high and holy thoughts:

"Predestination", "adoption", "redemption", "chosen before the foundations of the earth", "election", "the mystery of His will", "the fulfillment of the dispensation of the times", "sealing by the Holy Spirit", "the earnest of our inheritance".

When you see such things you are tempted to throw your hands up and say, "Alright, let's go to chapter two, and let's leave chapter one to the theologians. I want the simple things." Well, let me tell you, Ephesians chapter 1:1-14, is full of simple things.

Don't get snowed by words that complicate things. I'm not saying there's no mystery in this. Of course, there's mystery in it. You're dealing with God. He's infinite. "His footprints are in the water". We'll get just a taste. You can only begin to pursue the infinite. You can't overtake it. I tell you, a kindergarten child could understand the truth that ties this passage together.

I told you that chapter 1, is the first summary of our wealth, and chapter 2, is the second. The difference between chapter 1 and 2 is this. Chapter one reveals our riches through the eyes of God, and chapter 2, through the eyes of man. I believe you can use the words in verse 6, as the key to understanding the whole passage,

### "Freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved".

Especially, the words, "In the Beloved". If you want to understand your wealth in Christ from God's viewpoint, know that He is always seeing us, "In the Beloved". From God's point of view, all He sees is, "The Beloved". That's His Son, the Lord Jesus. All He sees is Jesus. God has a single eye.

On earth, Lillian is my beloved. When I look at Lillian, I see one person. I see her head and I see her body. Now try to grasp this. God looks at Jesus, and He sees one Person. He sees His Head, and He sees His Body. Stay with me. One person. We are the Body of Christ, but He does not see us as a multitude of individuals. The Church is not many parts. It's one.

Look at these references. Verse 3, "In Christ". Verse 4, "In Him", "Before Him". Verse 5, "Through Jesus Christ". Verse 6, "In the Beloved". Verse 7, "In Him". Verse 9, "In Him". Verse 10, "In Him". Verse 13, "In Him".

Now don't get lost in the theology of it. This is not a new thought in the Bible. God saw one man, Adam. He couldn't blame his neighbor when he fell. Adam couldn't say, "Well, I'm sorry Lord, it was Mr. Russell or Mr. Smith." No, it was Mr. Adam, there was no one else to blame. There was one person, and the whole human race was in him. So, when that man went down, billions of people went down.

You say, "That's not fair, Adam sinned, not me. Why should I be blamed for that?" Because...... you were **in Adam**. You were there in his loins. Don't argue too much about being representatively lost. Since we cling to that very principle, for our salvation. You are saved **representatively**. That's why Christ is called the last Adam. Jesus, your substitute.

Try to get the concept. God saw one man, Adam. He was the head of a whole race, and because that one man sinned, the whole body went

down. I am not going to try and understand this intellectually. It's enough that my faith can grasp a little of it. Before the foundation of the earth God knew who was going to believe. God knew every person who would ever embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. He saw the Body of Christ.

Pull out all the stops, and believe it with all of your heart. **You were there, in the mind and purposes of God.** However you explain it. The fact is, that before there was anything, you were there. And in the mind of God, He knew you would become a Christian.

In the fullness of time, Christ came to earth. God watched Him, and He pleased the Father. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." God had His eye on one man, one Person. The second Adam. When Jesus died on the cross, there were two bodies on the cross. His physical body of bones, skin and flesh. But also, His spiritual Body. The corporate Body of Christ. So Paul could say, "I'm crucified with Christ".

If you read the book of Colossians, you will see these strange concepts. When Christ was circumcised as a little baby, Paul said he was circumcised with Him. When the physical body of Christ was on the cross, the spiritual body of Christ was also on the cross. When the physical body of Christ rose from the grave, the spiritual body of Christ also rose. When the physical body of Christ was seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the spiritual body of Christ was also seated with Him in the heaven-lies. It's also true that when the physical body of Christ returns, His spiritual body will return with Him in glory.

Many people hide behind the truth, that God only sees Jesus. They hide because they have sin to deal with. "God doesn't see me; I can live any old way I want. God only sees Jesus." That's not the point here. These are designated riches. You can't spend them any old way you want. The wealth in chapter 1, is all designated. Verse 4, "That we should be holy and blameless before Him." Verse 12, "To the end that we who are the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."

To be **accepted** in the Beloved, is one of the most **purifying** truths in the Bible. When you begin to enter into it, it makes you humble, not proud. It fills your heart with praise, awe, worship and adoration. It's the very

key to your victory over sin. It's not the door to sin that lets you sin anytime you want.

Glance at verse 4 & 5. Be honest with me. What good is it to argue over election, predestination, foreknowledge and adoption, if you've never seen that you are "Accepted in the Beloved"? Everything God has given to His Son becomes yours, by inheritance? Volumes have been written on "the atonement". Libraries on "the mystery of His will", found in verse 9. "Dispensations", in verse 10. "The sovereignty of God", in verse 11. Untold pages about the ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit in verses 13 & 14. But it profits very little, if you haven't seen yourself in the Beloved, accepted in Christ. To the degree you see yourself in Christ, and to that degree alone, you enter into the wealth of your inheritance.

Somehow Christians have the idea, that when they got saved, every spiritual blessing was dropped on them. You don't understand your Bible if that's what you think. Fact is, not **one** spiritual blessing was dropped on you, when you got saved. There's only one Person, on whom every spiritual blessing, has been dropped. You know His Name and I know His Name.

### "He has a name that's above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess".

He's, been blessed with all spiritual blessings, and you are **in Him**. That's the only reason, you have spiritual blessings. He's wealthy, and He's rich. He's wise, and He's loving. He's dead unto sin, and He's alive unto God. He's triumphant over sin, death, hell, the anger of God, Satan, and every evil. He's the One that conquered.

You'll never find a verse like this in the Bible, "Be of good cheer, you, have overcome the world." "Be of good cheer," He said, "I have overcome the world." You'll never find a verse like this, "He always leads you in your triumph." You don't have a triumph, or a victory. Only He does. One of the biggest mistakes Christians make, is to seek a deliverance of their own. "Lord, give me victory." He'll never answer that prayer. He'll never give you, victory.

Why should He give you victory through a prayer? When Christ purchased victory, with the price of **His blood**! He'll only give Jesus victory. It's victory in Him, and you are in Him. So, you have His victory.

Don't seek one of your own. He'll never give you His Son, and something else called power. He only gives you His Son. If you have His Son, you have power. You have patience, and love, and wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and every spiritual blessing in Him. That's God's viewpoint. God looks at your riches, but His eye is on His Beloved.

Christians don't see themselves in Christ. I don't see myself in Christ. It would be a tremendous thing if we could see things as God sees them. What a difference it would make in our life. We look at these graces as if they were bestowed upon us. Then, when we can't access them, we say, "Oh, poor me. God never speaks to me. I don't have victory over this habit. I'm so poor that I don't have talents like other people. I don't have opportunities, or ministry and I don't have power."

You haven't seen yourself, as God sees you. God sees His Son, and **He has merited** all the wealth in the universe. I can't fly, but an airplane flies. If I'm in the plane, I fly. I don't have anything. Christ has everything. I'm in Christ. I have everything!

Before I leave these fourteen verses I want to show you how He brings this marvelous sentence to a climax. Read again verse 13 & 14,

"In Him you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. Who was given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory."

In this climactic illustration, as he winds down the longest sentence in the Bible – 270 words – He gives us two figures of speech. Let them burn into your heart. The first is in verse 13,

### "Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"

The second is in verse 14,

### "Who is the pledge of our inheritance (the down payment)"

Sealed with the Spirit, as a pledge, or an earnest of our inheritance. God ends up with this because we are tempted to say, "Wow, all of this wealth! By the time it becomes mine, I'll probably be in heaven in my glorified body." But Gods says, "No, the wealth is already yours. Not,

that it will be yours someday." Do you believe this with all your heart? Heaven is as certain to you right now, as if you've been there for a thousand years.

Look at these figures of speech. The Holy Spirit is called a "seal". The word is used as a guarantee, or stamp. It's a figure of speech that was drawn from the Roman business world. When the Roman seal was on a package, you'd better believe, that package got delivered! Nobody broke the Roman seal. (Except perhaps the Lord, on Resurrection Sunday). That meant it was "safe and sure", delivery guaranteed. There are many seals in the scriptures. Remember the signet ring in the story of Esther. The image of the king pressed into soft wax. Transferred authority. God softens us and seals us. As soon as we're saved, He presses His seal upon us. The Holy Spirit, is that stamp or seal. God's mark, on our lives. Talk about making a great first impression!

I don't know what it means to you, but it becomes increasingly precious to me, that God has put His seal on my life. Satan loves to torment the children of God, but nobody breaks the seal. Once you get the seal, it's there, and you can't erase it. My wife used to have tremendous doubts about her salvation. I entertained doubts, but not like hers. She went through agony. But doubts, don't' erase the seal. Backsliding can't erase the seal. He says, "You are rich, and you are in Christ Jesus. Even though you don't see it, I've put a seal on you. The Holy Spirit is that seal, and your fears will not be able to erase it". Nothing can erase it,

"Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus; not death, not life, not angels, not principalities, not things present and not things to come and not powers and not height and not depth nor any other created thing is able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus".

Look at verse 14. The Holy Spirit not only seals us, but is given as a pledge. KJV says, it's an "earnest". The Greek says, "down payment". In the world of agriculture, the word would have been "first fruits". But we aren't farmers. The earnest is the partial payment, toward the total obligation. It guarantees the fulfillment of the transaction. Let me illustrate. If I were buying a house, and they wanted a down payment. I'd put down 15% cash. I've paid the earnest. When it comes time to pay it off, I ask, "How much do I owe?" They would say, "85%." If I pay

them 85% in marbles, will they let me have the house? If I pay 85% in bananas, or old newspapers. Will that satisfy the debt? The down payment and the balance owed, must be in like value. It has to be qualitatively the same.

Do you see what God is saying here? He's saying, "I've blessed you so much, you will never come to the end of it". How do I know, **for sure,** I'm going to get it? He's already given, the "down payment". He has given the earnest, His Holy Spirit. A **foretaste** of His presence, which in the future, will be the Kingdom of Heaven. It's an amazing thing.

Sometimes, when you get into fellowshipping with God, you feel like your heart might just burst with joy. You feel like saying, "I'm in heaven right now". You hope for greater capacity, so you can receive more. You have tasted heaven, and that's just the down payment. That's heaven in the bud. That's a **present foretaste**, of what's to come. I don't care how intimate your fellowship with God is, or how wonderful your times of communion are. You've still, only gotten the earnest.

Grace is not just grace. **Grace, is the earnest of glory**. It's the down payment, of what shall be. And, what a tremendous way to end this. He says that we're wealthy, but also hints that it is nothing compared with the glory coming. If you could see the depths that are available in union with Him, it would burn you to a cinder. We're not ready, and not qualified. He says, "I'll leave you on earth for a while, and progressively reveal my Son to you, according to your capacity. Then one day, I'll give you a new capacity. With a resurrection body, full of glory.

Then you'll receive all of what I've begun to pay." I suggest, this is how God looks at it from His **point of view**. He sees every single Christian, in the Beloved. Every Christian, has been sealed with a down payment of future blessing. It's hard to think that anything, could be more wonderful. But hang on, there's more wonder coming!

## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 7

Who Are the Blessed?

1:3-14

### What a title, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It's a great thing, to have the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, and Paul. But it's nothing, compared with having the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Do you know what he's saying? He's saying, "Is there any blessing, that God would deny His own Son?" We would say, "No! He wouldn't deny Jesus anything." We **have** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's going to bless you the **same way** He blesses His Son. Do you know that in John 17, it teaches that God the Father never had one ounce more love for the Son of God, than He has for you. Jesus prayed,

## "May they experience such perfect unity, that the world will know that you sent me and that you **love them** as much as you **love me**."

Who is the Blesser. We're going to look at the blessing, but don't get caught up in **the blessing**, and miss the **Blesser**. God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of the Universe, the Trinity, the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit chose you. Bought you, sealed you, and adopted you. We ought to be pouring our hearts out, to the Blesser. "Come Holy Spirit and apply that to our lives".

Who are the blessed? I'll give you the answer, and then illustrate it. The answer is. All Christians. Every Christian, united to Christ. Notice chapter 1:1, the word "Saints", and verse 18, "His inheritance in the saints". Just like the word "church" has suffered from abuse, so the word "saints", has taken an awful beating. The word "saint" has been misinterpreted and misapplied throughout history. In preaching, religion, art, poetry and in literature.

I tell you what "saint" means to most people. "Dead Super Christian". That's a saint. Somebody, that made it to heaven. Somebody, that's glorified, and gone to their final home. "Now he's a saint, beyond the reach of sin." To other people a saint is a person, not connected to **ordinary life**. A few select (called), individuals. We paint them in strange garments with halos. We see them as holy people isolated from society. They **appear** to have this mystic union and relationship with

God. One way you can tell how we have misinterpreted the word saint is by these expressions: "Well, I ain't no saint." "Are you a saint or something?" You get the idea that, you don't want to be one. It comes across like "goody two shoes". You might feel better if they said, "You little devil." It's lost its meaning. Let's look at how the Bible uses it? How Ephesians uses it?

**Every Christian is a saint**. That's how the word is used in the Bible. A Bible saint is not some isolated monk on a mountain. He's in the factories and on the street. She's an everyday Christian, who hasn't lost contact with people. Someone, with agony, and real problems. When you remove saint-ship from the factory, the street, and from everyday existence, you make it inhuman, anemic and weak. The saints in the New Testament are everyday Christians.

When it says in verse 1, "To the faithful". It's not talking to those who are loyal. There, the word "faithful", just means "full of faith". Those who are trusting, those who are following. Every Christian is a saint. Matter of fact, in chapter 5:3, Paul advises all of us to, "Live as saints". King James says, "As becometh saints." The NASV says, "As is proper among saints." You see, the Blesser is God, and who does He bless? He blesses saints. Every Christian! Saint Bob, Saint Bill, Saint Pat, Saint Jack and Saint Ed. We're the saints!

Notice in verse 3, it doesn't say," He will bless". It doesn't say, "He desires to bless". It doesn't say, "He might bless". It doesn't even say, "Gather together and pray, then God will bless". It says, "He hath blessed" — past tense. He has already blessed every saint, with every spiritual blessing, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ask God to knock down the walls of your mind, and believe that with all your heart. He has already done it, in His saints. On the cross, and through the resurrection of our victorious Lord. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has already blessed us.

Did you ever hear something like this at a prayer meeting, "Lord, I'm asking you right now, to bless so and so, or bless the missionaries." Do you realize that's an **unscriptural** prayer? When you pray that God should bless somebody, you're saying you don't understand Ephesians chapter 1. God has **already blessed** every saint, with every blessing. So what are you asking, when you pray to bless somebody? Many times

it's just a statement full of **unbelief**. The only scriptural way to pray that God would bless somebody, is in the sense of **claiming** the blessing. It's already there. God has already blessed you. He can only open your eyes to what's already there. He can't give you anything else. When you got saved, you got everything. We'll never get another thing except **eyes** to see it.

Much of the confusion surrounding prayer, is rooted in a misunderstanding between the physical and the spiritual. Jesus taught us to trust God for physical things, "Those things the gentiles seek", and knock yourself out, seeking, "The kingdom of God and His righteousness".

He also reminded us that, "All these things," our physical necessities, "Would be added". That which we fervently seek, reveals the true passion and desire of our heart. Because the physical is always temporary, and a mere shadow of the reality that is to come, the Lord's economy will always sacrifice the lesser, for the greater. He will do everything in His power, to see your spirit and soul complete in Him.

The true purpose of prayer is not to change God or the situations we find ourselves in. It is a recognition that the Lord has invited and desired us to partner with Him and create a testimony to Jesus in this world.

I was helping my youngest son build a fence at his home. His son Mateo, is just two years old and with wild eyed glee ran to get his little tool belt and a collection of plastic hammers and saws to help with the project. He managed to get quite dirty and make a huge mess as my son and I did the real work. When we put up the last piece, the three of us took great pride in what we accomplished. Being the good daddy he is, my son put his arm around Mateo and said, "Thanks, you did a great job".

Beloved, that's prayer. God invites us to bring our spiritual and soulish tools to the project and make believe we can help. He plans and He builds. He just enjoys our company and loves to see our passion and joy.

We just recently went to pray for our new granddaughter who is getting a slow start at eating and such. My wife Tina has a gift of healing and prayed. She told me God was moving and had instructed her to say and do some specific things. The next morning my son texted us that somehow the baby got up every 3 hours wide awake and hungry.

I asked the Lord why He uses people like me and Tina in such situations. The reply came immediately and made me laugh. "John..... I'm invisible!"

I realized that God needed us weak creatures to make sure that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, gets the testimony and the credit. If we had not gone and represented the Lord Jesus, and God began healing, others would give credit to the doctors or medicines or just luck.

Peter tried to explain to the Jews in Acts 3, after the crippled beggar had been healed.

II While the man clung to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and ran to them in the walkway called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you surprised by this? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus. You handed Him over and rejected Him before Pilate, even though he had decided to release Him. 14 You rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and we are witnesses of the fact.

In order to obey Paul's suggestion in I Thessalonians 5:17,

### "Pray without ceasing"

We must understand that prayer is not just folding our hands and reminding God of what we think He needs to do. But rather prayer is as necessary as breathing. All day long and then throughout the night even when we seem to have no conscious thought of it. We bring in air as we inhale. Then, as we exhale we release the waste produced as the air mingles with our toxic bodies. That's Prayer! Just a cursory knowledge of Greek and Hebrew will tell you that breath and spirit are the same words.

When we get into Paul's prayer in Chapter 1, we see how he prays that the eyes of our hearts would be opened. Fellow Christians, fellow saints, and fellow billionaires, we "have been" blessed by God. And blessed!!! with every blessing. When I sign my letters, "The Lord Bless You Real Good", that's nice, but spiritually inaccurate. We are asking Him to do, what He's already done. Thanking Him for His blessings, is more in line with reality. I speak as a fool. God stands frustrated in heaven, because He can't give again, what He's already given.

Instead of begging God, we begin to praise Him, for what is **already** true. I tell you, it will make a qualitative difference in your life. You

won't be walking around like penniless beggars. You'll begin to live, like the billionaire you are. We're saints, and we're rich. We should never live beneath that high and holy calling. It's a tremendous position, and a high privilege. Purchased, by the inestimable blood of Christ. He paid too much, for us to have **ordinary** lives. Verse 7,

#### "Blesses, according to His riches."

It doesn't say **out** of His riches. They say the very wealthy John D. Rockefeller liked to golf in California because he was a lousy tipper. He didn't want to be seen in New York, tipping so badly. John D. Rockefeller tipped out of his riches, not according to his riches. God does not bless us **out of** His riches, but **according to** His riches. How rich is God? That's how rich you are.

When you get a designated gift, you have an obligation to use it for the **intended purpose**. He has made us so rich that you might get the idea, "I'm rich in order to be rich". Now watch. According to Ephesians 1, all our wealth, is **designated**. It's all used for one purpose, and one purpose only. He's given this, and this, because he wants something. Wants what? Why so rich? What is the wealth designated for? Your pleasure? It will result in that! Let's see the direction of God's heart in His abundant giving. Verse 4,

# "Just as He chose us in Himself before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him".

At a tremendous price, and with an eternal purpose, God wrought our great salvation. "Before the foundations of the earth", God planned that we might be holy. That we might be, like Jesus. Who is "Firstborn, among many brethren". There's an "easy believe-ism", among the people of God. It says, "Live any old way you want. Do your own thing. The law doesn't apply to us. God forgives the lazy and careless."

No, these are designated gifts, they don't' lead to a slipshod life. They are designed to make you holy, to make you pure, and to **deliver you from sin.** "It's spiritual wealth, for spiritual health". He longs for a holy people and an unblemished Bride.

Christians love to quote Romans 8:28,

"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

Some in immaturity or simplicity, think that it might help them get out of some difficult problem. When God chooses not to deliver them in the fashion they had hoped, it often produces a greater lack of faith than they had before. If they would read just one verse more, it would all be clearly understood. Romans 8:29 tells us the purpose and heart of what God meant by all things working for the good. Romans 8:29,

"For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

All things will work together, to help God conform you to the image of His Son. Ask Jacob, who's intimate encounter with the Lord, ends with a serious limp, and a new name. Ask Job, who learned to surrender to a God of love, which led him to a vision of his Redeemer (Jesus). Ask Ezekiel, who's dream of being a priest like his father, was destroyed as completely as was the temple and the city of God. God Himself sent the cruel and merciless Babylonians to physically chasten His wife (Israel).

But in order to strengthen and encourage Ezekiel, God gave him visions of heaven. God showed him His heavenly throne, alive and well on earth. Ezekiel was made the first "heart priest". He was made spiritually whole, in order to heal and encourage the Bride of Christ. He has given us, in his writings, the meaning of our spiritual priesthood. He has revealed to us the magnificence of the "Temple of God", the reconciliation of heaven and earth.

What the caterpillar calls, "The end of life."

The Master calls, "A butterfly".

**Chapter 8** 

Eyes to See

1:15-23

In Ephesians 1:15-23, Paul bursts into "The prayer for spiritual eyesight". Paul has showed us, how God sees us, multi-billionaires. Now he begins to pray for us. It means very little to have great wealth, if you can't use it. The natural heart is blind to spiritual things. If that heart rules the Christian, or the unsaved, they are spiritually blind. I've discovered some reasons why God has arranged this first chapter the way He did. One, is that it's not enough to give out the truth. After you finish giving it out, you ought to pray it in. That's what the apostle does.

According to this chapter, once I've taught a Bible study, my responsibility has just begun. I have another responsibility. To pray that God would open the eyes of your heart. Pray, that He gives the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. I haven't been faithful in this. But the apostle Paul was. He gave out the message. Then He called upon the Lord, who alone, can make it real. By His death and resurrection, **Christ made it true**. Now the Holy Spirit, must **make it real** to us. It's already true. It can't be, more true. Your believing it and so putting your trust in it, won't make it **more true**. It will, make it, **more real**. So, he prays, 15,

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

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling; what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the surpassing greatness of His power upon all of us who believe. These are accordance to the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly place far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but in the one to come. And He put all things to subjection under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all."

What a prayer! Let me outline how I'd like to look at it. First I'd like to suggest how to study the "Prison prayers" of Paul. There are four prison prayers. Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:1-19, Philippians 1:3-11 and Colossians 1:3-12. Studying these will answer this question. "How can I effectively pray for other Christians?" I believe every child of God, should measure their prayer life by these prayers. I did that to mine, and wouldn't you know it, I flunked!

Most of our prayers, are incredibly superficial. We seek to change physical, or environmental situations. But Paul's prayers get down to the source of the problem. Down to false foundations. If we're going to pray for each other, let's pray with God's inspiration ("inspire" literally means, "to breathe in"). Let's pray, as God **teaches** us to pray. How wonderful would it be, if you prayed for me, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians. If I prayed for you, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians. It's not grocery list praying, "Bless the missionaries, provide a jeep, a computer, etc, etc" We will find the "life changing" principle of prayer in verse 17,

# "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a Spirit of wisdom, and revelation, in the knowledge of Him."

The word "Revelation" in the Greek means, "To unveil", or "To take the cover off". That's where I get the idea of taking the veil away. "Give you a Spirit of wisdom, and unveiling." It's a prayer for eyesight.

Paul prayed this for **all** the Ephesian Christians. He didn't select a handful of "spiritual hotshots" and say, "Lord, take the veil away for them." Eyesight, is for **all** God's children. I was so occupied with external problems that for years I prayed like this, "Oh Lord, so and so is depressed. Lift the discouragement, and drive it away." Boy, if God were to lift the veil and show that discouraged brother His wealth in Christ, discouragement, would be impossible! Verse 18,

### "That the eyes of your heart, might be enlightened."

I remember when I was pastoring a local Church. One of the choir ladies refused to sing a particular song that asked, "Lord take the scales from our eyes". She said, "I can't sing that! I don't have scales on my eyes. I'm a Christian. Unbelievers have scales on their eyes." Not so! Believers are blind. Many believers, have a darker blindness than sinners, because, they have potential eyesight. Remember what Jesus

told the "so called" religious leaders who denied their blindness. "If you were blind, you could see. But because you say 'I see', your blindness remains." They are blind to who they are in Christ, and can't see their wealth in Him.

Asking God, "Open our eyes, so we can see more of Christ!", is always the right thing to do. You never come to the place where you say, "Alright, that's enough, I don't need any more." You always need more! Christ is infinite. We can't see His fullness. He's always got more to show. We just can't bear it. He's constantly working in our life, **getting us ready** to bear it. That's why the Laodicean Church became lukewarm. They stopped seeing. Jesus warns in Rev. 3:18,

#### "I council you to buy eye salve, and anoint your eyes."

You don't need more gifts, more blessings, more talent, more experiences, or more power. You have it! You need eyes. Oh, if God would give us eyes. He wouldn't have to give us anything else. When He gave you Christ, He sealed you with the Holy Spirit. He gave you the earnest. He gave you everything in seed form. The only thing you are going to get from here until the day you enter heaven, is new eyes.

He's going to break it down and get specific. He wants us to see these three things.

- 1. "The hope of His calling".
- 2. "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"
- 3. "The surpassing greatness of the power toward us who believe."

Once again, it's possible to get caught up in the theology of these simple truths and miss the beauty.

Let me try to nail it down simply and quickly. We aren't left without verses when we talk about "The hope of your calling". There are plenty that tell you what you are called to. 1 Peter 3:9 you are called "The blessing". And 5:10, you're "Called to eternal glory". 1 Thess. 2:12, "Called, to His own kingdom and glory." 2Thess. 2:14,

"It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you might gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." What's the hope of our calling? You say it's the second coming of Christ. No, it includes that, but it's more than that. He's not talking about the second coming of Christ when He says, "That they might see the hope of their calling." Let me try to put it into one simple sentence, then say a word or two about it.

I believe it can be summarized in these words, "Everything I have to look forward to, in time and eternity." That's the hope of our calling. Sometimes it's hard to see how all things are working together for good to those who love God. That God, has a purpose in everything. We lose a job, or get sick, or we backslide. We lose a loved one. We are mistreated, or we become the victims of gossip and slander. We walk down the street, and get bitten by a dog or lose our wallet. How does it all tie in?

Let me play a game with you. Would you be thrilled if God would suddenly open your eyes, and show you how all things fit together? How all things, that come into your life, work together for good. And conform you to the image of His Son.

If He told you the reason you tripped over that stone, or the reason for that fire. Why that book came your way, or you heard something on the radio. Would that thrill your heart? Let's say that He opened your eyes even wider. He not only showed you the purpose for everything. But showed you the reason you are going through it. I'll tell you what, if He were to do something like that, you'd have reason for hope, wouldn't you?

That's the hope of your calling. He opens your eyes to that by faith. He doesn't show you why you tripped over the stone, or why the dog bit you. He gives you the principle, (His character), and says, "All things work together for good". "Lord, open their eyes that they might know that everything in time and in all eternity, is designed to conform them to the image of Christ. Show them that." What would that assurance do in your life?

You are bound to be characterized by hope if your eyes are open to that truth. "To be holy and blameless before Him". Paul knows that, and prays for his friends, "Lord, open their eyes. Give them the Spirit of wisdom and unveiling, that they might see, the hope of their calling."

Then he goes on and says, "And not only that, but what are the riches of His inheritance in the saints". Now read it carefully because it is often misread. "His inheritance in the saints." He's not talking about your inheritance in Him. He's talking about His inheritance in you. It is one thing to see by revelation, what you have in Christ. But it's another thing to see, by revelation, what He has in You. This isn't just a spiritual bumper sticker. You make His heart flip. You make God excited! He gets so thrilled over you. He loves you. You are His inheritance. "He is jealous for you!"

You say, "The Lord is my portion." Yes, of course! But you're His portion. All things are His. Hebrews 1:1&2,

"He's the heir of all things." Psalm 57 says, "The cattle on a thousand hills are His." Psalm 24 says,

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwell therein."

I tell you, in a special way, He has an inheritance in His saints. In our most spiritual meditation, we would never have guessed, dreamed, hoped, or ever thought, how much pleasure God takes in us. It's easy to say to someone else, "God loves you." But has God ever burned it into your heart, that **YOU** give Him pleasure?

When is the last time you did nothing, but let God **enjoy you**? When is the last time you got alone and said, "Lord, here I am, just love me!" We don't naturally believe that. We naturally believe that we should rest in Him, and have fellowship with Him. And that's all right. But oh that God would open our eyes, to see **His** inheritance in us. That He's in us, and delights in us. We're not His gardeners. We're **His garden**. He wants to enjoy us, grace us, love us and hug us. Sometimes Lillian comes up and says, "Don't say anything, just hug me." Let God just hug you!

I'm not playing with this. Paul said that God has to open your eyes to that. That doesn't happen naturally. You're not going to think of that on your own. Then he says in 19-23,

"That they might know the exceeding greatness of the power".

The power that's available to them as Christians. Most of all he says, "Show them that they are in Christ. Above every name that is named, and seated with Him in heavenly places." Only **blind** Christians, are **discouraged** Christians. Only blind Christians, are anxious Christians. Only blind Christians, are depressed. Only blind Christians, fret. Only blind Christians, worry. Only blind Christians, are victims of their circumstances. Only blind Christians, are in bondage to sin. If God opens our eyes, and we see ourselves far above every name that is named, **seated** with Christ in heavenly places. We would never be discouraged again!

Then he says, "Lord, you've got to open their eyes to something else". "It's so hard to live the Christian life. Man, it's a struggle. Persecution, family responsibilities, and then, my horrible job. You've got to have a lot of willpower to live the Christian life. What a war! What a battle!" That's **not**, what the scripture says. "Lord, open their eyes to the power that's available to them, to live the Christian life."

In the Old Testament if you wanted a picture of power, you have the awesomeness of "Creation". But in the New Testament God uses "The Resurrection", to display His might.

"The power that He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of the majesty on high above every name that's named".

Power, to live the Christian life? You have the Life, of the Almighty One!! Not something, called "power". That's why he ends this way. He doesn't say, "Lord, Thou hast given the Church power." In the last verse, 22 it says,

## "He gave **Him**, to the Church".

Not power. You have the Life of the eternal One. There's no excuse for not living the Christian life. If you are blind, don't worry. He will, give you eyes to see!

## Chapter 9 Salvation Past, Present & Future 2:1-10

Let me warn you, brothers and sisters in the Lord. Never **substitute** the Lord Jesus Christ, with anything else. No matter how good that substitute **appears** to be. Don't fall in love with God's **attributes**, as if they were separate or distinct from Him. Don't fall in love, with the love of God. Fall in love, with God Himself. Face to face fellowship with Him!

You don't need to go after His power, or His patience. Don't seek His wisdom, or His will. **Go after Him**. Having Him, you have everything that comes with Him. "He gave Him to the Church." What does He mean by that? "He gave Him as head over all things, to the Church." This is more than saying, "Christ is head of the Church." That's true, but that's not what He's saying here. He's going beyond that. Christ is the Head of the Church, but the Church is His Body. He's also head over all things to the Church. What does that mean?

I'd like to word it this way, "God has given Him to be head over all things, for the **benefit of the Church"**. Let me illustrate it and it might become clearer. There are a couple of verses that make you wonder why you ever worry, fret, or ever get anxious in life. According to this passage, God is sovereign. He's Governor and Head. Not just over some things, not most things, not pretty nearly everything, but for the benefit of the Church, He's Head over **all things**.

If you looked at those old Roman roads with human eyes you would say, "Those roads were built to spread Roman Imperial power throughout the earth." But when you look with the eyes of your heart, you see the truth. He's the head over all things for the benefit of the Church. Those Roman roads were built for an ugly missionary named Paul. Those roads were built for Christians. To spread God's Kingdom, not the Roman Empire!

I don't think I'm childish for believing that Christ engineers, controls and governs all circumstances in order to accomplish His redemptive purposes on earth. I don't have any trouble believing that God would

delay planes, buses and trains. That governments rise and fall in accordance with His will. He's head over all things to the Church.

Don't think the great advances seen in society only benefit man's ego or promote our silly culture. I don't believe it for a minute. I believe electricity was God's provision for the Church. Radio and television is for God's children. Printing presses, literature and all media, was invented for the spread of the gospel. Music was written for the people of God. He's head over all things to the Church, and for the Church.

Certainly these things have been abused. Nevertheless, in Him all things belong to us. I think all of us can think of times, when God's sovereignty has controlled our circumstances. It's nothing more than Romans 8:28 & 29, stated in another way,

"All things work together for the good of those who love the Lord, who are the called according to the purpose of being conformed to the image of His Son."

Look one more time at verse 23,

#### "Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all."

We're generally accustomed to think about our own personal relationship with Christ rather than thinking of ourselves as part of a body. If I were to say, "Are you in Christ?" You'd be thinking about your own self, and probably not the whole Church. Yet, in the book of Ephesians, God is **not** talking about the **individual**. He's talking about the group. God's people. His Body. As an individual, I know 100% of God is in my heart. Not some of God. He's all there. God doesn't chop Himself up and give us each a little bit. Every Christian has 100% of God in their heart. That's too big for anything but faith. But it's the teaching of the word of God.

Though, every Christian has the fullness of deity in him, there is a way that only the Church, can radiate/express Him. You and I are tiny individual parts of an enormous entity. The ocean can't flow through your garden hose. The sun can't shine through a flashlight. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "Greater works will you do". It's hard to build a building with one brick or play a concert with a flute.

Here's how it works practically. God opens the scriptures, and He shows you Christ according to your own hunger and capacity. He gives

you exactly the revelation you need to take you forward. He does the same for me. That revelation you have of Christ may be different than the revelation I have. It may be different than Christian A's, and different than Christian B's. His revelation is restricted by our capacity. Because we are all unique, we experience God in our own **unique** way.

When we first moved into this building, there were cut glass door knobs that look like diamonds. I took one, and hung it in the window of my study. When the sun hits it, my study becomes psychedelic. A literal rainbow room. Sometimes I spin it. Wow, it looks amazing! In one place it's so bright, I can't even look at it. I'll stand in another spot, and it looks green. Somewhere else, red. And somewhere else, blue. Every look from a new perspective, gives differing results. New patterns, of radiance and glory.

I realize that's a poor illustration, but it's something like that with the Body of Christ. It's something like that with the Church. We're all cut differently, and Christ shines through us uniquely. Together we give a testimony, and a reputation of God on the earth. Together, we make a greater influence of light and salt on the earth. In a special way the Church is **His body**, "The fullness of Him that filleth all in all".

Sometimes we get awfully selfish and introspective. We go off by ourselves. Well, don't stop pursuing the Lord on your own. Jesus told us to enter our closet and shut the door. But recognize, as well, that God has a corporate testimony. And that can only be expressed, through our unity.

The first part of the chapter says, God sees us in Christ. The chapter ends by saying, the world sees Christ in us. The Church is the fullness of Him that fills all in all. That's chapter 1.

I'll ask you to turn to chapter 2, the second summary of our riches in Christ. Please read verses 1-10 before you continue......

Let me give you a simple way to get the thrill of this section before your hearts. Glance down at 2:1-3. Notice how it deals with the **past**. Now see how verses 4-6 deal with the **present**. Look at verses 7-10. This covers the **future**. I like to word it this way. The second summary of our riches in Christ, is in terms of **three fold salvation**. Salvation past, is

**justification**. Salvation present, is **sanctification**. Salvation future, is **glorification**. Those are the theological words.

Sometimes we miss an awful lot by not using words as God uses them in the Bible. When we use the word "salvation", we limit it to something that happened in the past. Usually when we say "salvation", we mean getting saved. "Did someone get saved?" I heard a person say, "Well, he's saved, but that's it! Just saved". That's like saying, "Poor guy. All he has is salvation". That's like saying salvation is not enough. "All he has is salvation — he needs something else." What else could you need?

If you use the word the way God intended, you won't need anything else. When you've said, "Salvation". You've said **everything**. There's no room for a second work of grace. It's utter foolishness to think that a Christian needs something beyond salvation.

There's a story told about a Salvation Army girl who was handing out gospel literature. To her dismay she approached the famous Greek scholar, Bishop Wescott. Handing him a gospel tract she said, "Sir, do you have salvation?" Well, he answered, "Do you mean 'sotheis', I have been saved, or 'sezosmenos', I am being saved, or do you mean sozomenos, I will be saved?" Now, he might have been a little rude, but he was 100% Biblical.

Salvation is more than getting saved. It includes that, but it also pictures us seated with Christ, right now, in heavenly places. It also reaches far into the future, taking us into eternity. That's why God writes, "We're closer to our salvation, than when we first believed."

It's true I have salvation. But it's also true...... I'm not saved yet!

## **Chapter 10**

Salvation Past

2:1-3

Justification, is salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin. (Past) Sanctification, is salvation from the power, and slavery of sin. (Present) Glorification, is salvation from the results, and presence of sin. (Future)

It will be easy to outline, because God gives us chapter 2:1-10, salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future as the sum of all our riches. Let's begin with Ephesians 2:1-3, salvation past.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

In this passage the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, is doing a very wholesome thing. It's good, every now and then, to look back at the "dark side" of your conversion. Remember what it was like, before God had mercy and saved you. There's a wrong way to do that, which can imprison you in guilt and condemnation. But when done in the right spirit, it can remind us of where we've been lifted to.

There's a way to study these verses that is dead theology. I don't want to do that. These are great verses on the **depravity of man**. But that can lead to a cold, hard, clerical experience. Seeing what the Holy Spirit intended us to see, will cause our hearts to melt in gratitude. Let's trust Him to work that into our hearts.

I heard about a man who gave testimony in words similar to these, "I'm not what I want to be, and I'm not what I should be. I'm not what I could be. And I'm not what I will be. But Praise God, I'm not what I was." Well, that's Paul's message in these three verses. He's looking back at what he was. He's going back in time, before he trusted the Lord. There are five expressions that the Holy Spirit uses in these three verses. They each show how hopeless we were, before God had mercy

on us. Let me share them before we move on. May God quicken us to this!

The first expression is in chapter 2:1, "Dead in trespasses and sins." Verse 5, the same thing, "Dead in your transgressions."

It's not possible to catch this graphic description, unless the Spirit of God quickens us. It's hard to see what the Spirit meant, when He said, "Dead in trespasses and sins". Picturing the unsaved, as "walking sepulchers". Seeing with God's eyes, that a sinner is a corpse, lying in a grave of corruption. Nothing, but the stench of rot and decay.

This brings us to verses 8-9,

### "It's a gift of God and it's not of works, lest any man should boast."

If you've got the truth in your heart that you are dead. You have nothing to boast about, when you get rescued. A dead person, is a dead person, is a dead person. No life. He can't even holler, "Help!" He can't do anything. That's why God uses this strong illustration. We watched a news report showing the horrible conditions after the Beirut massacre. The air was so polluted they had to wear masks. You can't escape the smell of death! That is God's illustration of a soul **separated** from Him.

Hold that for a moment. Look at verse 2,

### "The prince of the power of the air."

What is God saying, by describing Satan this way. One commentary says, "He's called 'The prince of the power of the air' because he spends more time in the upper atmosphere than he does on earth". Well, I don't know where he spends his time. Another one says, "'The prince of the power of the air', means that Satan has the power to raise winds, and cause storms like he did in Job's day. He controls the weather." Another says, "There are so many demons, that they fill the air like flies. The air is full of them. That's why Satan is called 'Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies'. Because there are as many demons under him as there are flies in the air".

Here's what I think God means in this context. Paul looks back at the Christian's past, before salvation, and declares, "Dead in sin and transgression". When you were dead in sin, how much influence did Satan have over your life? The answer is. As much influence as the air

has on my body. I think that's the point. He's "The prince of the power of the air". As we live and breathe in the atmosphere of the earth, the unbeliever lives in the atmosphere of Satan. It's just another illustration of how hopeless we were. What a mess we were in! We haven't begun to understand, how much we've been delivered from.

There was a time when you were dead in sin, and Satan was influencing you, whether you knew it, or not. We paid as little attention to his influence on us, as we did the air around us. A horrible, and hopeless situation. Look at verse 2 again. The third expression,

#### "Sons of disobedience".

I have six children. Let me illustrate by my youngest son. On Aug. 14, 1977, the Lord gave Lillian and me, Stephen Edward. When he was born, he belonged to me as a son belongs to a father. He belonged to Lillian, as a son belongs to a mother. He was the "son of Edward". Before you were saved, you were "sons of disobedience". You belonged to disobedience, as a child belongs to a parent. That's what he's trying to say. You were related to disobedience. Kissing cousins. You had no choice, you had to sin. And your father's name was "disobedience".

Let me ask this. Have I ever disobeyed the Lord since I've been saved in 1958? Indeed I have! I tell you, to my shame, that I've disobeyed the Lord many times. But listen. Not once, have I disobeyed the Lord, **as** a "son of disobedience". I'm no longer a son of **disobedience**. I'm a child of God. You've disobeyed the Lord since you've been saved. But before you were saved, that, was the direction of your life. You were related to disobedience, as a child is related to their parent.

Not once, since you've been saved, have you disobeyed as a "child of disobedience". Look back. You were dead. Satan influenced your life, as the air influences your body. Look back. You were related to disobedience, and that was expressed in many ways. Thoughts, words, actions, and deeds. A horrible past!

I looked back this afternoon as I was studying. Sin beat me black and blue. Before I got saved, there was no rest or escape. He said, "Do you want to see how rich you are in Christ? Then take a look at what you were before you were saved. On the level of earth, from the viewpoint of man, if we are ever going to see our riches, we've got to see what we've been saved from.

Verse 3, "By nature, the children of wrath".

This is one of the strongest expressions in the Bible on the truth of **original sin**. When you see a newborn baby. Beautiful, "innocent". It's born into this world as a child of wrath. You say it looks just like its father. Yes, Adam. As a "child of wrath", and a "son of disobedience", the future is certain. We all share our common source of life in the first Adam. We all hope in the "new life", bought and paid for by the last Adam. "The second man from heaven".

I have a book by Henry Melville who makes this comment, "You can tell how deep a hole you were in, by measuring the rope it took to pull you out." We see the length of rope it took, for God to pull us out. The price paid by the sacrifice of His only Son. 2 Corinthians 5:21,

"He became sin, who knew no sin. That we might become, the righteousness of God, in Him."

Our need for salvation was immeasurable. So is the joy of our salvation!

## Chapter 11

**Salvation Present** 

2:8-10

Let's look at salvation present. Sanctification. Verses 8-10,

"By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God, not as the result of works that no one should boast for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. We had a horrible past. How did God quicken you and raise you up with Christ? I believe verse 10 has the answer, "by created grace". I love that expression, "Created in Christ Jesus". Now don't be afraid of that word, and don't tone it down. God used that word, because it alone, communicates what is necessary to rescue people who are dead.

People who are "Satan influenced", "children of disobedience", enslaved to their old natures, and "children of wrath", can't be helped by anything except a new beginning. Nothing can help these people, except to start over. They need a "New creation". We were in such bad shape, that nothing could be salvaged from the old mess.

A new creation was necessary. The word "Creation" used here, is the same word used in Genesis. That's what He began with when He saved me; nothing. He had nothing to start with. Grace is not great because of the value it finds in our life. Grace is great, because of what it brings with it. It starts with nothing, and then creates us.

There is no spiritual evolution. The unsaved person, the sinner, has no beginning until God creates him. That's a **new beginning**. There's more theology in that truth, than in most seminaries. Only God can teach it. If it's true that God starts with nothing, like He did in Genesis 1:1, then how can anyone boast? How can you say, "I was a good boy, and I went to Church, and got baptized, etc." That's why I call it "**Created Grace"**.

Alright, look at that verse again. Not only does He say that you are created in Christ, but also, "We are His workmanship". The Greek word is very beautiful, "Poiema", where we get our word "poem" from. Try to get the impact of that. Remember what a poem meant to the

ancient Greeks. A poem was art, and a product of a skilled author. There's only two times in the Bible this word is used. Once in Romans 1:20, where it speaks about the physical creation,

#### "The things that are made, things that are **created**"

His poem. The other time is right here,

### "We are His workmanship".

Christians are His poems. Christians are the result of His skilled labor. He creates you out of nothing, and turns you into a literal masterpiece.

If you look at the physical creation, you will marvel at the skill, beauty and symmetry of God's creation. There is beauty beyond comprehension in this creation. Flowers, animals, insects, oceans, mountains, plants and the rest. That is God's poem. Then He takes the Christian and calls him His poem; "His workmanship". Look once more at Ephesians 2:10,

## "Created for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Don't think of good works in this verse, as some specific act or deed. Some Christian service. In this context, good works is shown in contrast to the actions of the unsaved, who walk according to the course of this world. It is compared to those influenced by, "The prince of the power of the air". But not the Christian; he walks in good works. It's not any individual specific act, but rather a direction of life. Good works, according to this passage, are not the cause of salvation. They are the result of salvation. "A good tree produces good fruit".

It's a simple truth that the tree produces fruit. When God planned the apple tree, He also planned the seed, and the fruit. He didn't go out and create an apple tree saying, "Let there be an apple tree". Then come back five years later and say, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had some apples". When he created the tree, He planned the apples, as much as the tree. Just so we read in Ephesians 1:4,

## "You were created in Him before the foundations of the earth, chosen in Him."

You say, "I don't have any trouble believing I was chosen in Him." Well, you're the apple tree. And if you were chosen in Him, so were the

results of your life. Before the foundations of the earth, your works were prepared.

Let me state it very simply and say it this way. Every Christian is created by God into a "unique poem". Before the earth was and before you were born, your whole life was planned out. It was ordained, and now you are created to walk in the plan that God has already prepared. He not only equips you for the path, but He also equips the path for you. Now when you and your path get together, you will be fully equipped. This is what He is saying. You can believe this with all of your heart. God equips you for every appointment you'll ever face in life.

He also prepares every opportunity in view of that equipment. He creates you, and has a marvelous design for you. What's involved, we don't know. It's an unknown quantity. It's going to be joy, and it's going to be sorrow. Times of difficulty, and testing. There will be what we call "tragedy". Believe it with all your hearts, Christian, it is foreordained that you shall walk in it. Before the foundations of the earth, it's already planned. It's called the work of **sanctification**.

Verse 10, every Christian is unique, and every Christian is different. When He saved you, He threw away the mold. When He saved you, He created you as a poem, as a literary masterpiece, as a product of skilled labor. He did something in you that He has not done in any other Christian. **Don't try to change, or be anybody else**. You are created in Christ Jesus. You are His workmanship, created for a path that He's foreordained you to walk in. This is an awesome part of your wealth.

#### A few more warnings.

- #1: **Don't try to put someone else in your mold**. You might be a square, or you might be a circle. You might be a diamond, or you might be a rectangle. You walk in the light God has given you, and don't try to squash other Christians into your mold. You are God's workmanship. You are created in Christ Jesus. You walk the path He has foreordained for you. That's the first warning.
- #2: **Don't let anyone press you into their mold**. It's the same truth from the other side. People try to make you feel guilty if you don't walk their way. They get upset, if you don't feel their burdens or join their programs. Don't force anybody into your mold, and don't let anybody

force you into their mold. You walk before God, and make sure you are not following man's ideas, or the traditions of men. Don't yield to pressure; be unique; be yourself. Let God show the world what He can do in a person like you. **Don't go copying other Christians.** 

#3: **Don't judge anyone who is not in your mold.** Not only don't force them. Don't judge them. You don't know what God's plans are for them. Don't say, "Oh, that guy is so lazy and he never gets involved." You don't know. He might have a ministry of writing letters. A prayer ministry in the closet, men's eyes will never see. You have no idea how God will use somebody. They might have the gift of giving, and are giving anonymously. One hand doesn't know what the other one is doing. Just because they aren't involved in **our great programs**, doesn't mean they are backsliding.

Let's not judge one another. We've all had a horrible past. "But God", who is rich in mercy and grace, found us. He created us, quickened us, and made us alive. Together with Him, we become His masterpiece. His great poem. Ephesians 2:10,

"We are His **workmanship** (Poem), and He has created us through our union with Christ Jesus, for doing good works, which He **beforehand** planned for us to do."

**Chapter 12** Salvation Future

2:6-10

In chapter 2 we looked at a wonderful word to describe your salvation. "Poiema". We are His workmanship, the product of skilled labor. We are His masterpiece. In Ephesians 2 we see the work of God in our life. Both individually, and corporately. A finished work. Christ is pictured as the "Top stone" of grace. We look forward to the day when the last sinner is saved. Covered by the righteousness of Christ. Standing in white robes, with resurrection bodies. Victorious over every enemy. Even the last enemy, death, has been destroyed. "It is finished."

The whole salvation process is finished. He takes you, clean, white and undefiled. The Bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle. He removes the veil, and the angels are astonished. The cherubim and the seraphim behold the work of grace He has put on display. The grace of God in you. The grace of God in me. The splendor of any achievement can be measured by the size, or number, of obstacles it has to overcome. The more **difficult** the obstacle, the **greater** the achievement.

Look what He's working with! Raw garbage. Red clay. (Adama) God has begun His work and will perform it until the day of Christ. He hasn't unveiled us yet. We're not yet on display. He's chipping and chiseling away. Holding us in the fire, to refine us. He tears us down and starts all over. He stretches us and pulls us. He's forming a masterpiece.

In salvation future He'll pull the veil off before the eyes of an adoring multitude. If angels have jaws, they will drop open in amazement. Behold God's work of grace in the church!!! His Body. His Bride.

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

What a day when the universe assembles to celebrate and praise God's masterpiece! Glory to the Lamb, who is worthy to receive honor and praise and glory and power and dominion and majesty and might forever and forever. They'll sing His praises into eternity. 2:7 tells us what it will be like in salvation future. Christians will be on display. The Victor displays his trophies on the day of His triumph. A great day, when the grace of God is on display! Heaven will become a great gallery and Christians will be the artwork. I used to think I will be awe struck when I get to see Gabriel or Michael. I don't know what I'll do when I see these angels. But maybe, Michael can't wait to see me. And Gabriel, can't wait to see you. They are going to adore the grace of God in Christ, as they behold Christians. You will be on display throughout the ages of eternity.

I love to relate this to Revelations 22:3, "His bondservants shall serve Him." I always wondered what in the world we'll do in heaven. I don't mind singing, but after ten billion years, what else are we going to do? Well, I don't know all that I'm going to do in heaven, but I know this, I'm going to serve Him by displaying His magnificent grace.

I tell you, I used to get discouraged that I was weak on grace. You and I are weak on grace. You won't be strong in grace until you are in heaven for a trillion years. We use the word "salvation" in such an anemic way. As if it was some kind of fire insurance that will keep somebody out of hell. It is that! But much, much, more. He pulled us out of the depths and takes us up to heavenly places. Seats us with Christ in His triumphant glory. Then works creative grace in our hearts. It's a marvelous thing! Both of these things are true. Romans 10:10 says,

# "With the heart man believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation."

That's true; when I trusted Jesus in 1958 I had salvation. But Romans 13:11 is also true,

### "Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed."

What a tremendous thing! There is sense in which I don't have it yet. Salvation is forty four years nearer to me than when I first believed. If any of you have trouble believing there is a future aspect of salvation, I'll give you a little test. Take a pin and stick it in your finger. That's the proof! If you bleed, or if it hurts. You don't have your new body yet. You're not finished.

You don't have salvation future. Just look in the mirror and look at your life. Look at the uncrucified filth in your heart, and thank God you aren't on display yet. In the world yet to come, you will be on display.

He's not going to unveil His masterpiece prematurely. He'll wait. We're impatient but God is not. He's not finished, so hang on.

Let me say one other word about this and then clinch it in another way. Romans 13:11,

#### "Salvation is nearer than when I first believed".

This also gives me the Bible method of facing old age. There are two ways to look at old age. The first is, "I've got twenty four less years to live, than when I first believed." In other words. Life is going fast and I'm losing ground. Or I can look at it this way, "I'm twenty four years closer to my salvation than when I first believed." That's how the Bible looks at it. So, does it depend upon what kind of day you've had? No, it doesn't.

God says you're getting closer and moving on. We don't have to look at old age and say, "I'm getting old and I've lost a lot." Oh no, I'm getting closer. I'm gaining ground. I'm heading for jubilee. The closer I get to jubilee the less value I give to the material world. Jesus Christ is our Jubilee! And when we celebrate Jubilee, all debts are paid. The prisoners are set free. All property (including you) returns to the Original Owner. You are His property, His temple, His building and His Bride. So rejoice!!!

That's Ephesians 2:1-7 and three fold salvation. What He has done and where I am. What's coming to me down the road. Let's look at 2:10 and ask the question, "How does God do all of this?" The answer,

### "Because He has created us through our union with Christ Jesus".

Creative grace. We are His creation, created in Christ Jesus. It took a creation of God to make it possible. He creates me and He creates you. Your Christian life is as much a creation of God as the trees, the valleys, the mountains, the seas, the flowers, the fish and birds. That's God's creation, and so is your Christian life.

We needed "fiat", an official order, given by someone who has the power and authority to make it so. We needed a "Let there be light" experience. We needed God to do it. And He did!!!

Chapter 13

Saved by Faith

2:8-9

Let me drive home the truth from verses 8 & 9,

"By grace you have been saved through faith and **that** not of yourselves; it's a gift of God, not of works or the result of works, that no one should boast".

These two verses have become loved and made famous among God's people. Usually they are used to show the unconverted sinner that he can't lift a finger to get his own salvation. "It's not by works, that any man should boast." God is the One Who has to do it. Glance at verse 8. I want to draw attention to the word "That", and "That, not of yourselves". Then the word "it". "It" is the gift of God.

To what does the word "That", refer? Some believe it describes the "faith" that God says "is not of yourselves". They use this verse to show that even the faith, by which you trust God, is a gift. It is totally from God, not originating with man.

Is faith a **gift of grace**, or can I believe, **without** the grace of God? The Bible gives an unqualified "yes". Faith is a gift of grace. But Ephesians 2:8, is not the strongest text to prove it. I like Ephesian 6:23, concerning the gift of grace.

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

That comes right out and says, **faith is from God**. Or how about Acts 18:27, speaking of Apollos,

### "He helped greatly those who had believed through grace."

You see, no act of faith can be exercised apart from the life of God. It's got to be **inspired (God breathed)**. Just, as the Lord breathed life into Adam, and Jesus, breathed life into His disciples. The grace of God is the **fountain** of all spiritual life. Faith belongs to God. We don't want to dethrone Christ by exalting faith.

What does the word, "That" refer to? By grace I was saved, "Through faith and that not of yourselves". It speaks of the entire salvation process. Salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future. This great salvation, is not of ourselves. You see, "That", includes faith, and everything else that comes with our redemption. Don't limit it to faith alone.

It includes repentance, hunger, thirst, seeking, praying, illumination, quickening, forgiveness and heaven in the end. The full salvation process. All of the blessings, God has rained on our heads. The multifaceted salvation process, is a gift from start to finish. It's grace all the way. It starts by grace. Continues by grace. And by grace, comes to a glorious ending, .

In John Newton's "Amazing Grace", there's a verse that says, "Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come. It's grace that's brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." Exactly right! It's the grace of God. It's amazing to me, how many people believe that it's grace at both ends, and somehow works in the middle.

If Jesus comes back before this study is finished, and takes us alive to meet Him in the air, what part would you have in it? Should we jump as high as we can? Should we flap our arms and try to fly? What part would you have in the rapture? I'll tell you, it's by grace. It started by grace, and it's going to end by grace. You have no part. He'll change you in the twinkling of an eye, and give you a new body. If it starts as a gift, if it ends as a gift, why do we have trouble believing, it's a gift all the way?

Some say, "It started as a gift but now **I've got to work** at it! I've got to be sincere, and I've got to work really hard. I've got to dedicate myself, and I've got to deny myself. I must strive and struggle with sin, then get involved in every program that comes along. I've got to work hard for the Lord, and quit sinning, and believe, and rest, and pray, and study, and confess, and repent, and give, and be in good Spirit, and all the rest. I **must** do that." No you **must not**! It's a gift of God. It's the grace of God. It's not by works.

Have you ever meditated upon the impossibility and stupidity of creature merit? In order to get merit, two things have got to be true:

- #1 To have merit, it can't be duty. You have to do something that you are not obliged to do. It must go **beyond** duty.
- #2 It has to in some way advantage, or profit the person you are getting the merit from. Let me illustrate. If it doesn't advantage God, then it can't be merit.

Now watch. The idea of meriting with God is not only pride, but **blasphemy**. Think of it. You can never do anything that adds to Him. There's no reason why an angel, who is strong enough to move a world, should merit any more than a worm that crawls upon the earth. Remember Jesus' words,

"When you shall have done all that is commanded you, then say, we are unprofitable servants, we have only done what was required."

God is the creator. And to the One Who created us, we are duty bound. We are to love Him with every ounce of strength He put in us. We are duty bound to worship, adore, praise and serve Him. And even if you did that perfectly, you haven't gone beyond what's required.

The angels in heaven have no merit. If you were to go to heaven, and suggest that an angel deserves to be there, he would accuse you of treason and blasphemy. He'd say, "God made us this way, we owe it to Him as our Creator." If I'm going to merit, I have to find something I can give to God. Something He didn't make. Good luck on that one. It's impossible. You've got to give Him something that didn't first come from Him.

If I owe Tom \$10 and then give him \$10 saying, "Here's a donation". He would say, "I'm sorry, that's not a donation. That's a debt." Until your debt is paid, a donation can't begin. Creature merit is impossible. But God comes and says "I have a salvation to give you. It's My gift. No merit is possible, lest any man should boast." So, Who gets the glory? Who gets the praise?

When the Lord uses you in His redemptive program. **Don't ever take the glory**. You can never get beyond duty. You can't even reach duty.

May your heart, get on its face before God. This is a tremendous salvation. "By grace you have been saved", by a three-fold salvation.

### Chapter 14

God's Holy Temple

2:22

This brings us to the third question, "Saved unto what?" We're saved from. And we're saved by. We are also saved unto. Unto what? Really, unto **Whom**? 2:11-22,

"Therefore remember, that formerly you, the gentiles in the flesh, by the so called circumcision which is performed in the flesh by human hands; remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

By the way, you might be interested in this. The Greek word for "without God" is "atheos", from which we get the word atheist. Before you were saved you were an atheist. But now in Christ Jesus,

"You who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for He Himself is our peace, Who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in **Himself** He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in Whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Right off, let me say that we are going to look at this passage twice. Right now I want to fly over it and pick up the big movements of God's Spirit. After that, we'll try to get into more detail. It's such a full passage. It's not possible to deal with it all at once.

Let me suggest an outline I'd like to follow. First of all, let me answer the big question, "Unto what are we saved?" We are saved from our sin. We are saved by created grace. But what is the goal of our salvation? What's the consummation? And then after we look at that, I want to show the ground or the foundation of this tremendous goal. It wouldn't be possible without this foundation. Then, Lord willing, we'll try to make it practical and applicable.

Let me answer the first question. From 2:11-22, unto what are we saved? What is the ultimate purpose? The answer is in verse 22,

### "A dwelling of God in the Spirit."

As usual, Ephesians looks at the Church as a **body**, rather than as individual Christians. It's the goal of our salvation that the whole Church, all God's people, everywhere, be a dwelling place of God. That's what He is moving toward. He wants to dwell in us. He wants to live in us. The Church, His residence, His address, His home. What a marvelous goal!

Choices that we make in life, reveal our character. You can tell an awful lot about a person by their choices. I see it in my children. The different decisions they make speak volumes. The fact that God has made some choices, tells us about Him. He chooses, for example, the low things rather than the high things. The poor things, rather than the rich things. Humble things, rather than what the world exalts. That's God's character. I think one of the great revelations of God, is that He chose the Church, filled with redeemed sinners. Men and women, who were nothing, had nothing, and couldn't be any lower.

I think this is one of the most awesome revelations, in all the word of God. God's choice of the Church, as His dwelling place. He could have created anything to dwell in. He says, "No, I'm going to create something, I long to dwell in. I'm going to make a home, and I'm going to make it out of My people." That's the goal of our salvation. The high privilege — I'll almost call it an office — the high office of the Church.

It's inconceivable to angels and to saints. No one would ever guess it, if God didn't reveal it in His word. We would have never known of His

choice except that He told us about it. God's choice for His home sheds a flood of light on my spirit. Not only Who God is, but the wonder that He chose us. I don't think the omnipotence of God could have created a more exalted position. It's God's eternal choice for his dwelling place. He could have done it a million different ways, but He looked to us.

We see the revelation of God climbing in this chapter. I believe He makes verse 22 the top rung, "A dwelling for God in the Spirit." This should put us prostrate on our faces in sublime worship. That God would choose us to be **His temple**, a divine chamber, the home of God.

Some of us don't have a home on earth. God wanted a home on the earth, and He chose us. Isaiah 66:1,

"Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be?"

United, and corporately together. I believe that's the eternal destiny of the Church. Verse 21 – much is made of this word picture – "A holy temple in the Lord." Certainly the magnificent temple in Jerusalem must have registered in their minds when they read this. They knew that temple. The Lord is comparing the goal of our salvation, to His holy temple.

Let's look at this temple made of human beings, the dwelling place of God. In verse 21, the apostle likens the spiritual Church to a physical temple under construction. All day today I tried to study by my window. They were preparing the ground across the street for construction. They are plowing and digging and it's extremely noisy. Verse 21 pictures the building being fitted together. I don't know if you've ever seen a building under construction. It looks like mass confusion, even though they are following a blueprint.

Maybe Paul had Solomon's temple in mind when he says, "Fitly framed together." Maybe he had in mind 1 Kings 6:7,

"The house, while it was being built, was built of stone which was prepared at the quarry; there was neither hammer, nor axe nor the sound of any iron tool heard in the whole house while it was being built."

Did you know that Solomon's temple was **built in silence**? Doesn't that give insight into what Jesus told us in Matthew 6:6,

## "When you pray, enter your closet, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret."

Every stone was prepared beforehand. Perfectly cut in the quarry, and then brought to its preordained place. It was put together like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each stone was silently slipped into place. So, he says that the Church is fitly joined together. Growing silently like a baby in the womb, Psalm 139:13-16,

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.

Notice in 2:21 you have the expression,

### "It is growing into a holy temple."

It's the same idea of the expression in verse 22,

#### "You are built together into a dwelling of God through the Spirit."

Of course, there's a mixed metaphor here. It's the same one used by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:5,

# "You, also, are living stones being built into a spiritual house; a people for God's own possession."

Usually when you think of the construction of a building, you think of inanimate things. Dead boards, glass, shingles, bricks, stones, and such. Everything is dead.

But this building, is like no other. It's God's house. This is the dwelling of God in the Spirit. His temple is not built with dead bricks. It may seem a little creepy, but visualize this in your mind. It is built with living stones. In a human building the house is the sum total of its pieces. A door, window, floor or wall is not a house. If you add it all together, you'll end up with a house. That's not how the Church is built. Each

stone is alive, and each stone is a mini-temple. God dwells in that stone, and He's going to dwell in the whole temple, when it's finally built. Each individual Christian is a **foretaste** of what the whole thing will be like when it's finished. Each Christian's body, is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Notice again in verse 21 the word "Growing". Try to get this in your mind. Here you have a building. Everything prepared beforehand and everything being fitted together. The stones are alive and growing in two ways.

#1. Growing by the number of stones. With every conversion and repentance. By every evangelistic effort. Somebody gets saved in China, Russia, Alaska, Africa, India or Spain, the temple grows. Stones quarried and silently fit together. God knows when the last person is going to receive Christ. It has been prepared before the foundations of the earth. Each stone is prepared, chiseled, cut, and polished. Every moment of every day, the temple grows.

#2: It is growing in capacity. Not only are stones added upon stones. But with the filling and infusion of God, the capacity is radically increased. Stones are expanding with the life of God. This is a temple that is going up right now, and we are part of it. Somehow in the mind of God, He knows when each stone has grown to capacity.

One day the "Top Stone" will be put on. What a glorious day when He calls His Bride to Himself. He will take up His eternal residence. The finished Church is going to radiate and reflect the glory of the resident. We have the foretaste now! The earnest. The Holy Spirit of Christ that dwells in our heart.

Chapter 15

God's Vision of Unity

2:14

What is the foundation stone upon which our happy destiny is built? The book of Ephesians is a book of victory. It's a book of the heavenlies. It's a book about the honor and glory of the enthroned Redeemer. But the Holy Spirit doesn't forget what all that victory is based on. Verse 15, "In His flesh". Verse 16, "Through the cross". The Holy Spirit never soars away from that precious foundation.

When I first heard the message of victory, I was far away from the cross. I began chasing victory. I was chasing the things of Christ. I thought that I was all done with the cross. I had applied the blood and was ready to move on. The more you go on with the Lord, the more you need the precious blood of Jesus. Every day you need the precious blood of Jesus. Every time we study our wealth in Christ it's based on the blood of Christ. Whenever we study about seeing ourselves united with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places, it's because of His precious blood.

However deeply we look into the vast ocean of His grace, it's all because of His work on the cross. It's our destiny to grow up and become His temple and His home. **Our hope is based on the blood of Christ**. God is the One who gave us hope in the blood. He's the Author of the hope. God will never disappoint hope that He Himself gave. He won't mock us. If I rest in His finished work and He's displeased with me, He's at strife with Himself. It's His record. We have reason to hope.

Let me give a little background at this point in order to make it clear. Verse 14, "He Himself is our peace." He doesn't give peace.

"He Himself is our peace, Who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall."

What is the barrier of the dividing wall, or as the King James says, "The middle wall of partition?" There's a simple answer and then there's one with historical background. Let me give you the simple answer then illustrate it through history.

It's the wall of separation between the Jews and the gentiles. That's the fact. It's not the principle. As you know, the Jews and the gentiles were as far apart as east from west. The Jews and the non-Jews (gentiles), hated each other.

It's hard for us to imagine the tremendous gulf that existed between them. We presently have a history of race problems in our country. Segregation still goes on. But it is nothing compared to the level of hatred and animus they shared. The great boast of the Jew, was that he could trace his family tree back to Abraham. They identified with Abraham and they called themselves, "The circumcision". They took pride in the special covenant of circumcision God gave Abraham. And the gentiles, were uncircumcised. They even added the word "dogs". "Uncircumcised dogs". That was the gentiles.

What was revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit, pulled the "holier than thou" rug from under their feet. God was no longer going to honor the **outward show** of physical circumcision. He said that God looks at the heart. A "true" Jew, had a circumcised **heart**. He hit them where they lived. He was taking away their source of pride, dignity and identity. It said flat out that in God's eyes, many of the gentiles were the real Jews. Worse than that, many of the Jews were the real gentiles. They had an awful hard time with Romans 4. What a shock to learn that in God's eyes, they were "spiritual gentiles". (Probably the main reason they had Paul killed)

You can't believe the division and hostility. I was reading that an orthodox Jew would not burn wood, if it came from a gentile tree. The Jews were used to walls, gates and veils. They were a separate people. Originally, God did that to protect His channel of redemption for the world. So He said, "I'll separate you." But they misinterpreted that missionary opportunity for entitlement, saying, "We're special, the highly chosen of God." They made wall after wall creating division all over the place.

Let me give you a diagram of Herod's temple as it was in the New Testament. They copied the two main sections of Solomon's temple. The Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. They had a great veil dividing the Holy of Holies. Only once a year could the high priest go in. The Holy Place was full of ministering priests going in and out all the time. They

ministered every day in the Holy Place. There was a tremendous wall separating another court, called "The court of the sons of Israel". Those, who could trace bloodlines to Abraham.

The temple was built upon a hill. Twelves steps up from there they had another wall. Of course, that's where they had the treasury. They wanted to make sure they got their bucks, you know. Then they had fourteen steps for gentiles and a huge wall. This wall was the great wall, called the "Middle wall of partition". The gentiles could not go beyond that. The message of the elevation was simple. Some people are closer to God than others. (Many Christians act like that is still true)

The "gentile dogs" were down at the bottom. They had no access to the Holy of Holies. Some of these walls were fifteen feet high. The veil was about thirty feet high. It was their graphic way of saying, "You don't get to God. **Stay out!**" No barbed wire fences like you see around a prison. Instead, these walls were beautiful; elaborate works of art. Hypocrisy!

The Jews were under the Roman government. Rome took away many of their governmental privileges, including capital punishment. There were few exceptions, and this was one. The Jews had the right to kill anybody that went beyond that wall. Do you remember all the trouble the apostle Paul got in? He got all excited about his liberty in Christ. He knew the line to Abraham was through faith. He knew it was circumcision not made with hands, but circumcision of the heart. A true spiritual circumcision that removed the veil of flesh that kept us from intimacy with God. So he took his Ephesian gentile friend, Trophimus, and said, "Let me show you the sights." That didn't go well. Acts 21:28 & 29.

"Israel come to our aid. This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the law and the place; and besides, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled the holy place. For they had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, in the city with him."

They accused Paul of defiling the temple by bringing him in. He probably didn't. But he had to carry that for the rest of his life. They used it against him when he was brought up on trial before Felix in Acts 24:6, "He even tried to desecrate the temple." When he was in trouble with Trophimus, they dragged him outside the temple. They

knocked him on the ground and were ready to kill him. Because of the uproar, the Romans sent a band of soldiers to stop the chaos. If it weren't for them, and of course the sovereignty of God, Paul would have been murdered. That's the price and severity of going past that wall. That was the "Middle wall of partition".

Let's go back to Ephesians 2. Do you see the impact of verse 14, and what it registered in their minds?

# "He **Himself** is our peace, Who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier, the dividing wall".

Oh what a picture that is! These verses are about the strongest verses anywhere in the Bible, on the **spiritual blessings of unity**. The blood of Christ has broken down the wall of partition. He uses the big wall, to include all lesser walls. This wall, and every other wall, was rent in two when He died on the cross. This made the way into the presence of God open to everyone. Hebrews 4:16,

"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."

No more walls, no more steps and no more gates. No separate courts. Nobody down, and the other up. Everybody, on level ground. The fulfillment of John the Baptizer's calling. Isaiah 40:3-5,

"A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord'; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together."

It's a marvelous, marvelous picture. That barrier, that middle wall pictures the great tragedy of **divided Christians.** 

The goal of our salvation, is not only that God will have a home in His people, but that God will have a home in His **united people**. His people who are one, with no walls, gates, stairs, or divisions. I tell you. That's heavy on the **heart of God**. That's the passion of the Lord. We search for unity in such a surface way. It seems that it's easier to hold

superficial views on unity than almost any other subject in the Bible. We can have such unscriptural ideas of unity

The unity of the ecumenical movement, is not the unity of Ephesians 2. Unity of laying down our differences and cooperating with brother Christians, is not the unity of Ephesians. When I pastored Maple Ave. Baptist Church we sang a song every time we broke bread. It didn't mean much to me then, but the song means a lot to me now. "Bless be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above." I never appreciated the phrase, "Tie that binds". I didn't know what it was. Ephesians 2 tells you what it is. It's the precious **blood of Christ**. "Bless be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." It's easy to say the wall is gone, but there was a price to take down that wall. There was a **high price** for the blessing of unity.

Are you familiar with the basic idea that **death** is **separation**? He was dead and then, alive. He was separated. Here's an amazing thing. Since it cost the death of Christ, that I can have unity with you. And, for you to have unity with me. **The price of unity, is separation**. Christ had to be separated, before we could be united. He purchased the right for Christians to be one, and to dwell in unity.

I believe one of the greatest miracles in Bible history, was the unity found in the first century Church. They were so **naturally** divided: The Jews and the gentiles. The homeland Jews, and the Jews of the dispersion. Masters and slaves. Even those saved before the cross, and those saved after the cross, were divided. The New Testament was a hodgepodge of divisions. We don't have half the excuses for disunity they had, yet we're full of division. If ever you had an object lesson of what the power of the blood can do. You have it in the unity of the New Testament Church. Psalm 133:1&3,

# "How good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity. For **there** the Lord **bestows his blessing**, even life forevermore".

Don't take that miracle lightly. Unity comes at a high price. Let me try to identify what the Bible teaches about unity, and apply it in several ways. Verse 2:16, when he's talking about the Jews and the gentiles he uses the expression, "In one body". He's talking about the body of Christ. Christ is the Head, and we are His members. In our introduction study to Ephesians, I suggested "mutual headship", as a definition of

unity. If I'm looking to Christ my Head, and you are looking to Christ your Head, then we have perfect unity. That's what brings unity to the parts of my physical body. I have a common head. My right hand lives for the pleasure of my head, and my left hand lives for the pleasure of my head. The problem with God's people, is they are not equally drawing life from their common Head. Isn't it interesting that the real meaning of "antichrist" in the Greek is, "In place of Christ".

Let's take that same truth of mutual headship, and state it differently. Instead of stating it in terms of the head, let me state it in terms of the body. **Common life**. That's unity. God dwells in us, and each one of us is a living stone. The more we have the life of the Head, the more we are going to have unity. I cry out in pain when I hurt my foot because of common life. Do you know why I hurt when someone twists my arm or bends my finger back? It's because the life that's in my arm and finger is in my head.

I mention this because Christians who are living in union with Christ, have common life. **His life**. That makes us one. Ephesians 2:20,

#### "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"

Does that mean that the apostles and prophets were my foundation? I knew they couldn't be. But as representatives of God's Word, they pointed to the true foundation and cornerstone. Peter, Isaiah and any other Bible saint, is not my foundation. Peter, Paul, Jeremiah, Daniel and all the rest had the same foundation. We are built on their foundation. **Christ**.

In this verse Christ is called "The Corner Stone". Christ is the corner stone in two ways. The corner stone was a foundation stone. The whole building rested on it. But it was also the unifying stone, and that's his point. It's the stone by which the corners came together. Here's what he's saying, "To the degree we become Christ centered. That He's our Head and we share common life. To that degree we rest on the foundation stone and are united. To the degree we look to Jesus Christ alone....... to that degree we'll be one.

Let me get personal. One of the saddest things in the Christian world is these walls of divisions, the middle walls of partition. We don't have physical walls and barriers, but even stronger ones made up of opinions and prejudice. God hates sectarianism. God hates denominationalism. God can't stand these walls of division that Christians have put up, to isolate and separate themselves from other children of God. Most of these walls are built around non-essentials.

Don't misunderstand me. Since the blood of Christ is what tore down those walls, you know that I'm not suggesting we tear down moral walls. It's the blood of Christ that tore them down. Holiness will always remain a wall. Don't try to tear that down. I'm not saying that we should swallow our conscience to see if we can "get along". It's not that. We're one in Christ. We're all in Christ. I am one with everyone who is one with Him. You are one with everyone who is one with Him. If we're in the same body, we have the same head.

If you look at this carefully, you'll notice he says that the walls are down. He doesn't say "Take the walls down". What a difference that makes. The walls are already down. His blood has taken them down. He abolished them in his flesh when He died. I call attention to this because one of the worse things that anybody can do, is try to create unity. You can't create unity. One of the greatest enemies to the work of Christ is the effort to have unity. A great way not to have unity, is to try to have unity. Trying to have unity is a work, and it's a work of the flesh. It's against God. Unity is not created by socials, get-togethers, meetings and by friendships. That's not how unity is created.

**Unity is created when people live in union with their head.** Unity is a gift of God. It's created by God. The best thing we can ever do is to look toward that wonderful goal. Be a dwelling of God in the Spirit. To enjoy Christ, and enjoy Christ with those who enjoy Christ. To turn people's eyes to Christ. And rejoice when they turn their eyes to Christ. To the degree that happens in our life, without effort or struggle, there is unity. A marvelous unity, that was purchased by Christ.

When we all come together, we are saved **from**, we're saved **by** and we're save **unto**. God had a marvelous plan and the Body of Christ living in union with the head is one of the most unique things on the earth. There's no greater testimony. In this unity, God has planned to have His reputation shown to mankind. John 13:35,

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, If you have love one to another."

## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

#### Chapter 16

The Mystery Revealed

3:1-21

You'll notice that chapter 3 is sort of a big parenthesis. One commentator worded it this way, "Paul hates to leave the theme of chapters 1-3, and had trouble getting to chapter 4." I think he's accurate on that. If you have the New American Standard, Notice in 3:1, that there's a dash after verse one,

### "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you gentiles-"

Notice 4:1, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord". He finally got to it! You see, he started off telling you something, then got side tracked. He went into this long parenthesis, as if to say, "I'm not quite ready to tell you what you must do through Him. I'm not finished telling you what He has done for you." So he starts all over again, summing up our wealth in Christ. And so we have Ephesians chapter 3.

If you read it carefully, you'll see that he's really not off the subject at all. He's reviewing what has gone before. "I haven't told you enough yet," he says, "Jesus has done more. Let me tell you one more time, before we get into your responsibilities." I think it would help you to understand the message of this chapter if you see how he writes it. These three words help me get there.

In this chapter there's a **message**, there's a **prayer** and there's a **song**. 1-13 he gives a message. In 3:14-19 he drops down on his knees in prayer. And then in 3:20-21 he bursts into song. With each of these sections there's a principle which sheds light on how I can enter my wealth. Rather than give you the three answers, let's take them one at a time. Let's look at the message of chapter 3:1-13. Glance down please at these passages; verse 3 "*Mystery*", verse 4 "*The mystery of Christ*", verse 9 "*The mystery which for ages has been hidden in God*". What mystery?

If you look at verse 6, it looks like the gentiles are fellow heirs. Fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise. It looks like the mystery is, that the **gentiles are included**. But, if you read it

carefully, the mystery is bigger than that. It includes that, but his point is far greater. The mystery is not that the gentiles were allowed to come in, precious as that is.

Throughout this epistle and its sister epistle Colossians, the mystery is that the gentiles have been brought in to what? **Union with Christ!** That's the mystery. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The mystery is the **Church**. Jew and gentile, walls knocked down. The whole Church, in union with Christ. By the way, in Eph. 5:32 there's a good verse,

### "The mystery is great but I'm speaking in reference to Christ and the Church."

What he's talking about in marriage, is exactly what he is talking about here. In verse 6 he talks about fellow heirs and fellow members of the body. The message is **union with Christ**. So, here's a great mystery. By the way, when you see the word "mystery" in the Bible, it doesn't mean "that which cannot be known". It means, "That which cannot be known, **apart from revelation."** It's hidden by God. It's a mystery. Not because you can't know it, but because **God hasn't revealed it**.

Notice verse 3, "By revelation". Verse 4, "By insight". Verse 5, "Has been revealed". Verse 9, "To bring light".

I used to have this idea. That Paul got hold of the mystery by revelation and now it's an open secret to all Christians. That's not the point. It's true that Paul got hold of the mystery by revelation, but not as a substitute for the Church. He got it as a **representative** of the Church. What am I saying? He was illustrating how he entered into the wealth. **He got the mystery by revelation**.

God opened his eyes to it. How are you going to enter into the mystery of your union with Christ? The answer is. The same way Paul did. By revelation. There's no other way to enter your union with Christ. You'll never see how rich you are in Christ, unless you enter the mystery the way Paul did. By revelation, and heavenly insight.

See, the average Christian doesn't begin to see the mystery of his union with Christ. It remains veiled. Christ, in union with His Church, and all that flows from that, is still hidden. Paul got it by revelation in order to illustrate the only way any Christian can ever get it. Let me share a couple of verses that shed light on this. The first is verse 8 and the expression, "The very least of all the saints". This sometimes comes

across like humble pie. You might say, "Come on. He's just cutting himself down. It's a figure of speech. Paul is the greatest of all the saints." "Unto me, the very least of all the saints." He makes other comments in other places that sound equally strange. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, (talking about Saint Paul),

"I am the least of all of the apostles and I'm not worthy to be called an apostle."

And we say, "Come on, Paul. We know you're humble. But you don't have to go that far!"

2 Cor. 12:11, "I am a nobody." That's what Paul said. 1Timothy 1:15,

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief".

What is Paul doing when he calls himself "The least of all the saints", "The least of all the apostles", "I am a nobody" and "I am chief of sinners"?

Is he just using strong language to drive home a point? Doesn't he know, what you and I know.... he's top brass? He's not the least. He's the highest. He's the most eminent of saints. He's God's illustration of a New Covenant Christian. If anyone wants to study a great Christian, study Paul. He's the model and the standard.

Why is Paul held in such high regard? Why is he put up so high? Isn't it because, he **seems** to have a handle on everything. He seems to have such victory in his life. Is it because he wrote these great identification truths and seems to be in the secret place? He had the mystery unveiled to him. Isn't that why we say, if you want to know the Christian life and want to know how to live a victorious life, study Paul?

Paul is not using a figure of speech when he says, "I am least of all the saints". That was literal. The Apostle Paul, on planet earth, was the bottom drawer. The lowest, of the low. God reached down to the very bottom when he saved Paul. I believe that the Apostle Paul was the hardest case Jesus ever saved. When he says, "Chief of sinners", he means it literally. It's not a figure of speech.

He had a heart full of **"Pharisee pride"**. He was a blasphemer. He persecuted God's people. He killed women and children. He's the worst case that God ever saved. He was the lowest of the low, and vilest of the vile. Then how come everybody thinks so highly of him?

I'll tell you why. Because, **one day**, God **opened his eyes**. That's the only reason. God took him into the mystery, by **revelation**. That's why his example is so full of encouragement. Here's what he's saying, and listen carefully. It's a marvelous truth filled with comfort. "I am the least of all the saints, literally. **If God can open my eyes** to the mystery. If God can take me, into union with Christ. Then no Christian in any age, ever needs to despair. **He can take you into union with Christ.**"

The Apostle Paul was able to cash in on the unfathomable wealth of Christ, because **God opened his eyes**. You are able to cash in on unfathomable wealth in Christ, if God opens your eyes. 1:18-23,

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 17

**Super Zeros** 

3:10

Sometimes we miss God's message through the life of Paul. We say, "What an incredible Christian I will never be that great!" *There ain't no such thing as a great Christian*!! *There's only "nobodies"*. (No super heroes, just super zeros) Christians are carved out of the dirt. You get a "nobody" Christian, and let God open his eyes to a few truths, and do you know what is going to happen? In the eyes of those around him, he'll be the greatest thing since sliced bread. It's unbelievable how this works. You see, Paul wasn't kidding.

If I could lift a thousand pounds, do you think I'd have any trouble lifting 700. If I could lift a thousand pounds, do you think I'd have any trouble lifting 100 pounds? If I can lift the greater, I can lift the lesser. God lifted Paul. He can lift you. God lifted Paul, and he can lift me. Let me give you a couple of warnings in connection with this, and isolate the principle.

When God gives you a little light, and illumines your heart. You are going to think that you are pretty great. **That's what they did to Paul**. Even though in your heart, you know you are the least of all saints. Even though you know, you're a "nobody". You let God open your eyes, even a little bit, and people all around you are going to start holding you in high esteem. They'll treat you like a "little god". Like an angel from heaven. When that happens, and it will, ask God to graciously keep you from being puffed up with pride. You are a nobody. A **"nobody"** with a **revelation.** 

In that connection, let me turn that warning around. Don't hurt other people by letting them look **to** you. Always turn eyes away from yourself and to the Lord. What a tragedy when men trust men, and when flesh leans on flesh. We are empty cisterns that can hold no water. We've got to turn people's eyes to the Lord. Paul got a revelation, and he knew he was the "Least of all saints". Everybody else was saying, "Paul is the greatest Christian," but he reminded himself who he really was.

Here's the **second warning**. It has to do with the "Christian psychology movement" that is ripping up the people of God. Christian books are being written, suggesting believers **analyze** themselves. It's a call to look inside, discover your problem, and give it to Jesus. Beloved, you have no more ability to **discover** your own problem than you have to **solve** your problem. It's a very unhealthy thing to introspect. Your prayers should always be, "Search me, oh God, and know my heart."

You don't want to look down into that dump. It will scare you to death. If you are out of sorts with the Lord, it will drive you to a building or a bridge. You don't need to look inside. You see, there's a right way to say, "I'm nobody, the least of all the saints", and a **wrong way!** 

When the Apostle Paul said it, he wasn't full of **self-pity**. He didn't say, "Oh, I'm a nobody. Poor me. I'm a big flop. I'm no good." He had a revelation of who he was in Christ. God had opened his eyes to the mystery. He had clarity. I love the fact that in the same verse where he said, "I am least of all the saints," he also said,

#### "Unfathomable riches in Christ."

"Sure, "I'm least of all the saints". That's one side of the truth. The other side is, "Unfathomable riches in Christ." The Lord is giving us a safe-guard from looking up to men, and down on yourself. The principle is to always to look away from everything else, and unto Jesus. Hebrews 12:2,

### "Looking (away from everything else) unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith."

Paul shows us two ways, in these eleven verses, on the "how". The first is this, "Least of all the saints". The second is verse 10. It's one of the most unusual and wonderful passages in the whole book of Ephesians. It's so wonderful, you scarcely believe it,

# "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the Church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places."

Ask ten Christians if they believe this, and I doubt if you'll find one who really does. How rare it is to find Christians, who live in the **thrill** of it. This verse reveals a tremendous fact. The lives of Christians in union

with Christ, demonstrate God's truth **to angels**. I don't understand Ephesians 3:10. I have never met a Christian that does. God is instructing His angels, through the Church, through Christians. As you live your life day by day, and struggle through your problems, seeking to please and honor Him. Offering the littleness of your capacity and ability, you are a **"theatre"**. You are on display.

The angels of God, as hungry students, are watching and observing you? According to the Greek word here, they are learning the, "Multifaceted, multi-colored, fully diversified, infinitely creative, manifest and manifold..... Wisdom of God."

Angels are more intelligent and powerful than men. I read this in a science book, "The average eye can see over a half million colors." I didn't know there were a half million colors! It's amazing what our eyes can take in. I stood on Mt. Washington, New Hampshire, at 6,288 feet above sea level. I don't think I've ever seen such scenery as I saw that day. It was tremendous! It was majestic and breathtaking. What must an angel's eye see?

I wonder if they can take in the landscape of the whole world with one glance? I know they're not confined to only one spot in the universe. If they wanted to see Mt. Washington, they wouldn't have to take the railroad to the top like me. With rapid wing, they can fly anywhere in God's universe. They could probably scan ten thousand worlds in a flash.

Angels were there when God created the universe. They saw the first light as God spoke it into existence. There had never been light before. The Bible says they burst into song. In the book of Job 38:4-7,

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

They saw sinless angels. They saw dark angels fall. They saw the glory of God in heaven. What has not passed before angelic eyes? Let me suggest something that would impress an angel and capture their attention. You'd think they would be bored with anything you could show them. This is clearly recorded, yet I still have a hard time believing it. This is amazing! The angels, with all their ability, all there wisdom, all

their infinite possibilities, can't get over **the Church** in union with Christ! They study you day and night. They stare, gaze, admire and wonder.

According to this passage. There is more wisdom in being **united to Christ,** than there is in the whole of God's creation. This universe, is not God's picture of wisdom. The angels look at all the wisdom of God, and they come back to study the Church. That's the **full revelation of God** in all its glory. All through the Bible, the angels are pictured longing to see, leaning over, meditating, delving into, and watching the Church.

They saw Adam, and they saw him fall. They saw Moses, Aaron, and a long succession of priests. They watched the nation Israel march up to Mt. Zion chanting hymns. They saw oceans of blood, flowing from Jewish alters. They saw incense and prayer, rising to heaven. They beheld "Emmanuel". **God became man**. The angels burst into song!

They saw their Creator die on the cross. Rise again, and ascend to His exalted position. They watched the Church, born at Pentecost. They watched as Christians were saved from every part of the compass. From the chilly north, to the hot zones below the equator. They saw babies taken from their mother's breasts. They saw men, women, children, kings, princes, slaves, the rich and poor, the sick and healthy. They saw people standing in flames, shouting testimony to their Lord. They watched as believers were tortured, going about in sheepskins and goatskins, living in caves. They saw them afflicted and starving, and they wondered. They learned the manifold wisdom of God in **His love for us**.

They can't get their eyes off of you. They watch God keep you, rescue you, clean you, and restore you. They are watching Him bring you to perfection. Every time God does something in your life, angelic eyes are open wide in amazement. Because you, and not they, are the **Savior's Bride**.

It's amazing! We have such a surface view. Someone comes up to you and asks, "What's your purpose in life?" Great day! **We're teaching angels!** That's what our purpose is! People will say this is ministry here, our tapes and Bible studies. Bull feathers! This isn't ministry. We're teaching good angels, and shaming bad ones. I think talking to angels is questionable. But when my eyes are on Jesus Christ, and I'm living in

union with Christ, I know that I'm teaching them. That's too big for anything but faith.

Ephesians 3:10 includes bad angels as well as good angels. 1 Peter 1:12 shows the good angels, "Things that angels desire to look into." See, no good angel ever knew the joy of salvation. No angel can study salvation in his own life. He can only study salvation in your life.

Job taught the angels a thing or two. We have no idea about what our usefulness is. Only God knows how He is using you. Have you ever meditated on the thrill that will be yours in heaven, when redeemed men and women come up to you, and thank you for your influence in their life. Was your **testimony**, their heavenly **invitation**?

A few years ago my wife Tina and I were asked to help minister to a dear sister in the Lord. A beautiful woman of God, that was stricken with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). She had deteriorated to a place that was hard to watch. She was strapped to hold her up, and couldn't speak. Her quality of life was near zero, but every time we began to worship, her beautiful blue eyes looked to heaven, and the glory of God filled the room. Many well-meaning and faithful Christians prayed for her healing, but she only got worse. We prayed for the Lord to take her, but she continued in pain and suffering.

One Sunday morning the Lord put her on my heart so strongly that I could do nothing but grab my guitar and Tina and go see her. The Lord was showing me that she felt like she was failing in faith, and did not have the peace of His absolute approval. Perhaps she felt that she missed her ministry and purpose, and felt God could only be glorified with a miraculous recovery. Many times Christians feel responsible for their "faith". It is almost insinuated that if you don't get healed, your faith is too weak. I felt that she couldn't let go, because she was ashamed.

We worshiped, and the glory of God was so thick you could cut it with a knife. I shared Ephesians 3:10 with her. And with the authority of Jesus Christ, explained that she had not failed God. That she was fulfilling the highest purpose a Christian could ever attain. That as she looked to the Lord in praise and worship, in her impoverished physical condition, she was shaming the enemy, and all of his dark angels. As the Lord did for Stephen, when he was stoned to death, Jesus was standing up for her in heaven. He was so proud of her, and couldn't wait to hold her in His arms.

With tears in her eyes, she motioned for us to come closer. She had an alphabet board on her lap. The only thing she was still able to do, was to slowly spell out words. She pointed to T, H, A, N, K, Y, O, U. She went home to be with the Lord two days later. The angels watched, astonished at the faithfulness of God, and His great mercy and love for us!!!

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 18

Paul, Teach us to Pray

3:14-21

How are you going to enter into the mystery of your union with Christ? The answer is. The same way Paul did. By **revelation**. But what happens after you've been blessed with this eternal life changing vision.

1: Don't be impatient with those you share the gospel with. God is the One, Who must open their eyes. They won't be able to see, no matter how simple you make it. That doesn't mean, they're not responsible. They are. **Spiritual blindness** is a **sin.** It's rebellion. Nevertheless, God will not reveal it to them, until **they** are ready.

It often takes a long time. Be **patient**. Sometimes, it takes much heartache. God has to knock out the human props they lean on. He waits patiently as they reap what they have sown. Through the reality of life they lose confidence in themselves, and the idols they trust. 1 Samuel 15:23 tells us how the Lord views selfish behavior.

### "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry."

Stubbornness is just insisting on your way. It is having **faith** in your own understanding and your ability to rescue yourself. Notice all the you's and your's. All idols are inanimate representations of ourselves. They are empowered by our own confidence, which is in actuality, a total departure from reality.

Sometimes, when it looks to these human eyes, like they're down and out. They haven't even begun to go down. Down is so far away, they couldn't see it with a telescope. I've known drunkards, laying in their own vomit, **full of pride**. They look like they're on the bottom! But they're not even close. It's amazing, how far God has to knock people down. So, when you pray for your friends and loved ones. Always pray, that God will **open their eyes**. No matter how logical and intelligent they are, they are not going to see, until God puts eye salve on them.

2: If you have a measure of eyesight, don't be **proud**. If God has opened your eyes to see a few things, don't be puffed up. If you

understand any spiritual mysteries of your union with Christ, it's because **He**, has opened your eyes. Without the revelation of God, our spiritual eyes, might as well be the eyes of a potato. The only difference between us believers, is the grace of God we accept, and see. That's all. He's given some, eyes to see a greater portion of their wealth. Fall on your face and praise Him, for what He's shown you. But don't get proud. Don't look down your nose, at those who are still waiting for light. Be very, very, patient, before the Lord.

That's Paul's message. He's ready to leave the "treasure room", and he says to the whole Church, "Remember these spiritual riches are yours. May God enable you to see them! They are yours by revelation. You may know the facts. But until he revives and quickens your spirit, you really don't know anything."

That brings us to the last two sections of this wonderful digression. The "prayer", and the "song". Let's read it together, verses 14-21,

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name; that He would grant you according to His riches in glory to be strengthened by power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him Who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all that we ask and think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the Church and in Jesus Christ to all generations forever and ever. Amen"

The way to enter into the meat of this, is to study it as an effective way to pray for other Christians. The prayers of Paul in Philippians, Ephesians and Colossians are called "The prison prayers". The value of these prayers lie in the fact that they are the Holy Spirit's inspired answer to the question, "How can I pray effectively for myself, and other Christians?"

When you study these prayers, you will be convicted. So much of my praying is superficial. It's amazing how foundational these prayers are. We pray something like this, "Dear Lord, please pat so and so on the

back, and do away with his discouragement." Paul never prayed that. "Bless him Lord," (even if he doesn't want to be blessed). That's how we pray. "Deliver him, Lord," (even if he doesn't want to be delivered). "Please take away all his problems, and pay his bills". The Apostle Paul wouldn't pray that in a million years. His prayers rest on inspired ground, and we can learn a lot by taking a look at them. Paul's concern that every Christian cash in on his inheritance, was so great, that he dropped to his knees and began to pray. Let me show three principles that I get from this prayer and song.

Understanding the facts, will give you one or two applications. But when you find the **principle**, the applications become **unlimited**. Let me state the first one, and then we'll explore it.

Always trust God to **over-answer** your prayers.

See, if you read the Bible carefully, you are going to find this; that God has **not promised** to **answer** your prayers. You won't find a place in the Bible, where He has promised to answer your prayers! No, He has promised to **over-answer** your prayers. Notice verse 16 please,

#### "According to the riches of **His glory**."

See, in the world, we spend out of our wealth, and not according to our wealth. If I have a million dollars, and I give you a thousand dollars, I am no longer a millionaire. By my giving, I become poorer. Our resources diminish as we draw from them. But God doesn't give out of His wealth. He gives, **according** to His wealth. God is just as rich after He gives, as before.

He never runs out of forgiveness. He never runs low on strength, or guidance, or peace. He doesn't say to you, "Well, now, I gave patience out a million times this week, so I don't have enough for you. Peace is on back-order, and as soon as it comes in, I'll give you a call." He doesn't need to get re-supplied. God has unlimited resources, and He gives according to His riches, more than you can ever ask.

Take a look at verse 20. One way to get the full impact of Paul's language, is to reduce the statement to its bare minimum. We will then add the modifiers one at a time. The minimum statement is,

#### "To Him Who is able to do what we ask."

I tell you, that alone, would be enough! Now watch as we add the modifiers. "To Him Who is able to do All we ask." What an increased blessing from the word "All".

Now we add the word "Beyond". "Able to do Beyond all we ask."

Here comes the word "Abundantly". "Able to do Abundantly beyond all we ask." He then adds the word "Exceeding".

"Able to do exceeding, abundantly, beyond all we ask."

"Able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we ask or **imagine**."

What a verse! It goes way beyond asking. We can think of tons of things we could ask for, but don't. God is bigger than all your requests. God is bigger than all your thoughts. He doesn't answer your prayer. When you pray to the Lord, He answers "Exceedingly, abundantly beyond, all that you ask or even imagine".

In Psalm 78, God demonstrates a great sin in Israel's history, "Limiting the Holy One of Israel". Limiting God. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we can never ask too much, or think too high. Just be sure to let Him take hold of your spirit, and fill you with His desires. We find this principle in seed form in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

Reading a verse like this we are tempted to say, "My, what a hyperbole; what a figure of speech! It's an exaggeration." It is not an exaggeration! It's an **understatement**. Every word of this is true. That's how God wants to answer our prayers. You might think, "I'm asking such and such for Joe and Fred; I'm really asking a lot of the Lord. Maybe if God does half of what I ask, then I'll be happy and satisfied." Great day!!! Half of what you ask! Pull out all the stops, and ask God to burn this into your heart. God longs, not to do half of what you ask, but to do "Exceeding, abundantly, beyond, ALL you could ever ask or think". What a marvelous, marvelous truth.

One way to get the impact of this is to remember the context. It's true as a principle, that God always over-answers prayer. But look at the context. Look at the **prayer** he's talking about over-answering. 3:19,

"That you might be filled, with all the fullness of God."

Is it possible that God over-answer that? Man, I'd be happy if He just gave me 10%. "Filled with all the fullness of God". That's the request He wants to answer exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ever ask or think. Don't let the enemy rob you of this very, very precious truth. Have you ever said, "Well, now, you can't really expect God to do much for so and so. Let me tone down this prayer. You know how dull they are. You can't expect God to fill them with His fullness. Look at their background. Look what they've been through. Look at their personality. Everything is against them." Bull feathers!!!

Tone up your prayers! Pray to the limit of your vocabulary and to the limit of your intellect. Then believe with faith that God is going to answer, exceeding abundantly beyond your little vocabulary and the intellect that God has endowed you with. Marvelous, marvelous, truth. I just pray all the time that God would teach me to pray. We ought to be before God all the time praying Luke 11:1,

#### "Lord, teach us to pray."

Paul's not praying this for just a few. He's praying this for every Christian. It's a shame that we limit God. Even those who have had their eyes opened, could fit their God in a shoebox. We have Him handcuffed. The second principle is in verses 16 & 17,

"That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith".

First look at verse 16, the little expression, "Inner man". Verse 17 says, "Heart". When the Bible uses these words and kindred expressions, He's referring to the real you. I like to paraphrase it as the "core of your being". In Vine's Greek/English Dictionary, the word used here for "Dwell", literally means, "to settle down in a dwelling" or "to dwell fixedly in a place". Vine paraphrases it in these words,

#### "That Christ may have a home in your heart."

The Greek scholar, Wuest, in his Expanded Translation of the New Testament words it this way,

"That Christ might finally settle down and feel completely **at home** in your hearts."

It's the opposite of the up and down experience you see in many Christians. Maybe, your life? One minute you are up, and the next, down. That's because Christ doesn't dwell in your hearts by faith. I'm not saying He's not there. He's in your heart. Paul prayed, that Christ would settle down, and make Himself at home in your heart. Let me ask you a question, a heart searching question. The question is not, "Is your heart God's home?" I trust that's already so. That's not the question in Ephesians 3. The question is, "Is Christ at home in your heart?" See, that's a different thing. Sure, it's His home, but is He "at home". Is He comfortable in your Home?" Does He approve of your life style? Can Christ relax in your life?

Here's a Christian that is always unsettled, and drifting between hot and cold. He's in and out, he's up and down. Do you know anybody like that? Are you like that? Then you need to pray this prayer. That Christ would settle down and make Himself at home. There are not many Christian hearts, where the Lord Jesus is free to kick off His shoes and put his feet on the table.

That's the Greek word. At home, like He was in Bethany. If Christ were like us, He'd become a nervous wreck in some hearts and lives. He'd never feel at home. He doesn't like a dirty place. He's not at home in confusion and strife. He wants a clean place; serene and full of joy. Not full of tension and pressure.

First principle: Trust God to **over-answer** your prayers.

Second principle: Pray that God would settle down in the very core of

your being, making Himself at home, in your heart.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

#### Chapter 19

The Fullness of God

3:10-19

The third principle we see from Paul's great prayer and song, is concerned with us becoming an "All-dimensional Christian". Read these verses again,

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you be rooted and grounded in love, and may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge."

An "all-dimensional Christian". I'll tell you what I don't mean by that. I don't mean "balanced". I've had people tell me something like this, "Yes, we would like you to come speak because we need your emphasis also. We want to hear about serving God, and working hard for Him. But then, every now and then, we want to hear about the fullness of Christ". There's no such thing! That's not balanced. That's unbalanced, awkward and lopsided. Christ alone, is the balanced truth. The message of pure grace alone. When you look to Jesus Christ alone, then you will have a balanced message.

I remember once, speaking about the four dimensions of God's love. Telling how wide and high it is. That's true, but that's not what he's saying. The love of God is included in those dimensions, but it's not the main point. He's talking about, the dimensions of **our salvation**, which includes the love of God.

### "That they might comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth."

And, in addition to that, "To know the love of God." The love of God is in addition to those dimensions.

What he's saying in effect is this, "For many chapters Lord, I've been laying out their wealth, and how rich they are in Christ. Now, I pray that they learn all of the dimensions — the height of their wealth, the depth of their wealth, the length of their wealth, the breadth of their wealth, and in every dimension that their eyes might be open to see

how rich they are in Christ. He's praying that they set a well in God, and then drink in all the dimensions of that fountain.

When Jacob was dying and blessed Joseph in Gen. 49:26, he prayed that Joseph might be blessed to the "Utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." What a blessing that is! Imagine praying for one another like that? "Lord, I pray that he be blessed to the "Utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." That's what Paul prayed when he prayed that they would be all-dimensional Christians. What a tremendous prayer! How can you know what surpasses knowledge? The answer is, by a mighty miracle of God! By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Do you see why Paul can't leave this room? He said so much about our wealth, but it's only the beginning. God wants to **over-answer** your prayer and deal with your inner man. Christ wants to settle down and make your life and heart His home, His **dwelling place**. He wants you to be **all-dimensional**, and enter into every inch of your portion in Christ. He wants you to know the things that transcend head knowledge, as Adam *"knew"* Eve, and she conceived.

Abraham "knew" Sara, and she conceived. Hosea "knew" Gomer, and she conceived. And in the book of Hosea, he says, "Follow on to know the Lord." It's the same word, the seed implanting intimacy of marriage. Every Christian, is called to be an all-dimensional Christian. It's God's will that every Christian, enter into the full inheritance of union with Jesus Christ. Shame on us, for claiming such a meager portion of our inheritance. We ought to be crying out for eye salve. That God would open our eyes.

Here's another principle. Not only, that He over-answers prayer. Not only that Christ will settle down in your heart and make Himself at home. Not only make every Christian an all dimensional Christian. But then He climbs even higher. After He says all of this, He says, "Let Me take you up to the higher rung." I don't think I'm forcing this particular illustration. In verse 17, "So that", and then He goes on and in the same verse he says, "So that". And then in verse 19 He says, "That you may be"..... He's climbing. It's progressive. Each one is built upon the other.

Look at the rungs. Rung #1: Spirit, in the inner man.

The Spirit-filled life is not the **goal**. It's the **starting point**. Satan loves to make a goal out of a starting point. Satan loves to suggest, "Wouldn't it be nice if you were filled with the Spirit..... **someday?**" Brothers and sisters in Christ.....that's where you begin!!! The Spirit, in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Once you are filled with the Spirit of God, then Christ can **settle down** in your hearts. So you might be **all-dimensional** Christians. Verse 19,

#### "That you may be filled up to ALL the fullness of God."

Man, how high is that top rung? "Filled up, to ALL the fullness of God". It is infinite blessing, and infinite blessedness!

When the prayer reaches this height, the dear apostle bursts into song. He can pray no more. He must sing,

"Now, unto Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we ask or think, according to the power that works within us; to Him be the glory in the Church; and to Christ Jesus in all generations, forever and forever. Amen."

Let me give you a couple of principles concerning this song. Verse 21, when you pray for others, and when you pray for yourself, may I suggest that you pray with a **passion** for the **glory of God**. The true goal of prayer is not the good of man. It's the glory of God. This is a wonderful chapter on real praying. Are you praying for people's good, or for God's glory?

God's glory includes their **spiritual good**, but it doesn't always include, their **physical good**. In other words, when a Christian is having a rough time, my natural heart wants me to get him out of his trouble. See, that's off-centered. That's praying for the good of man, and not for the glory of God

As I look back on my own prayer life, hundreds of my prayers have been for the good of man, and not for the glory of God. This is especially true when it's for a close friend, a wife, a husband, children or a loved one. It's abrasive to our nature to see them in trouble. Filled with pain, and confusion. So, we ask the Lord to take away the pain. That's not real praying! Real praying is, "Lord, you didn't spare the angels, or your own Son. Don't spare my children, either. Just get the glory. Don't spare my

wife or my friend. Whatever it takes to give you the glory, that's what I claim". **Passion,** for the glory of God.

There's one other principle I'd like to share and hopefully, it will clinch Ephesians 1-3, and prepare us for 4-6. How can I enter into all my wealth? I'm about to leave chapter 3. I don't want to miss anything. How do I make it my own? The very last word in the chapter – "Amen".

That's a marvelous word! The word "Amen" does not mean "the end". It doesn't mean "goodbye", or "cheerio", or "ciao". You probably have heard that the word literally means, "so is it" or "so be it". I don't like that because it comes across as wishful thinking. You know, you say a prayer and you say, "Amen, so be it". In other words, "I hope so. I hope God answers this prayer. I wish it would be so". Amen does mean so be it, but it is stronger than that. It means, so is it, because God says so. And so will it be, because God says so.

Dr. A.J. Gordon, founder of the Gordon College, said that in the Hebrew language, the word amen was an acronym. You know what an acronym is? It's when you take the first letter of every word, and then you make another word out of it. Like RADAR, LASER, NATO, etc.

Amen is derived from three Hebrew words. The first was Al, sometimes spelled El, meaning God. The second word was Melech, which is the Hebrew word for king. And then the third word is Neman, meaning trustworthy. Those three words form an acronym. Al-Melech-Neman. You take the first letters and you have AMN. Amen.

And out of those three words we get the actual Hebrew word, amen. And it means: God, king, trustworthy. "God is a trustworthy king". And when you put that at the end of your prayer, or I put it at the end of my prayer — don't just say: Amen, we're done, over and out. You say: Amen, so is it because God said so. So will it be, because God said so, and God is a trustworthy King. That is what amen means. So Paul ends chapter 3 with finality.... AMN....God is a trustworthy King!!!

How do I enter into all of my wealth? Just say, "Amen." Of course, you say it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will enable you to say "Amen" to all that God has given you in Christ. Why do I need the Holy Spirit to help me say "Amen"? Because the natural man doesn't want to. My nature runs contrary to God's will and God's way.

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul ends chapter 3 with a simple step of faith. I think He ends it that way deliberately, in order to give us the key of appropriation. The key to access all of our amazing wealth is the simple step of faith. Nothing can **substitute** for it.

I remember in Bible school where I knew even less than I know now. I thought the way to enter in, was by the simple step of **prayer**. So, we decided that the more we wanted to enter in, the longer we would pray. Have you ever fallen into that? We started off, having "sweet hours of prayer". And then we had even more, "sweet hours of prayer". Then, when we got real spiritual, we decided to pray all night. We wound up, praying ourselves right **out of faith.** By the time 2 AM came, I was ready to say "Amen". Which really meant...... "I quit!"

**Prayer** is not a **substitute** for faith. Many times you pray yourself right out of faith. You are just insisting on your ways and understanding. Maybe trying to change God's mind or council Him. Prayer should be, an **expression** of faith.

The more you go on in the Lord, the less you are going to pray. There's no question about that in my life. The more you go on in Christ, the less you go through the motions of praying. The legalistic prayers are going to drop off. That's a ton and a half. Then, your "pleases", are going to become "thank you's". Pleading becomes praise. You learn the attitude of prayer by just "being". In I Thessalonians 5:17, Paul writes,

#### "Pray without ceasing."

He couldn't have been talking about what we insist is the only way to pray. Hands folded and head bowed, and on our knees. He is speaking of a surrendered attitude that with every breath says, "Yes Lord, yes Lord, yes, yes Lord!"

God will not allow any substitute for the simple step of faith. He won't accept surrender, service, diligence or Bible study. He'll only accept trusting Jesus. God tells you how rich you are in Christ. Don't say, "Really?" Say, "Amen". That's a simple step of faith.

And by that simple step of faith, you become an **all-dimensional** Christian. By saying, "Amen," He **settles down** and lives in your heart by faith. He fills you with **all the fullness of God**, and enables you to **pray effectively** for others.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

#### **Chapter 20** Responsibility Unlimited

4:1-16

That brings us to the second half of the book, chapters 4-6. In our outline of the book, you remember we titled chapters 1-3, "Resources unlimited". And chapters 4-6, "Responsibilities unlimited". Chapter 4:1, notice how this section begins,

"Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk** in a manner **worthy of the calling** with which you have been called."

Paxton calls this section, "The walk and warfare of the Christian pilgrim". Watchman Nee wrote a small commentary on Ephesians entitled "Sit, Walk and Stand". This is the "Walk, Stand" section. The practical section. These chapters will challenge us to walk and stand as multi-billionaires in Christ.

Watchman Nee's book has this idea. That we sit before God. We walk before the world. And then we stand before the enemy. However you approach it, the emphasis that I'm calling attention to now is in verse 1, "Walk". Seven times in this epistle the Holy Spirit calls attention to that word, "Walk".

Parents get excited when the little one learns to walk. God is also thrilled when His children begin walking. He gets excited when His children take their first step into His ways. Ephesians 4-6 is teaching us how to walk. In chapter 4, we are going to look in more detail about what it means, "Walk worthy of your calling". What is our calling? There's great confusion concerning our "calling".

For now, let me get it before you by sharing a sister verse from 2 Thessalonians 2:14,

"And it was for this He called you through the gospel, that you may gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ."

You talk about "calling", there it is. "It was for this that He called you, that you might gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ". Whatever else is included when we talk about a "calling", you've got to embrace "To gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ". We're called to

be like Him. To be conformed to His image. Chapter 4:1 says, "Walk worthy of your calling." Without the Spirit of God's illumination on chapters 4-6, it would scare the tar out of you to read these chapters.

Let me show you three ways these chapters are frightening. The first is by comparing chapters 1-3, with 4-6. When you contrast those two sections, its' frightening because of Luke 12:48,

#### "To whomsoever **much** is given, of him shall **much** be required."

You see chapters 1-3 tell you how much you have been given. Chapters 4-6, tell you how much will be required. Because of our great wealth, there are tremendous responsibilities. You don't have to meditate long, to realize how frightening it would be on the level of earth, that God requires in proportion to what He gives. It would be nice in one sense if He wasn't such an abundant giver. But He gives and gives and then He requires in response to that.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, I speak as a fool, if we could have all that wealth in Christ, with no responsibilities? Some Christians think that's how it works. They live their lives like it all ends with chapter 3. They go around with a mystical look in their eye. Spiritual sounding phrases dripping from their lips saying, "I'm rich in Christ. I'm waiting for the Lord and I'm resting in Him. God doesn't see me! I'm covered. He only sees Jesus. The only thing that matters is fellowship with Him. I don't need form or rules or regulations or other people. I only need the Lord. I have Christ and He loves me and that's all that matters."

Then you look at their lives, and there's no walk! They aren't walking worthy of their calling. They are in bondage to the old sin nature. They are worldly, proud and selfish. Living careless, slip-shod lives. They joke about the things of the Lord. They have the looks and the words. They write the tunes, and sing the songs. But there's no walk.

One thing that I get from the study of Ephesians: **No walk, no wealth**. It doesn't matter what you say, and how you claim you are resting in Christ. If it doesn't introduce a **holy walk**, you haven't received chapters 1-3 yet. You haven't entered in. Those riches are **designated riches**. Designed by God, to make you holy. If they aren't making you holy, you don't have them in **reality**. One produces the other. The inward is expressed through the outward. What you are, **character**, is

expressed by what you do, **conduct**. Let me mention a second way that makes this section frightening. 4:1,

### "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

The King James puts it, "Walk worthy of the vocation". That's easy to say with your mouth. But if you read it carefully, as the Spirit of God has recorded it, you realize that the standard of behavior is God Himself. I heard a statement by the Presbyterian theologian, B.B. Warfield. He used it over and over again in one of his sermons. The statement is, "Our goal is God." Hold that in your heart for a moment. Our goal is God. Take a look at, 4:32,

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

Did you ever think or meditate on that? You say, "Oh, I have a responsibility to forgive my brothers and sisters." Read it carefully. To forgive one another just, "As God in Christ also has forgiven you". Nothing less than that, is forgiveness. Your goal is God. You are to forgive the same way, in the same degree, God has forgiven you. See why that's scary? Those are high standards. Our goal is God.

Just think. Do you forgive your brother with that kind of forgiveness? Is it **unlimited** forgiveness? God has already forgiven you for future sins. Have you already forgiven every Christian for every sin they will commit against you? If they come up and say they're sorry for something, will you say, "It's alright. It's already been forgiven. I forgave you a long time ago."

Does God have a struggle forgiving your sins? If you ever have a struggle forgiving someone else, you are not living up to your responsibility. That's your walk; "Walk worthy of the vocation of which you are called." No matter how deep the hurt. No matter what they've said, or what they've done. How they've lied, or maligned your name. How they've gossiped, or taken advantage of you. How they've stolen from you, or how unthankful they've been. If you don't forgive them the same way that God forgave you, without a struggle, you are not living up to your responsibilities. You are not walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you were called.

That's what I mean when I say it's scary. Because, the standards are so high. God is the goal. When He forgives, He never brings it up again. Do you know how we say, "Forgive and forget"? Well, God doesn't forget, because He can't, that would be a weakness. He wills not to remember. "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." That's not the same as forgetting. That's choosing never to bring it up again. Is that how you forgive? If not, you are not living up to your responsibilities. Chapter 5:25,

#### "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her."

What a standard! "Just as Christ loved the church." Dr. Ironside, the late pastor of the famed Moody Church in Chicago, told about a man who came to his office very burdened. He said, "Dr. Ironside, I love my wife **too** much! I'm afraid I'm putting my wife before the Lord." Dr. Ironside answered, "You can love her in a **wrong** way. But you can never love her **too** much." His advice was to go back and love her some more. He based it on that verse. Because until you get beyond Eph. 5:25, you haven't loved her enough. Until you have met that standard, you haven't lived up to your responsibility. That's scary!

Look at 5:1-2, concerning the same thing,

#### "Therefore, be imitators of God."

I wish it said Paul or Peter, James or Timothy, or David, or even Gabriel. Then, I might have a shot! But it says "Be imitators of God". In verse 2, "Walk in love just as Christ loved you." On the level of earth, this is impossible. "Be holy as I am holy." God is the goal. We have a great responsibility, due to the abundance we received in chapters 1-3.

To make it even scarier, he adds standards that are absolute. Chapter 4:28, "Let him that stole, steal no longer." That's how God says it. Not how the world says it. God's standard is not tapering off little by little, until you find the power to quit. It doesn't say, "Let him who stole, steal a little less today, then a little less tomorrow. So hopefully by next week, you will hardly be stealing at all." "Let him who stole, steal no more." It's over. Stealing is a representative sin! What's true of stealing is true of every sin.

Man's way of deliverance is cutting down. Behavior modification. "I lost my temper ten times last week, but I'm doing better. I only lost my

temper five times this week. I expect by next week, I'll only lose it three times." That isn't the standard. "I'm improving." That's not the point. If I'm to walk according to my responsibility, "Let him that stole, steal no more" and "Be holy as He is holy". Of course, there's a thrilling side to this. That at any moment, the Lord can offer me, complete deliverance from sin.

Obviously, the Spirit of God, did not give us chapters 4-6, to scare us to death. That's not why He recorded these chapters. He has not given impossible standards, that we can't keep. He's not standing with a big club, waiting for us to mess up, so He can whack us. Instead, He's given us these **blessed** responsibilities. He fully intends, that every Christian, who is a multi-billionaire in Christ, walk this way. We call this, responsibilities unlimited. An indeed they are. We call it a high and holy walk. And indeed it is. The reason the Spirit of God gave it, is not because they are awful responsibilities, but because they are "blessed responsibilities".

What's the difference between a dreadful responsibility and a blessed responsibility? The difference does not lie in the responsibility itself. The difference lies, in the direction of our heart. Our **attitude**, toward that responsibility. I told you that the word "Walk", was used seven times in the book of Ephesians. When the Spirit of God, gives a recurring emphasis. Saying the same thing over and over again. I use a study principle suggested by the great Bible teacher, A T Pearson. Find the **first** place God said it. That will be the key, to how it is used throughout. What is the first mention of "Walk", in Ephesians? Look at 2:10,

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

According to this verse, what should we **walk** in? The answer is, **"Good works"**. Well, you say, "the Word is full of good works". Which ones should we walk in? The answer is, ones that,

"He has prepared beforehand, that you should walk in". Those are the ones you are to walk in. I say, "That scares me."

It would scare me, and it would be a dreadful responsibility, if 2:10 weren't so. I'm **not responsible** to walk in **all** good works. Just the

ones, He has **prepared beforehand**. That will make it a "blessed responsibility". Kings James says, "before-ordained."

Let me give a silly illustration. When you get out of bed in the morning and want to put shoes on. Do you have to manufacture the shoes? Do you cut the leather, or sew it together? I don't have to make my shoes. Someone else, makes my shoes. They were "Prepared beforehand", that I should walk in them. It's a wonderful truth, that we aren't responsible for creating our shoes, before we put them on. They were created by another.

Just as really as someone else created your shoes, God has already manufactured your day, before you wake up. It's **already prepared**. It's already built, and already fore-ordained. All you have to do is walk in it. You don't have to manufacture forgiveness, love, unity or generosity. It's already been prepared for you. And for each one of us it's different.

We are responsible to walk. But, only, in the **finished work**. We don't have to **do** the work. We walk in an already finished work. You see, the dread comes, when we think we have to **make** our own path. We don't have to create love in our hearts. No, nothing could be further from the truth. God never called upon Christians to create those things. That's why they are called **"Fruit"**, and not **"Works"**. It's something God creates.

May I make a suggestion? In the morning, when you put your shoes on, since your head is already bowed. Say, "Lord, as really as these shoes have been prepared beforehand. I accept by faith, all the good works You have prepared beforehand for me to walk in". You don't need to be afraid of the word, "Walk". The first mention of the word "Walk", tells you that everything has been prepared.

Now He says to walk. Well, that makes it easy. That takes the "awful" away and makes it **blessed**. So, you don't need to be afraid of chapters 4-6. They are the outworking's and fruit of the first three chapters.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

#### Chapter 21

What is Maturity?

4:1-16

Chapters 4-6, describe the kind of life you will have if you enter into 1-3. It's a test, a quiz, an exam. If you read chapters 4-6, and those things aren't true in your life. **Don't try** to make them true! That's the worst thing you can do. If they aren't true in your life, just understand you haven't experienced the reality of your riches in 1-3.

Run back to the foundation. The more God burns this into your heart, the more 4-6 will be true. You haven't laid claim to your wealth. This is God's gracious objective test. He doesn't need it. We do. He's given us this test because He loves us too much, to let us go on in **unreality**. Too much, to let us fake it. Jesus truly got **angry**, dealing with hypocrites.

That brings us to chapter 4. Let me give you a plan for this chapter. Even though chapters 4-6, spring from 1-3. It is also true that chapters 4-6, rest on their own unique foundations. He keeps placing firm footing under us. He wants to make sure we don't become legalistic. Legalism is not keeping **too** many rules. It's trying to keep the rules, with your **own power**. No rest! Legalism is **confidence in the flesh!** 

In order to best look at chapter 4, I suggest you divide it into three parts. In 4:1-16, He gives a firm foundation. Then He gives some blessed responsibilities that follow. Then, in verses 17-34, He gives a second liberating truth. A second foundation. Then a few more blessed responsibilities. It's almost as if He doesn't dare tell you too much, until He's put a rock solid path beneath your feet. In chapter 4:25-32, He ends up showing us the wonderful results flowing from these foundations. Please take a moment and read Ephesians 4:1-16, before continuing.......

Now before I state it to you as a principle, let me point out the parts that lead to a foundational understanding. Chapter 4:1-16 is a wonderful passage on Christian maturity. Notice verse 13,

"Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man."

What is maturity according to verse 13? Maturity is the **knowledge** of the Son of God! Knowing Jesus. In verse 13, we have this expression,

### "To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

That statement is so full you can miss the elegance of its simplicity.

How do you measure maturity? How do you measure growth? If I want to measure how tall my children are, I use a ruler. If I want to measure temperature, I use a thermometer. If I want to measure the distance to the stars, I'd use the time it takes light to travel in a year. It all depends on what you are measuring. How do you measure Christian maturity? The answer is, look for the "Fullness of Christ". That's "The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". The knowledge of Christ is the measure. A person is mature depending on how well he knows Jesus. That's the point. That's what maturity is. How well you know the Lord.

That's why 4:15 says, "Grow up into all aspects of Him." Grow up in Him. The more I know Him, the more I'm mature. I call attention to this because of the wrong ways people measure maturity. Some people think a Christian is mature, because he's logged in many years. "I've been saved for forty years. Back in 1929 I trusted Jesus." That doesn't make you mature! You might still be on the nipple. Being saved a long time, isn't how you measure maturity. If you repeat the same year 40 times over, you are like the Israelites marching around Mt Zion with one foot nailed to the floor. 40 years to make an 11 day journey!

You don't measure maturity by how early you get up each morning, or how many times you've read the Bible. You don't measure maturity by how active you are in the work of the Lord, or how much evangelism you do. You might say, "But I have a special ministry, and I do this and that." That's not it. Not according to this chapter.

A mature person, is one who is **drawing from the Head**. One who is related to Christ. One who is going forward, in a "heart knowledge" of God, that comes by the progressive revelation of Christ in the scriptures. The babe in Christ, according to Isaiah 28, is one who **refuses to rest**. That's the infant. A mature Christian is not one who is working his way up the ranks of Christian notoriety, hoping to reach the platform of public ministry. That's not the one.

God doesn't have plan A for one Christian, plan B for another Christian, and plan C for the next. My calling is your calling, and your calling is my calling. We have one calling as the Body of Christ. What is that calling? **Maturity**. We're all called to be like Jesus. We're all called to be "Measured by the stature of the fullness of Christ".

May I suggest in this connection that you be careful how you use the word "calling". Some people say that they are "called" to a ministry. "Called", to the pastorate, or vocation. Don't be deceived about that. Our "calling", is to a **Person**, not to a place, and not to a job.

Now you might be **inclined** toward certain works of ministry, because of the unique gifts God has given. In one sense, you might say that's a calling. But it's really the **"outworking"**, **"the fruit"**, of our call to intimacy with Him. Many feel they have not been called, and so feel left out, or not spiritual. Everybody is hearing God except them. I hold in high suspicion, anybody's calling except this one. You are called to **know Jesus**. Called, to know the Lord. In union with Him, He does the work through you. He said call no man father, or teacher, because there is only one. In union with Him, we lead others to union with Him. As we all abide in the Vine, abundant fruit comes forth that glorifies God.

In this connection, let me make a comment, then state the foundation. Glance at verses 7-12. The Spirit of God does not aimlessly change the subject. He doesn't jump from one thing to another. He's not going to get off the subject and say, "Now let me tell you how the Old Testament saints got out of Sheol, and ascended with Christ into Paradise." To lift that out of context, and bring in that doctrine, is to violate the great intention of the Spirit of God.

The reason He talks about the ascension, is to turn our attention to the Lord on the cross. That's the consummation of His victory. His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. Far above, every name that's named, and every power on earth. That great victory, conquered every enemy, and led captivity captive. He conquered sin, death, hell, the wrath of God, and Satan. He has ascended on high. Why? In order that, He might "Give gifts to men". That's His point. He's not talking about some prophetic thing in the future, or what happened in the past. Because of this tremendous victory of Christ, He can now give

wonderful gifts to the Church. Why would He give wonderful gifts to the Church? Verse 12.

# "For the equipping of the saints; for the work of service; to the building up of the body of Christ."

He has one thing in mind. That every Christian, will come to maturity, being made like Jesus. So every Christian, will have that same calling. To grow up in Christ. In order to accomplish that goal He's given gifts to men. It's not humility to say, "I have no spiritual gift". Truthfully, it's an act of pride. According to the scripture, God has given gifts to **all** of His children. Let me comment on Spiritual gifts and then we'll move on.

**Spiritual gifts meet deficiencies**. If you understand spiritual gifts, you won't be proud of your gift. Spiritual gifts are given, because God sees a **hole** in your life. God sees something missing. Without that gift, you'd be on your face more than you are already. Most baby Christians need the subjective gifts. They need feelings that encourage them to go on. They need to feel that God loves them. So, He meets that need.

Why do you think He gives the gift of discernment of Spirits? Because the people He gives that gift to, tend to listen to "Every wind of doctrine". They would easily be led astray, without that gift. He gives the gift of government, to those who are unusually scatter brained and unorganized. To the naturally selfish, He gives the gift of helps. He gives the gift of teaching, to those who by nature would neglect the Bible (that would be me, John). All of the gifts meet deficiencies, and it is God's way to meet a weakness. He then uses your frailty, to build up other Christians. "So no flesh can glory in His presence". He gets all the glory!!!

Let me back off now and give you the foundation in chapter 4:1-16. Then I'll set before you some of the responsibilities. It can be summarized in these words, **Because of the victory of the ascended Christ, God will bring every Christian to maturity, through His gifted children.** 

I think it's thrilling that maturity is not an issue. Try to get the impact of this, and don't be afraid to follow it to its logical conclusion. Look at verse 14,

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

God has made every provision that I would not be a wind-driven child. He's about to give us our responsibilities and tell us how to walk, but first He lays down a firm footing. He's going to tell us how to walk but before He does, He wants us to understand that we **will be mature**. We're not to **worry** about that. "Because I've ascended on high and given gifts to men, I'm going to make you mature. I've already prepared the steps you are going to take. So, don't worry"

With that as the foundation, let me mention the two responsibilities that flow from these revelations.

#1 Unity. Chapter 4:3, "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." KJV says, "Keep the unity of the Spirit." Wuest in his Expanded Translation says, "Safeguard the unanimity of Spirit in the bond of peace." Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say to make unity. It's not your responsibility to make unity. It says to keep the unity. Why can't you make unity? The answer is, it's already made. By His death, by His resurrection and by His victory, Christ has made us one. All Christians are one in Christ. So, "Keep it, preserve it and safeguard it". We need to walk in the unity He's already made.

In Ephesians 4, there is a parenthesis between verse 3, and verse 13. 4:3 says, "Keep the unity of the Spirit." Verse 4:13 says, "Keep the unity of the Spirit, until we all come to the unity of the faith." Well, that's a tremendous thing. You see, the word "until", shows us we're not all going to agree on matters of faith.

Many people base unity, on the unity of the faith. He said, "No." Your unity is not in faith. You keep the unity of the Spirit—until—we come to the unity of the faith. Keeping unity, is our first blessed responsibility.

#2 Chapter 4:2, "With all humility... Be humble!" How can we boast or treat other Christians badly when we are made one by the blood and sacrifice of God's Son? "By the grace of God, I am what I am".

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 22

Unity of the Spirit

4:1-16

We belong to each other. You belong to me and I belong to you. We're all members of the same body and share the same head. That's why I like verses 4-6,

"There's one body and one Spirit and one hope of our calling and one Lord and one Faith and one baptism and one God and Father of all Who is over all and through all and in all."

If we're going to understand this responsibility, God will have to work in our hearts a resistance to our attempts to **make** unity. Unity is not made by sharing common creeds. Unity is not everybody believing the same things. The death, resurrection and work of Christ made unity. That's the error of denominationalism, which is built on creedal agreements and faith statements. If you can't sign my statement of faith, sorry, you're not welcome. That's **denominationalism**. Our blessed responsibility to keep the unity of the Spirit, is crippled by denominationalism.

Some think that unity is created by social events. I love to fellowship. It's fun to meet with God's people. But fellowshipping doesn't **create** unity. Some say, "Well, our young people need to be one. Let's start a bowling league or softball team. We'll order pizza and do scavenger hunts." Church suppers don't create unity.

Proximity doesn't make unity. We had a neighbor that we lived close to for years. There was no unity or peace there! I guarantee it! Unity is not created by social occasions. It's already made. Unity is a lot deeper than singing in the same choir, or going to the same functions together. And unity is not **uniformity** or **conformity**. We don't need cookie cutter Christians that all look and act the same.

Take a piece of music. In a good piece of music, there's more than one note. If all the instruments looked and sounded the same, you couldn't experience the majesty and creativity of a Bach or Beethoven.

There is incredible diversity in the miracle we call the human body. A vast, complex, multitude of completely different parts, united by one

common life. The life of my head is in my arm. The life of my head is in my leg. The life of my head is in my body. Every part is fitted together. Each member, and each organ, has its own proper function. But it has one **common life**.

I believe in separation from **sin**, but not from **Christians**. We are one in Christ. We have the same Head. God sees us as one. Diversified, unique, but one. Do you see why He lays this foundation first? Watch. We're all going to get mature. We're all going to arrive, because God has given gifts to His children. Verse 13, "Until," means we aren't there yet, "Until we come to the unity of the faith".

Do you know anybody that has reached maturity? Have you arrived? See, we haven't arrived yet. Every one of us has some very odd ideas and some idiosyncrasies about us. Not one of us can stand up and say we are perfect examples of Christian maturity. We're all on the way. We're going to arrive and make it safe and sound.

Sometimes I get embarrassed when I read my old notes. I wonder if I actually said those things. We've destroyed a lot of our tape series, and threw a lot of my notes away. Five or ten years down the road, if God allows us to have grace, we're going to look back and say the same thing. We'll say, "Yuck. We thought we knew something then". We don't know anything. And we are going to blush because we'll see how weak we were, and how little we knew. We hold truth like a little baby holds a rattle. You have to pry our fingers from it. We are on the way to the unity of the faith. That's why there are so many denominations. They don't agree. And God said they wouldn't.

Now watch. Until we all get to the unity of the faith, **keep** the unity of the Spirit. What is unity? We defined it a chapters ago. It's mutual headship. I live for the pleasure of the head and you live for the pleasure of the head. If you and I are living for the pleasure of the head, we have perfect unity. We're one. That's what unity is; **shared headship**.

In chapter 4:3, you have the expression, "Unity of the Spirit" and in 4:13 you have the expression, "Unity of the faith." When the average Christian thinks about unity, they almost always think about verse 13, "Unity of the faith." Well, God said that we aren't going to believe the

same thing. We're moving that way, but we're not there. He said to keep the unity of the Spirit, until we arrive.

But everybody is asking "What do you believe? Are you dispensational? Oh, you are not? I'm sorry, I can't fellowship with you. Are you covenant? Are you Calvinist? Are your Armenian? Are you pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib? Do you believe in tongues, in water baptism? And when you baptize, is it sprinkling or immersion? What do you believe?" They begin to draw their circles around the unity of the faith, and they say I can't fellowship with you. We put up walls and separations based on our **own understanding**.

Do you believe in the seventh day, or in the first day? Do you believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Do you accept all the spiritual gifts? Do you believe in missions? And all these walls are put up. The Body of Christ becomes a collection of separations and divisions. Jesus says this, "Because of the fact that we have not arrived at the unity of the faith, we have a blessed responsibility to,

#### "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

We belong to each other, and the unity He gives as a blessed responsibility, has nothing to do with the unity of the faith. It's the unity of the Spirit. Regardless of where you are in your faith and where I am in my faith, we are one with every true believer.

Every one of us has the blessed responsibility to fellowship with all other Christians. You might say, "Well, I don't have anything in common with them." Yes, you do.....Jesus, the Head. With every **Christian**, we have **Christ in common**. Because we have the Head in common, we have the same life. The same Holy Spirit, and the same grace. The same forgiveness, and the same heaven in the end.

I used to teach with all my might that the Church would be raptured in the middle of the tribulation. I was mid-trib. I don't believe that any more. But so what if someone believes that! You are one in Christ Jesus. If someone believes in raising their hands when they worship, or breaking into a dance, so what! What does that have to do with anything? You are believers; you are in Christ Jesus. If they feel like taking a megaphone, and going out on a street corner, so what! You might say that they are embarrassing me.

You might not want to identify with them. Then you aren't living up to your blessed responsibility. It's not up to you, to change them. God is changing us, and we're coming to the unity of the faith. But until then, we preserve the unity of the Spirit, and recognize our basic oneness with every Christian.

Let me ask this question. Do you handle the matters of your faith in such a way, that it promotes unity of the Spirit? Think about that for a moment. Or does your handling of the unity of the faith, cause divisions and splits? Just glance at verse 4 & 5. I'm going to give an example here. "One baptism". My head was swimming when I was studying the commentators. God says there's one baptism, but when I read the commentators I came up with twenty baptisms. They can't agree. Some people say it's water baptism, some say it's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You realize these days that baptism, especially water baptism, is dynamite in the church of God. Nobody seems to agree, causing big splits all over the place.

I'm not asking you what you believe about water baptism, or about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, because that's not my concern. My concern is this. Do you hold what you believe about baptism, in such a way, that it **promotes unity?** Or does your belief cause splits and hurt the people of God? Your blessed responsibility, is to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is a way to handle all those matters of faith in a common denominator way. We can focus on the great principles of God that we all share, and so promote unity.

When I think of baptism, what's the difference if it's the Holy Spirit baptism, or water baptism? One is a **picture** of the other. One is the expression of the inward, and one the outward.

We don't have to strive to get everybody into our particular fellowship, or try to get them to our particular church. All He is saying is, "Be one in Christ". You are one with every believer. What a witness to the world. Didn't Jesus say that?

## "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

God's people are fighting all over the place. Wouldn't it be a wonderful blessing to the people of God? Remember Psalm 133,

"Behold how good, how blessed it is for brothers to **dwell together** in unity; like the precious oil upon the head that ran down upon the beard; it's like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion".

There, in the place of unity, "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even forever".

It's a wonderful responsibility. It would it be a witness to the world and a blessing to the people of God. But more than that, it would warm the heart of the Lord Jesus who prayed, at His final gathering with the disciples in John 17,

"That they may be one, even as we are one; that they might be one; that they might be in us as we are in them."

That's heavy on the heart of Christ. A tremendous responsibility belongs to the people of God. Not to be one in faith....that's coming. Until then, every Christian needs to recognize every other Christian as his brother, and his sister. We are one, and we share a common Head, and a common Life.

If you listen with a spiritual ear, you know that I'm not encouraging compromise in any way. I'm not promoting this false idea of ecumenism, where we all get together in one big church. We are one in Christ. That's what we are to see. I'm not encouraging that you lower your standards in any way, and make room for sin. No! I'm not saying that. I'm just saying what the Spirit of God is saying in the verse,

"Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, until we all attain to the unity of the faith."

That's Responsibility #1

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 23

Put Off the Old

4:17-24

Responsibility #2 brings us to chapter 4:17-24. The second spiritual foundation. You can see what God is doing in this section. He's contrasting the way the gentiles walk, excluded from the life of God, with the way the Christian walks, in union with Christ. Verses 17-19, describe life without God. Verses 20-24, describe how someone lives with Him. The foundation we're going to illustrate, revolves around the expression, *"The life of God"*.

There's so much doctrine squashed into these eight verses. Let me try to unwrap it, and get it before your heart. Then I will state the principle. Some call verses 22-24, "The doctrine of the old man, and the new man". The New American Standard calls it, "The old self", and "The new self". Commentators differ greatly on this passage. What's, "The old man"? What's, the "New man"? There's conflicting thoughts. When you come upon truths that seem to contradict, ask the Lord to give you a common denominator truth, that can bind them together.

Bishop Moore wrote a wonderful classic on the book of Ephesians. He says the "Old man" and the "New man" in Ephesians 4, is not the same as "The flesh" found in Galatians 5:16 & 17,

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that you would".

Here it talks about the "Flesh", being at enmity with the Spirit. In Galatians it looks like a war going on, but not in Ephesians. Others disagree and say, "No, God uses all these words synonymously. Sometimes He uses "The old man", and sometimes He uses "The old self". He also uses "The old Adam", and often times uses "The flesh". Elsewhere he says "The body", and The body of this death".

We see Paul use the phrase, "The natural man", and "The carnal man". But no matter what you read, it's talking about the same thing.

Here's what I think causes the confusion. In Ephesians, it sounds like the old is put off, and the new, is put on. It seems like the struggle and conflict is over. One is gone, the other has arrived. That seems to contradict other passages, as well as our life experience. The Christian life appears to be a battle, and sometimes a war. Constant struggle. Sometime losing. Sometime winning. We sing, "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war." "The Battle Hymn of the Rebublic". Is there anything crystal clear? What is the Holy Spirit's message in this passage?

Here's what I'd like to do. Let me give a little exposition of this passage and then state the principle. Maturity is no longer the issue, so don't worry about that. This is much more liberating! When God opens your heart to these things, the Christian life will become the **blessing** it was meant to be.

It's important to grasp the principle before you jump into the outworkings. When I say "grasp", I'm not talking about a mental understanding. You know I'm talking about **Spirit** illumination. Nothing is more lifeless than a doctrinal approach to Christian living. For my own self, I'm fed up to my Adam's apple with these ideas on how to live a victorious Christian life. I want revelation! For seven years of my Christian life I got burned out, as I sought a method to know the Lord. We don't want theories. If what I give is not God, then just throw it away.

Let me begin by making a few comments about 4:17-24 as a whole. First, notice that the Holy Spirit pictures an extreme case. Listen as he describes gentiles.

"They walk in the futility of their mind, darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, hardness of heart, become callous, giving themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity and greediness".

Could it be worse than this? When you read this description, this question comes to mind. "What kind of horrible Christians did the Apostle Paul think these Ephesians were? He describes them saying, "Don't be like that, don't walk as the gentiles walk". He pictures the heathen at their heathen worse. He pictures them excluded from the life of God. Given over to sensuality and practicing lawlessness. Then

he says to these victorious Christians, "Don't be like that." In one sense you say, "What an insult! Great day! He didn't have to be so strong in his language. He could write that to the Corinthians. But we're up in the heaven-lies with Christ. We have seen how rich we are in the Lord."

It's one thing to slip backwards, and lose your temper. Carry a grudge, or be unforgiving. Harbor some bad thoughts, and let a bad word slip out. You might fall into lust, and then come back to the Lord. But this — "Excluded from the life of God, hardened in their hearts, callous to their conscience".

That's pretty bad! Why does the Holy Spirit use this strong language? I believe He has a reason and a purpose. He's trying to show a wonderful principle. He's going to make sure you don't miss it. He identifies the "Old self", and the "New self", hoping to lay down a very radical and liberating truth. A truth, that thousands of Christians have yet to discover. A truth that can set you free, and deliver you from bondage.

I believe "The old man" can be summarized in these words. The old man is the life of man, excluded from, the life of God. That's the old man. What's the new man? It's the life of God, excluded from, the life of man. The old man is the life of man, without the life of God. The new man is the life of God, without the life of man.

What does man's life look like, when you take God out. It looks like verses 17-19. How will that life flow? Don't be shocked by the description in these verses. This is not a description of a nation full of Hitlers. This is the description of every human heart. Your heart, my heart, and the heathen heart. Life, without God. The question is not, "Do you do these things." The question is, "Are you capable of doing these things?" You see, He uses the extreme case, to demonstrate the natural course of human behavior, without God. When the heart is absent from the life of God, this is what you get.

It's shocking to realize how corrupt, and how depraved, we really are. We're supposed to be "nice" Christians. Now and then, the Lord takes the cover off, and lets the repulsive smell reach our nostrils. We get a glimpse of the **wicked possibilities** of our heart. We want to die. It's unbelievable. Last Sunday I was reading 2 Kings 8, about a man named Hazael. He was the servant of the king of Syria. Hazael stood before Elisha, and the man of God wept. That puzzled Hazael, so he asked

him, "Why are you weeping?" Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown me the evil you will do."

You will set cities on fire, kill young men with swords, dash little babies on the ground, and rip out the wombs of pregnant women. Hazael stopped him and said,

### "Is your servant a dog that he should do these things?"

He couldn't believe what was in his own heart, and walked away. The man of God wept, because God had shown him Hazael's heart. He denied the possibility of it. Yet the facts remain that he murdered the king of Syria, became king himself, and did even worse atrocities than Elisha prophesied.

Don't think for a moment, "I'm a Christian now. I can't get involved in those things. I'm safe and protected in God." **No, you're not**. Here is a clear principle. Not just for the unsaved. Thousands of Christians are trying to keep the principles of God, with their own **will power**. They live in denial, assuming that they are beyond such thoughts and actions.

Take your eyes off Jesus for a while, and you will find yourself **excluded** from the life of God, even though you are saved and going to heaven. You won't be living by the life (Spirit) of God. You will be living by your own life force. That force which flows from the Adamic nature. When you are living by your own life, there is no end to the possibilities of sin in your life!

I decided to read through the Bible, and every time I found a sin, I would either confess it, or admit the possibility of it. I accepted that if the circumstances were right, I would do that very thing. I tell you, it got bad! I stopped at Leviticus. I wound up confessing murders, immoralities, perversions and incest. It was horrible. I reached the bottom when I had to confess to God, the possibility of having sex with animals. I said, "Lord, is that possible? Could anybody stoop that low?" The answer is yes. I could. And so could you. We can't begin to know the possibilities of our heart, without God. This is called the "doctrine of depravity". Jerimiah 17:9,

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Only God.

This is what he's talking about when he mentions the "Old man". This is the extreme old man, full of hell. Filthy, polluted and perverted. Feeding upon his own lusts and perversions. If you can understand that, you are going to see the liberating principle. He's talking about a direction of life. Why does the Holy Spirit tell us this? Is it to scare us and make us feel condemned? Is he trying to say, "You see where you're headed if left alone?" Is that what He's saying? "You must overcome sin. That's why there's a struggle. That's why there's a battle".

You know the answer. A million times no! That's not what He's saying at all. The key to understanding the principle is in verse 22. The expression in the KJV says, "Put off". "Put off the old man". The New American Standard Bible says, "Lay aside the old self." Verse 22 says, "Put on the new man and the new self." That's the key! Put off, and put on. Let me show you two things about that and then I'll give the principle.

First of all, there's a difference between **putting off** the old man, and **conquering** the old man. There's a difference between laying aside something, and beating it into submission. Every honest Christian recognizes that though he is saved, he's not done with sin yet. Even though we know the Lord, we still host the **principle** of sin. There's still that bias, that bent, that desire and impulse. This is what inspired the great hymnist Robinson to write this stanza, in the classic "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing",

"O to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above."

In the next chapter, we will find God's "Blessed solution", to our hopeless dilemma.

## Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 24

Put on the New Man

4:22

Wouldn't it be wonderful if at the moment you said yes to God, you were made perfect? No more passion, selfishness, impatience, dishonesty, pride, lust of the flesh, unbelief and no more wayward thoughts. Sound nice? Often times the Christian gets confused, because he sees many of those things, still dwelling in his redeemed heart. Sin is very present in his life, and he doesn't know what to do.

Too often he's taught to be an overcomer, a champion! Be victorious! He's taught that he has an enemy in his heart. That old sin nature, the flesh. It wars against the Spirit, so he must always be on guard. Evil thoughts and wicked desires could attack at any time, so don't get caught sleeping. Be especially careful, when you're tired and sick. In that weak moment, the flesh will come and overthrow you. So, he's taught to be a cautious, anxious, soldier at war. Remaining ever alert, and let not the old man live. Is that what the Spirit of God means when He says, "Put off the old and put on the new"?

Let me illustrate with this foolish illustration. If my shirt suddenly caught on fire and I couldn't put it out. There are two ways for me to have victory. I could have victory "Over my shirt". Meaning God would give me the same kind of victory He gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when their shirts were on fire. The fire burned. But God did a miracle, and they were kept safe. God could give me that kind of victory. Total deliverance "over my shirt".

Or I could have victory "From my shirt". That is, I could take my shirt off. And just let it burn. There's a difference between deliverance from and deliverance over. If I had deliverance over my shirt, God would do a miracle to keep me from harm. If I had deliverance from my shirt, I'd be removed from it, and there would be no battle.

Here's the question. Does God give us victory **over** our old sin nature? Or does He give us victory **from** our old sin nature? I believe if you read this passage and the balance of scripture, you will find that He gives victory **from** it.

The second thing about this key, can be summarized in a quote from H.C.G. Moule speaking of Ephesians 4:22 "Consider the old self..." and 4:24, "Put on the new self." He says, "The reference which I believe is intended is not a duty but a fact! In the Greek it is an aorist infinitive (finished in the past). The "putting on" and the "putting off" is viewed as an accomplished fact.

What's he saying? He's saying what we sing about, believe and love. It is finished! It's a contradiction, to say Christ finished it all on the cross, but I still must battle sin. Christ finished the war, but I must struggle. Christ won the victory and now I must win it. No!! That's all wrong. That would be victory over the shirt. We are not delivered in the battle, but from the battle.

Thousands of Christians live in a constant struggle with the sin nature. There is no struggle. If there were, it would be a slaughter, and not a struggle. The power of the **heart to sin**, cannot be conquered or overcome. There is no struggle. That's what I love about 4:20 & 21,

## "You did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus."

Here's the good news. The gospel as a **fact.** And not as an **act**. The old sin nature is no longer the issue. Just like maturity is no longer an issue. God doesn't deliver from defeat to victory, in the battle. He delivers you **FROM** the battle itself. The war is over, and **He** is the victor. **He** has won. **He**, has victory. **He**, is dead to sin. **He**, is alive to God. **He**, is Holy. What is your part? To fight sin? To struggle with the old man? No! Literally put it off! Reckon it put off. It is an inescapable fact. Christ has triumphed. He leads you in **His** triumph. Christ is the overcomer and we are overcomers in Him!

He has overcome the world. United to Him, Who has overcome the world, we overcome the world? Do you believe that you have a righteousness of your own? Or is it imputed? Do you believe that you have any strength of your own? Or is it imputed? Just so, your wisdom, your sanctification, your patience and your love is all imputed. He is love, and you are accepted in the Beloved. He is elect, and you are elect in Him. He is the Son of God, and you are a son of God **in Him**. Victory is also imputed. Victory belongs to Him, not you, not me and not us!

How does this work practically? How many times have we said, "Lord, give me victory **over** my impatience. Give me victory **over** my temper. Give me victory **over** my critical spirit. Lord, overpower and conquer my flesh. Curb my love of money and material things." That's ALL WRONG!! Those are **unscriptural prayers**. It will NEVER happen. It's impossible. It is futile. There is no word of promise, that God will ever do any such thing. My life excluded from the life of God, is to be **laid aside**. Not overcome!! It is to be "put off", and not conquered. But what is the new self; the new man? It is the Life of God **excluded** from the life of man. Read Ephesians 4:23 & 24,

"That you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

What is the Christian life? It is not fighting sin. It is appropriating the Life of God and becoming like Him. It's letting Him live. He is victorious. He is holy, He is pure. His life is in fellowship with God. The simplicity of this is what makes it so wonderful. I don't have to run after thousands of things, or a dozen, or even two things. To the degree that I **let Him live**, to that degree I will see the **fruit** of **His Life**.

Our **one responsibility**, is to go after **God Himself**. We MUST NOT try to die or try to crucify self! God will take care of that. He will always work death in our lives. He will **engineer the details** of our life to bring us to the end of ourselves. The good news is that Christ has already overcome, and there is not the slightest battle left for you or me. My full time job is to **know Jesus**. Not witness. Just know Jesus. Not fellowship. Know Jesus. Not fight sin, Satan and self. There is no effort, no sweat to knowing Jesus. I don't have to conquer my motives, quit my habits, try to crucify myself, or live an ascetic life. All of that effort is just MY life, excluding the Life of God. IN FACT IT IS THE ORIGINAL SIN.

To make this practical, let me show you what flows from the two foundations. #1: Maturity is not an issue. #2: The old sin nature is not an issue. Do you realize that not one Christian in a thousand would agree with this?! Let me give it to you broadly, and we will develop it in more detail later. Look at the reality in Ephesians 4:25,

"Laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another"

Laying aside falsehood and speaking truth. What a word! It's all genuine, with no hypocrisy, and no artificial living. No pretending to have peace and liberty that's not really mine. I don't need to play games or play act! I never have to **fake** it again!

Some Christians have never been real. They have a chair and a whip like a lion tamer. They are constantly trying to tame the beast of their motives. They are embarrassed that it can't be domesticated. So, they lie, and **pretend** they have **victory**. They even write "how to" books about victory and peace. But all they have done is **suppress** its outward form. In secret, and in the dark, when nobody is looking, it runs amuck. Just ask the wife and kids? They nurture dirty habits and foul thoughts. They lie, plot, and get puffed up, just like everybody else.

I can't tell you how many priests and pastors have confessed to me, asking me to pray for sin and lustful habits they just couldn't overcome. I only wish I had the enlightenment of "putting off". But in my immaturity, I was in the same boat as them.

The second outworking, is in Ephesians 4:24. Holiness,

### "Renewed in the spirit of your mind... in the likeness of God"

God-like! Here is the truth. **It's in Jesus**. When I see Jesus, by faith I am transformed. I share His life. My life is excluded. We share His victory. I don't try to **quit** sin. I **pursue** God. I am transformed into His likeness. Let's say that you felt bitterness for someone. Victory **over** your nature would be something like this. "Hateful old cat. I can't stand her! But now, because I'm a Christian, I'll tolerate her." That's victory **over** your nature? Here is victory from your nature. "Hateful old cat. I can't stand her, but God loves her. Lord you love the hateful old cat in me. Not my will, but thine to do. I'll stop trying and live by your life and love."

I give up **trying**, and I **yield** myself to the life of God. You see, the transformation that comes through seeing Him, is complete. It's not tearing down, but actually, a building up. It's real through and through. I WILL be transformed. Verses 30-32, Christ will "Be formed in me". And His life will flow through me. Verse 4:32, I will "Forgive just as Christ has forgiven". Verse 5:1, I will "Be an imitator of Christ". Verse 5:25, "Husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church".

Now you know why I took so much time showing you the foundation. Otherwise, you would think you should try to be real, and you would try to stop sinning. You would work hard at being kind, being forgiving, being honest and tender hearted. The only answer is to appropriate the life of God, **excluded from your own life**.

As natural as breathing. Matthew 5:3 & 6,

"But seek first, the Kingdom of God, and **His righteousness** (Jesus) And all these things will be added"

"How blessed are those who are **poor in spirit** (out of breath). Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: they **Shall be filled**."

In Ezekiel 37:11-14, the Lord explains what moved Him to prophesy through Ezekiel concerning the spiritual dryness that had afflicted His people Israel dwelling in Babylon. The key is, that **they cried out**, confessing their hopelessness, and lifelessness. God their Husband and Provider was quick to answer.

"Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; **behold, they say**, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

"Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD."

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 25

Walk in the Light

5:1-33

When I look at chapter 5, I see three big movements of the Holy Spirit. He often illustrates spiritual truths through physical things. In chapter 5 He does exactly that. He dips into the world of nature, and pulls out three marvelous pictures. Light, wine, and marriage. From these three illustrations, He lays down three, "Blessed responsibilities". Chapter 5:1-14, He uses light. Chapter 5:15-21, He uses wine. And chapter 5:22-33, He uses the bond of marriage.

The illustration of light, gives us the blessed responsibility to walk in the **light** of the Lord. Which really means, be holy. The illustration of wine, gives us the blessed responsibility of walking in the **joy** of the Lord. The picture of marriage, gives us the blessed responsibility of walking in **union** with the Lord. Ephesians 5:1-14,

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God, into an aroma of a sweet smell.

But let sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness not even be named among you, as also is proper to saints, and filthiness, and foolish talking, or crude joking, which are not fitting, but rather thanksgiving. For this you know, realizing that any fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous man, who is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light— for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth— discerning what is well-pleasing to the Lord.

And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even expose them. For it is shameful even to mention the things being done by them in secret. But everything being exposed by the light is made visible, for everything becoming visible is light. Therefore

it says: 'Awake you, the one sleeping, and rise up out from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you."

Let me identify the great illustration. Notice verse 8, "Formerly darkness; now light. You are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Verse 9, "The fruit of light." Verse 11, "Unfruitful deeds of darkness." It's the illustration of light. Light, against darkness. He is contrasting "Beloved children" in verse 1 with, "Sons of disobedience" in verse 6.

The Spirit of God longs that we be real. Not saying empty words, but having reality deep in our beings. The fact is, the argument here is rather forceful. He says, in effect, "Here are some characteristics of darkness, and here are some characteristics of light. Now look at your life. Do you have the characteristics of darkness, or the characteristics of light?"

Because it's easy to confess light with your mouth, and not have the characteristics of light in your life. The tongue can be **religious**. Satan's tongue is very religious. Satan could quote the doctrinal creed of any local church. He's very kosher. He believes it all, but, like many of us, will not surrender to the King and His truth.

In 5:3-7 he lists the characteristics of darkness. Immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, coarse jesting, covetousness, and idolatry. Then He says in verse 5,

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

You may say, "These are the characteristics of the lost and the unsaved. Those separated from God". But before I continue, let me give a strong warning. Be careful how you talk about a carnal Christian. Some people teach that you can be saved, trust Christ as your Savior, and live for the devil. They call that "Carnal Christianity". They say, "At least he's saved, he just not walking with the Lord. He's full of darkness, but at least he accepted Christ. He raised his hand, or signed a card, or came forward at some meeting."

They say that you can be born again, yet never have grown in Christ. Remain a baby all your life, and continue in darkness. That is not Bible truth. If you live like Ephesians 5:3-7, you are going to be separated and in danger of hell. That's what the Bible says. You are under the wrath of God, and a "Son of disobedience". The message of grace, leads to holy living. It leads to a transformed life. Not a slipshod life. That's what I like about verse 5. It begins with these words, "This you know with certainty." Some people don't know with certainty.

"This you know **with certainty**; no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ".

He says you know that, with **certainty**. You don't have to wonder about it. I'm not trying to scare you. I'm trying to make you honestly cautious, as you walk before the Lord. You need to examine your heart. I'm not trying to introduce doubt or suspicion, I am suggesting this from verse 6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words."

What are "empty words"? They are the empty words of "easy believism". "You can live any old way you want to live. Just claim the promises, and He'll keep you safe from harm". You CAN'T sin with your eye on Christ. The Bible doesn't teach that, and it's a very dangerous thing. Those are "empty words". Don't be deceived. They are not true. As far as I read in my Bible, there's no such thing as "carnal Christians". They don't exist. There are not two ways to heaven. By being spiritual, and, by being carnal. You get separated from God, when you are carnal.

Verse 8 says, "You were formerly darkness." You used to be that way, but, it's not that way now. "Now in union with the Lord you are light itself, so walk as children of the light". He goes into the great illustration of light. Verse 9,

"The fruit of light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

Glance please at verse 10,

"Trying to learn what's pleasing to the Lord." KJV has, "Proving what is pleasing to the Lord."

"Proving", is a strong word in the Greek. It means "to put to the test, and to check out all the specifications". It's a lot stronger than we generally think. It actually has a positive, and a negative connotation. It approves God's will positively, while rejecting man's will, negatively.

A heart set on one goal. Pleasing the Lord. My heart is set on His satisfaction." Sometimes we seek the will of the Lord in order to touch other people's lives. 5:10,

### "Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord".

We are not to go after the will of the Lord because of what it will mean to others. Sometimes we go after God's will, because it will bring joy and satisfaction to our own lives. We are not to go after the will of God because of the joy and satisfaction it brings to our hearts. We are to go after the will of God, only because, it is the will of God, to go after the will of God. Because, it pleases Him! And for no other reason. If it brings pain and bitterness to your life......you still go.

Sometimes we think we'd be happier if we were more involved in ministry. Teaching, or preaching, in some public platform. Brothers and sisters, the goal is not your happiness. Sometimes, to crucify that self-centered desire, He sweeps away the opportunity, and disappoints your worldly aspirations. He actually sabotages ministries that would satisfy your "need to serve", and not, His good pleasure. The Greek word describes a child of light as, "One who never really desires anything, never refuses anything, but is constantly open. Without any reservations. Everything he ever wants, is what God wants." "All I want, is what God wants. If God doesn't want me to have it, I don't want it". That's, a "Child of light".

In order to catch the thrill of it, let me get into this illustration of light. Glance at verses 11-13. The principle can be stated in these words, "Light exposes". It exposes the unfruitful deeds of darkness, and in verse 13, it "dispels" darkness. It transforms darkness into light.

Now before I show you how practical this is, let me give you the spiritual reality. Light is the illustration. Look at verse 14,

"For this reason, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you." KJV says, "Christ shall give you light."

The literal Greek says, "dawn". "Christ shall dawn upon you." It's exactly the same word used in Matthew 28:1 on resurrection morning,

"Now after the Sabbath, as it began to **dawn** toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave."

And as it began to **dawn** toward the first day of the week, "Christ shall dawn upon you." He's pictured as the dawning sun. What happened that Easter morning, happens to every Christian. It's another wonderful figure of speech, applied to Christ. He's called "The Son of righteousness". He's, "The Day Star". He's, "The Morning Star". And now He's saying that Christ, is the light. He's the One that shines on you.

Let's go back to what happens when Christ dawns on you. First, He "exposes" the deeds of darkness. Verse 12, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness; instead, even expose them." Verse 13,

### "All things become visible when they are exposed by the light."

What's the light? Christ will shine on you. How do I find the unfruitful deeds of darkness, in my life? How do I find out, in my own heart, what is displeasing to the Lord? How is the darkness exposed? Well, here's the **wrong** way to do it. Number one, **self-examination**. Looking inward. Introspection. Get alone, search your heart and meditate on your sin. Make sure you dig deep. See if you have sinned against God today. Confess it, and constantly keep clean records before the Lord. I suggest, that, is a subtle **error**, among the people of God.

It came in recently with that flood of Christian, "so-called", psychology, and Christian psychiatry. It's this psychiatric victory before God. One Christian psychologist has a chapter in his book called, "Discover Your Sin and Bring it to Jesus". The problem is, that you have no more ability to **discover** your sin, than to **remove** it.

Do you realize what bondage you'd be in, if you started searching for sin? If you began to look into your heart right now, don't you think you could find something to confess? I could. Then, after you confessed it, and you start searching again, do you think you could find something else? When would you be finished? How long would that take? I suggest you'd never be done. If you went that route, searching your own heart, you'd have to say, "Did I spend this moment right and that moment right? Did I say the right thing? Did I neglect something? Did I waste any time? Was I angry? There's **no end** to it!

The fact is, in wanting to escape from self and run to God, we become preoccupied with **self**. It's a clever devise of Satan, getting us to look inside and discover our own sin. He subtly insinuates your responsibility to examine and fix yourself. It separates you from grace, because it pushes you to put confidence in the flesh! The very introspection, by which we try to deliver ourselves, actually causes greater bondage and self-absorption. Read Colossians 2:20-end. Paul suggests that taming the beast, really feeds the beast, and makes him stronger!

"If once through fellowship with Christ you died and were separated from the world's crude notions, why do you live as though you belonged to the world?

Why submit to rules such as, 'You must not handle, you must not taste, you must not touch,' which refer to things that perish in the using, in accordance with human rules and teachings?

Such practices have the outward expression of wisdom, with their self-imposed devotions, their self-humiliation, their torturings of the body, but they are of NO VALUE; they really SATISFY THE LOWER NATURE."

Religion is often a subtle way, to get your eyes off of the Lord, and onto yourself. It seems right, but is really death. Proverbs 16:25,

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

The first mention of Satan in the Bible includes what God wants us to know most about him. Genesis 3:1,

"But the serpent was more **Subtle**, than any other creature."

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 26

Joyful Responsibility

5:15-21

In addition to the blessed responsibility of letting Christ shine on you, there's another blessed responsibility illustrated by wine. Eph. 5:15-21,

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father, and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

Before we look at the illustration of wine, and why it illustrates "Joy in the Lord", let me say a word about 5:16-17. The King James Version calls it "Redeeming the time" or "buying up the opportunities". The NASB says, "Making the most of your time". Many sermons on the proper use of time have been preached from Ephesians 5:16. It is a great passage against wasting time. But, it goes beyond that.

I remember going into bondage, trying not to waste God's time. I didn't want to do the wrong thing, and I didn't want to do nothing. I can tell you now, it didn't work. Not for a single minute. If I were consistent, maybe it would have worked. But I was moody. One moment I was tired, the next, hyper. Two minutes later, I was silly, and soon after that, full of anxiety. Sometimes enthusiastic, and other times, just plain lazy. My heart was conflicted. Strange emotions welled up, depending on whether things were enjoyable, or inconvenient. My attempt to "Redeem the time", was a waste of time. I had no peace. I was miserable.

"Making the most of your time", in Eph. 5:16 is literally "Buying up the opportunities". Opportunities for what? For years they told me it was for witnessing, for sharing Christ. "Don't miss an opportunity to speak up for the Lord." Perhaps!! But not, in this context. According to

Ephesians 5:17, they are opportunities to **know** what the will of the Lord is. Look at the physical illustration that He uses in 5:18,

### "Do not get drunk with wine, but rather be filled with the Spirit."

Usually this verse is taken out of context, to teach the evils of strong drink. Fermented wine is compared to, and contrasted with, the fullness of the Spirit. It is in the context of **joy**, music, singing, rejoicing and giving thanks. It contrasts the **emotional** joy that comes from drinking, with the **supernatural** joy that comes from being filled with the Spirit.

I used to think that the point was control. Don't let drink control you, let the Spirit of God control you. That's true, but here he's really talking about being **filled** with joy. We are to walk in the joy of the Lord. Wine is Satan's **counterfeit** for God's joy. It's easy to show the problems with "alcoholic joy". We all know the results of too much strong drink. I heard a song on the radio the other day, "I want to stay drunk, till I get over you," and of course, it ended with a hangover.

According to this verse, not being filled with the Spirit is a greater sin, than being drunk. The average Christian would shudder at the thought of going out and getting smashed on liquor. Yet, won't give a second thought about not being filled with the Spirit. Strangely enough, this is the only place in all the epistles, where we hear the expression, "Filled with the Spirit". Since that is so, it will serve as a key to what it means to be Spirit filled.

The context makes it a most wonderful passage. For years I was confused about Ephesians 5:19. I wasn't sure if we were supposed to go around singing to each other. Can you see that? "How are you today? Hallelujah! Verily, verily, I say to you, how about this crazy weather? Lift your hands and worship Him Amen"

Look at it carefully! Is it real songs? Is it real speaking? It begins with "Speaking to one another", and ends with "Speaking to the Lord". Notice the phrase, "Making melody in your heart". This verse is not physical. It's spiritual. Let me summarize the teaching of Ephesians 5:19. When a person's life makes melody to the Lord, that life, speaks to men. Isn't that so? Here's how the illustration goes beyond natural joy. Look at verse 20, "Giving thanks for all things". Some say we are to give thanks "in" all things, 1 Thess. 5:18, but not, "for" all things.

Ephesians 5:20 says FOR all things. Isn't this a marvelous context? It takes the fullness of the Holy Spirit to make me sing to the Lord. To make me, thankful "for" all things. God's joy goes infinitely beyond man's capacity.

We hear a lot about witnessing. Do you want to know how to speak to others? It's by the fullness of the Spirit! His power, makes your life a melody unto Him! That life, speaks to others. Nothing else does! That's the result of cashing in on chapters 1-3, Christ's riches.

Did you ever meet a Christian described in Ephesians chapter 5? Christ is shining on them. The darkness is being exposed, expelled, and transformed. They are proving what is God's will, and turning from the flesh. They are redeeming the time, and buying every opportunity to know the will of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they are music to the Lord.

Did you ever meet anyone like that? Didn't they speak to your heart? A life like that, can't help but speak. Who is that, who is drinking? You say they are a super saint, a bionic Christian! No! Ephesians 5 is describing **every** Christian. Every Christian, who is in Christ Jesus. All who have received the riches of chapters 1-3, by revelation. Without formal training, huge libraries, experience, or talent. Just simple faith.

Don't get it backwards. Don't work on finding God's will, or striving to not waste time. Don't **try** to witness, or try to be thankful. NO!! Just make sure your heart is **turned to Him!** His light shining in you and on you, will result in a song. If you live to be music to His heart, and satisfaction to His soul, He will make your life, His psalm of praise! These things happen when Christ shines on you, and when you are filled with His Holy Spirit. Such a life is a **work of God**, and not of men. Before leaving this, let me say one more thing about 5:18,

### "Being filled with the Spirit".

I have heard that you can't be filled, until you are emptied. I have been burned trying to **empty myself**. The teaching of the Bible is that we are emptied, by being filled. Picture, pouring water into a bucket of ping pong balls. The ping pong balls rise and flow out, as the water flows in. Our blessed responsibilities are Eph. 5:1-14,

"Walk in the light and let Him shine in you", and Eph. 5:15-21, "Be filled with the Spirit, being music and a melody to Him".

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 27

Marriage

5:22-33

Ephesians 5:22-33, is not really a passage on marriage. Nor is it a passage on husbands and wives. Marriage is the illustration, not the reality. I should have caught on sooner with a verse like 32,

### "The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the Church."

That should have been a clue for me, when He comes right out and says, "I'm not talking about marriage, I'm talking about Christ and the church." Could it be any clearer? For years I missed that. It's a passage on union with Jesus Christ.

Now, if you just took the illustration of light, wine and marriage, you'd wind up with a lot of rules on how to forsake darkness. How, not to get drunk, and how to have harmony with your spouse. But this isn't a book on psychology. He's not teaching us how to have good family relationships. These are spiritual truths. He's talking about walking in the light of the Lord, and walking in the joy of the Lord. You might say that it's the same thing. Well, it's not the same thing at all. There's a change in direction here, a change in emphasis. It's the difference between God and man. It's the difference between grace and works. It's the difference between heaven and earth.

You see, if you make the illustration the point, you're a legalist. That's what legalism does! Legalism, is like trying to make love to a picture of your spouse. The facts are given, by the Spirit, to **illustrate** the principle. The picture itself, is not God's **heart**. We need to have the eye that God gives, to see the spiritual principle. There's a spiritual truth here, underneath the illustration of marriage, and that's what God intends. No illustration can perfectly picture what God is trying to communicate.

You see, we come to marriage as an illustration, and we run into a problem. When you look at most marriages, you don't see union with Christ. Most modern marriages are tragic failures. You see an illustration that has been smashed to smithereens. In order to see what

God is trying to demonstrate, you've got to understand that He's using marriage, not as it is, but as it ought to be. Marriage as He **intended** it, is the illustration. I can't look at marriage in my life and say, "Now, there's a picture of union." I hope, by God's grace, I'm moving toward that.

So, by saying that the point of this passage is not marriage, doesn't weaken the practical application. On the level of earth, there's going to be a great deal we can apply to marriage. God by His grace begins to restore the illustration to what it ought to be. So, you see where we are headed. We'll deal with marriage, in order to see the real point which is union with Jesus Christ.

Let's begin our discussion on this. I trust as we look at the ideal marriage, that we'll find many practical relationship principles. I'll give a simple outline of how I'd like to develop this and then we'll go deeper. The blessed responsibility we're looking at is **union** with Jesus Christ. If we are entering into our wealth from the first three chapters, we will be walking in the light of the Lord. We will be walking in the joy of the Lord and we will be walking in union with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit points out three comparisons to the ideal marriage and the reality of union with Christ.

Let me state them for you and develop them as we go along. The first comparison can be summarized in these words, "The husband is a **giver"**. The wife is a **responder**. Now that's true of the heavenly husband and the earthly husband. That's true of the heavenly wife and true of the earthly wife. God is the initiator. God always **does the doing**. And the woman **responds**. Sometimes I wonder how people can read the scriptures and twist a clear passage into the exact opposite.

Some people, some Christian husbands, never get beyond 23a. They get all excited when they read, "The husband is the head of the wife" – close your Bible – that's enough! They don't understand it in terms of its spiritual context. You might say, "That's easy to interpret, the husband is the head of the wife. I'm the boss. I make the final decisions. When it comes to a show-down, if we're at sorts and can't come to an agreement, then I have to run with the ball. I'm the head. I decide". Some go even further than that, saying, "No matter what... the wife has

a responsibility to submit to the husband". They say, "He is your Godappointed authority in the home, the head of the house, the ruler."

What flows from that, is the idea that the wife is a slave, or a servant. She's got to obey and do what the man says, because God set it up that way. The woman has to submit to the husband. Right wives? Is that what the Spirit of God is saying? Is He assigning to the husband, as the head of the wife, as the head of the family, the place of final authority in the home? I don't have to clear my throat when I give the answer. The answer is **NO**! That's not what He's doing. In fact, the exact opposite of that is what is presented here. If there is any **servant** in verses 22-33, it's the **husband**, not the wife.

If you read it carefully, the husband is the one pouring himself out, holding nothing back, giving in self-sacrificing devotion. There's no sense in which you can interpret this passage, where the husband is saying, "I'm the boss, and I rule the roost." In this passage, the husband is the giver and the servant. He's **living for another**, his wife. There is no domestic tyranny in this passage. I'm hitting this hard because it has been so abused. It's tragic what some Christians have done to this passage. It's pitiful to see what has happened to God's illustration of union with Jesus Christ. When you destroy the illustration like this, you will always miss the **reality**.

For a man to ask for a woman's love and life, then become her oppressor, is tragic. Yet, it's happening all over the place, in the name of the Lord. It's **selfish**, and self-indulgent. It's prideful and capricious, to rule your life partner. You won't find it in Ephesians 5, and you won't find it anywhere in the Bible. God never intended it! In verse 23,

"Christ is the head of the church; He Himself, being the Savior of the body," verse 25, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her," verse 29, "No one has ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church."

I understand why people are thrown off, because there are two words here that throw you off. When you see the word "Head", and when you see the word, "Submit". That can lead you down the wrong path because you think the word "Head" means "Lord", and the word "Submit", means "obey". But words are used, and fully defined, by the context in which they are used. When you read verse 23, "The husband"

is the head of the wife", and verse 22, "Wives are subject to the husband", and verse 24, "Wives ought to be subject to their husbands in everything". It sounds like it's saying, "I'm the boss, you're the servant, and you do what I say." But it's not saying that.

You see, the word "Head", in this context, does not mean "Lord". There is another place in the Bible where head is used as "Lord", but not here. He's talking about the relationship that the brain, the physical head, has to the physical body. And it's not Lord over the body. That's not what He's talking about. And the word "Submit", in this context, means to rest in the intimacy of your relationship. It refers to the dependency, and delicacy, of the connection between our body and our head.

Neither one, can live without the other. Later on he'll use "Obey", in chapter 6:1, when He's talking about children, and 6:5, when He's talking about slaves. But He doesn't use it here for wives. It's amazing how this has been misinterpreted. He's not talking about the head of a government. It's a life union. The head supplies life to the body, and the body responds, by giving life back to the head.

In this passage, and in the whole Bible, everything the Lord teaches about the wife's responsibility to submit to her husband, is in terms of the **husband's responsibility** to give to the wife. God is the First, and great Giver. We as His wife, were created to respond to Him. If the illustration were perfect, that's what it would be like in families. Husbands would be loving their wives, and giving. The wife would be responding to that.

Editor's Note: Many years ago I was meditating on Ephesians 5 while preparing to officiate a wedding. As I opened myself to His revelation I began to see that the Lord asks the husband to do what he can't do in his own strength. "Love your wife". He then asks the wife to do what she can't do, without His help, "Submit, respect her husband." Because of the curse in Genesis 3:16, "Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you", the man's affection and passion is for the land. His job, and what he can create with his hands.

The woman's affection is for the man. The woman's problem is not, loving her husband. Her adamic nature leaves her addicted to his love. The problem is, trusting her husband. Women are attracted to the "cowboys", but soon learn that they can't trust them. It is her fear that

blocks trust. Doubt and apprehension causes her to put up walls of safety. She is uptight and closed off. She can no longer willingly surrender, and open herself fully. **True surrendered intimacy**, is God's perfect will. This will result in the unfolding of her inner beauty and the fruitfulness of child bearing. Why is trust so important? Because it is the practical, earthly, manifestation of faith.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6, declares what is most important to the Lord, in His relationship with us. He tells the husband to "Love his wife the way Christ loved the church, giving Himself for her." But what God is referring to here is the question, "How does the weaker and more vulnerable partner, risk surrender to the powerful and potentially hurtful?" How can we trust an infinite God with unlimited power and control?

Remember the key to understanding this whole illustration of marriage. "But I'm speaking of Christ and the Church." Our problem as weak humans goes back to the Garden of Eden. How can I trust an all-powerful Being? And by Satan's suggestion, Adam and Eve decided to take matters into their own hands. This original act of fear and control, is the source of all habits and addictions. Fear always leads to a need to control. How we choose to control, becomes our addiction. All addictions create the illusion of control. That's why reality is our best friend. The first step in AA, and life in Christ are the same. "My life is out of control, and I am powerless to fix it."

The Lord knows that He must do something to make Himself approachable and trustworthy (worthy of faith). He made himself weak, to remove our fear. Jesus hung naked, with arms and feet nailed to a cross. Could He go any lower? God says, "This is Who I Am". He comes to us as a servant, lover and friend. We are the wife. We can trust Him. We can lower our defenses and crawl out of our shelters. This opens us to receive His Spirit and Life. We surrender in love, to the One who first loved us. Romans 7:4.

"Through the body of Christ (Mortal Jewish Flesh) we have ended our relation to the law, so that you may be married to another husband, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."

Loving surrender will lead us to the chambers of the Bridegroom. Intimacy will result in divine union. **Divine union** will produce **fruit**.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

### Chapter 28

**Union Benefits** 

5:23-32

Reality, is union with Christ. The illustration is marriage. But the Lord knows that His illustration is going to get messy. So He points us to a relationship demanding intimacy on an even **higher** level. The human head, and the human body. A complex living miracle, made up of trillions of members. They connect, agree, and harmonize. They unite in order to fulfill the destiny and desires of the head. As well as the welfare and pleasure of the body. That's unity! Notice in 5:28 & 29,

"Husbands ought to **love their own wives** as their **own bodies**. He who loves his own wife loves himself. No one hated his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it".

I know there's a wrong way to love yourself. But there's also a right way. The Bible teaches that it's natural for a person to love his own body. And if you don't love yourself, it's un-natural and perverted. If a man starts to injure himself, he's got a mental problem. Something is wrong. God has put into man what psychologists call "the survival instinct". Man takes the utmost care to make sure that his body is well nourished and cared for.

If you wear shoes, I have an idea that they fit your feet and are comfortable. Do you know why you're shoes are the right size? Because, you love your feet. Why does a man eat food? Because, he loves his stomach as well as his life. He's the savior of his feet, and the savior of his stomach. At night do you sleep on a pile of stones? It's cheaper than buying a bed. But you love your body. You are in love with yourself. God uses that, to illustrate a wonderful truth.

When you get married, you and your wife become one body. She is you, and you are her. If you hate your wife, you hate yourself. He uses the love we have for our bodies, and the oneness we have with our wife, to demonstrate our **awesome union** with the Lord Jesus.

In marriage, the wife is likened to the body. It's just as unnatural for a man to hate his wife, as it is for him to hate his physical body. In verse 30, He takes us upstairs. "We are members of His Body." I don't

know if you've ever thought about this. May God burn it in your hearts! It's a precious thing that God treats us, as He treats Himself. God loves us, just as much as **He loves Himself**. He nourishes us, and cares for us. In verse 31 where it says,

"The two shall become one flesh"? Notice what He adds in verse 32,

### "I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the Church."

That's true on earth, and we can only begin to know that it's true in our relationship with God. God is a giver. He gives and gives and gives. ALL we have to do is **receive**, **receive**, **receive**...... and then **respond**.

Then there's a third comparison. He declares that the **love** of the husband **transforms** the wife. One of the clearest illustrations you'll get of that is Revelations 21:2,

## "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband".

The New Jerusalem is the Bride. It's us! The New Jerusalem is the Church, as it will be some day. In its maturity and fulfilled destiny.

Let me illustrate, and then come back to this point. Picture a man complaining about his wife in words something like this, "Oh sure, it's easy to read Ephesians 5, 'Husbands love your wives.' But Paul wasn't married to a porcupine, like my wife. She's always crotchety. Nothing seems to please her. I work my hands to the bone. I come home tired and hungry, and there's no dinner. She's been yacking on the phone all day. Sure, it's easy for you to say, 'Love your wife' but, man, she's pretty unlovely. Am I still responsible to love her?"

Listen to the principle again. That's the illustration, but of course it's extreme (I hope it's extreme). The love of the husband, transforms the wife. In the passage, the wife is pictured as dirty, spotted, and wrinkled. That's the picture. Let me ask this question. Does our heavenly bridegroom/husband, love the Church because she is lovely, without spots and wrinkles? Is that why God loves you? Because, you are so pure and perfect? According to the passage, Christ loved the Church when she was dirty, and when she was spotted, and when she was wrinkled. She had many faults and many imperfections. Christ loved the Church, not because she was lovely, but according to this passage, in order to make her lovely. His love makes her lovely. 25-26,

"Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spots or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and blameless before Him."

Read a passage like that, then tell me He's talking about the family. He is NOT! He's talking about union with Jesus Christ. Do you see what He's saying? He's saying that when Christ loves the Church, His constant love changes her spots and wrinkles. With each outpouring of love she is cleansed and healed. He keeps loving her, and loving her, and her spots disappear. Her wrinkles go away. He loves the wrinkles out of her, and He loves the dirt out of her. And she's transformed! One day she will stand before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Blameless, pure, undefiled, with no imperfections. She will reflect His beauty, having been conformed to His image.

Husbands, and men who are husbands to be. Whether we like it or not, our wives are becoming conformed to what we are. We have a responsibility before God, to love our life partners – spots, wrinkles and all. I told Lillian today, that she had no spots or wrinkles to love away. She denied it. There's never an excuse for the children of God.

How is the bride brought to perfection and glory? The answer is, by the love of the groom. By the love, of the husband. He loves the spots away. He loves the wrinkles away. He loves away all the imperfections. Over and over I've had the experience where people come to me. I'm not a counselor. Fact is, I'm not even sure where counseling fits in the Body of Christ. Christ, is the Counselor. But they come and make this comment, "I don't love my wife anymore." I just tell them, "Go back and love her some more, until you have loved her as Christ loved the church".

There is never an excuse, for a husband not to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. The love required by God comes from above, and not from within. Again, the Holy Spirit's point is **union with Jesus**. He is telling us that Jesus will always initiate. He will always deal in grace. He invites us to respond.

We, as evangelical Christians, like to draw charts. But there is a doctrine I've never seen charted. We have the resurrection, the rapture, the judgment seat of Christ, the millennium, and heaven on our chart. But there is a great day coming. The day of "*Presentation*". It is mentioned in Ephesians 5:17,

### "That He might **present to Himself** the Church in all His glory."

This is a great day for the Lord Jesus Christ. When, the groom receives His glorious bride. Perfected, and wonderful. Then He gives her His throne to sit upon. He leads her to His marriage hall, and He sits with her, and serves her, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jude 24-25,

## "Now to Him Who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy..."

That day is coming when He makes you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy. He will present the Bride to Himself. Having finished a great work of art, He sets her in some conspicuous place to be adored. These are the things the Holy Spirit of God intended, when He inspired the **blessed responsibility** to walk in union with Him. Certainly it does have its applications in the family, especially to husbands. If you are a husband, and want to see how you are lining up with what the Lord intended your role in marriage to be. Ask yourselves these questions.

- 1- Are we initiators? Are we proactive to reach out first, to love our wives. To trust that as we reach out, He will reach out with us to support and strengthen us in our weakness and inability to love like Him.
- 2- Do we regard our wives as our bodies? Understanding that we are parts of one unique union and creation. Caring for her as we care for ourselves.
- 3- Do we love their spots, wrinkles and blemishes away? Realizing that rejecting them will be as rejecting ourselves. Pushing them away, will increase the blemishes. Allowing His love through us toward them, will remove and replace the damage. It will result in restoration and beauty.

If you fail, as most of us will. Return and receive more love and care from The Bridegroom Lover of your soul. Remember, all that the Lord asks of you, He will produce in you. Through surrender, union, and intimacy with Him. Romans 7:4 reminds us that through our marriage union with the risen Lord, we will bear fruit for God. In Galatians 5:22 we have the familiar list of fruit. The passage says "The fruit of the Spirit" and doesn't say fruits. I believe what the Lord is saying here is that the fruit of the Spirit is love. The fruit of the Spirit is Jesus. God is love.

"The fruit of the Spirit is Love", which tastes like, "Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Selfcontrol". The fruit of union with the Lord is always His Son. It's not what would Jesus do? So you can fake imitating Him. It's the fruit of love, which has the aroma of Christ. He is calling you to His chambers, and the ecstasies of the divine romance.

I believe the Lord prefers His Bride, "Barefoot and pregnant". Barefoot, so we don't wander too far from Him. Pregnant, with His Son. Saying "Yes", like the Virgin Mary, when she reversed the curse of Eve. "Let it be done to me, according to Your will, Oh Lord! I am Your love-slave!" Eve said, "How can we do it our way?" Satan tried to help them achieve that self-protecting goal.... he is still doing that for those who ask for his help.

By loving surrender to God's Holy Spirit, Mary surrendered in love and received the seed of God. She conceived, carried and delivered the greatest gift in the history of creation. We have been given the same high and holy privilege. To say yes to the Holy Spirit, and be filled with the Life of Jesus Christ. To receive Him, carry Him, and deliver Him, to this sin-sick, empty, and barren world. Just say, "Yes". He will do the rest.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 29

Children Obey

6:1-9

Notice in chapter 6:1, the verse begins with the word "Children", and then glance down to verse 5, which speaks of "Slaves". You see, chapter 6:1-9, is not really a section by itself, but a continuation of chapter 5:22, which is, "Wives" in 5:22, "Children" in 6:1, and "Slaves" in 6:5. Here the Holy Spirit is illustrating the blessed responsibility, "Walk in union with the Lord". He now expands it to include children and their parents, as well as slaves and their masters.

Remember, it's not a chapter on bringing up children, and it's not a chapter on employee/employer relationships. Those are illustrations, but not the point. The point is **union** with Christ. Naturally, we get great light on those issues, but don't get sidetracked. God is underscoring the chief principle of this whole section, by these three illustrations. The chief principle can be summarized in these words; **"Submission"**, **"Surrender"**, and **"Yielding"**. When we looked at 5:22-33, we studied it in terms of the husband's responsibility to the wife. The great point was love. But now when you take all three together, he's looking at submission.

The Spirit of God seems pleased to take physical realities, in order to illustrate spiritual truths. Let me make this one comment before we actually get into it. The **picture**, is never as great as the **reality**. The human illustration, always breaks down. But at least it gets us looking in the right direction. Let me suggest a little outline for those who like logical connections. God made this one easy. He outlined it for us. The four words in chapter 6:1-9, that divide the section for us:

6:1 "Children", 6:4, "Fathers", 6:5, "Slaves", 6:9, "Masters".

It's already divided up. So we'll talk about children, fathers, slaves and masters. We'll try to look at how the Holy Spirit develops each one of those, and then we'll come back and see the sweeping principle of submission. "Please read chapter 6:1-9 before you continue"............

Let me give four observations from chapter 6:1-3. The first observation is that the Holy Spirit addresses children. What that means practically,

is that children were in attendance at the Christian fellowships. You see, whatever position you take about the local church. Whether you say they met in special buildings, or in the temple, or in homes or caves. God's people met together, and the children were there. These letters were passed around to the local assemblies and the children were present.

The second expression is the words "In the Lord". "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." I believe, by that expression, the Spirit of God is limiting the boundaries of obedience. There are times when children will honor the Lord more, by disobeying their parents. Exactly right.

See, when Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's", He was showing the difference between absolute authority, and delegated authority. Of course knowing that there are limits to obedience, may give us an excuse to be rebellious. But there is a time to obey God, rather than man.

I know Daniel used it. He obeyed God, rather than man. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego used it. Peter used it. But the burden to prove that Caesar overstepped his bounds, always falls on the one who disobeys. There is great abuse of this principle. It's easy to say, "That doesn't honor God", and use that as an excuse to do our own thing. So before we take on worldly authority, we need to walk very softly and respectfully, before the Lord.

I believe there must be a **clear violation** of God's objective principles, before you decide not to submit to authority. If the authority outright contradicts the word of God, then you have the right to go against it. In other words, if the authority, whether it's parents or government, command you to lie, steal, get drunk or something like that, you've got to obey God. But you are obligated to submit to delegated authority, when there's **no clear word** from God.

For example, there's no clear word from God about prayer in public schools. Submit to authority. There's no clear word from God about heavy taxation. "Oh, I'm being overtaxed; I'm going to rebel against that." You be careful before you do something like that. There's no clear word from God about forced school busing. There's no clear word from God about bearing arms. Some Christians get all upset because those things are violated. God has ordained authority, and if there's no

clear word from God, then the only word we have is "submit". You must submit by the grace of God, without a murmur or complaint, no matter what that official decision is.

On the other hand, there **is** a clear word from God, on abortion. There is a clear word from God, on mercy killing. There is a clear word from God, on capital punishment and on preaching the word of God. If you oppose those things you have no choice. You have to line up with the Lord. All delegated authority, whether it's the ball coach, the umpire, the referee, the bus driver, policeman or teacher, has as its boundaries *"In the Lord"*. Submit in the Lord. As long, as it doesn't violate His written word.

I think it will help if we view delegated authority as divine offices, or positions. I believe you will find this to be scriptural. I'll tell you what I mean by that. I'm going to use my son David as an illustration. No place in the word of God does it tell David to submit to Ed. It says, "Children, submit to parents." "Parent" is an office. "Father" is an office. "Mother" is an office. "Husband" is an office. "Wife" is an office. Even "Child" is an office. Certainly, there may be unworthy people filling that office. The Bible describes what a father is, as he reflects the Fatherhood of God. My children are responsible, not to submit to me, but to submit to the "Bible office" of father.

Father is an especially high office, because God has given it, to reflect Himself. The Bible describes its qualifications, duties and limitations. If there is a father, that's a renegade, violating the Bible office of father. Perhaps a drunkard, living in immorality and full of violence. You are to submit to the office, and not the man. Often your submission to the office, will prove to be rebellion against the individual. This is true of all delegated authority. It's also true of wives and husbands.

I had an occasion where one wife called me up, "My husband required me to go to the bar and drink with him, and the Bible said to submit, so I went." The Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says to submit to the office of husband. That wasn't the office of husband. That, was a violation of the office of husband. She was wrong to submit to that. She should have submitted to the Lord.

Those are two observations. First of all, children were present. Secondly, the expression "In the Lord", sets the boundaries of

obedience. There's another thing that "In the Lord" illustrates. The verse, "Honor your father and mothers, which is the first commandment with a promise". Honor your father and mother is called a commandment. Let me give a Bible illustration. Here's God and here's junior. God says to junior, "Obey your parents." Parents say, "Turn off the light. You are wasting electricity." That doesn't violate anything from the word of God, or cut across any grain. Children are to obey their parents. They said to turn off the light. Who are they obeying? Are they obeying their parents, who said to turn off the light, or are they obeying God, who said to obey your parents? It's not the parents that said to turn off the lights. It's God that says to obey your parents, when they say, "Turn off the light". If you disobey your parents, you've disobeyed God, because God is the one who told you to submit to that delegated authority.

If I have trouble in a horizontal relationship on earth, it's a dead giveaway that something is wrong with my vertical relationship with the Lord. If I'm **rightly related** to the Lord, I'll be rightly related in all the horizontal relationships of life. It's never a problem between parents and children. It's always a problem between parents and God, and between children and God. I believe with all my heart, that we ought to be teaching our children about this vertical relationship with God.

Certainly, they are responsible to us, but it's very scriptural to say this, "Children have no responsibility toward their parents." Before you turn me off completely, let me finish. Children have no responsibility toward their parents, but they have every responsibility toward God, in dealing with their parents. That's not just words. That's a different direction.

Parents have no responsibility toward their children, none. But, oh, do we ever have responsibility toward God, in terms of our children. It's always that way. Why is it so serious for children to disobey their parents? Why is it so serious for anybody to rebel against delegated authority? It's a sign that they are rebelling against God Himself. God is the One Who has commanded these things. Here's the principle. We are responsible in God to obey delegated authority, as long as such obedience, does not violate any of His objective truths.

In the case of our illustration, notice verse 2, "Honor your father and your mother." That word "honor" includes an awful lot. It includes

appreciation, it includes respect. I remember when I was young, sometimes I would be ashamed of my parents. That's not honoring your parents. Here's an illustration, Matthew 15:3-9, the Lord Jesus was dealing with that haughty group of individuals called the Pharisees. He said, "You've broken that commandment." They said, "How have we broken that commandment?" He said, "By standing on your traditions. You are giving all your money to the Lord's work and you say therefore you are free from honoring your parents." In Matthew 15, the Lord Jesus included under honor, helping out your parents financially. He said, they didn't help their parents, and used the excuse that they gave all their money to the Lord. By not helping them out financially, they dishonored them.

I won't develop this much, but let me suggest you study 1 Timothy 5, and kindred scriptures, which show the responsibility of children and grandchildren to take care of aged parents. God has put that upon us. Matter of fact, He says if we don't do that, we're "Worse than infidels". I believe if Christians obeyed God in terms of their parents, there would be little need of nursing homes. Of course, there are exceptions, and sometimes it's not medically possible. But oh, there would be a big difference, if children were honoring God in terms of honoring their parents.

Our relationship toward our earthly father will give us a pretty good indication of our relationship toward our heavenly father. The tragedy is, that our children will desire our heavenly Father, to the degree they desire their earthly father. They will look for their heavenly home, to the degree they desire there earthly home. Our home is to be a heaven on. And our families are to be replicas of God's family. We are to deal with them the same way He deals with us. Look at verse 4,

## "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Why are fathers mentioned here and not mothers? Well, at first I puffed up my chest when I read this and said, "That's because fathers are the authority in the family, and we're the ones responsible to bring them up in the nurture and admonition, of the Lord. I'm the boss." As I studied it, I don't think the Holy Spirit quite intended that. Instead I think He intended something like this, "Fathers, we know that you are

made of dust, and we know all your weaknesses. Among those weaknesses, is the fact, that you are more apt to provoke your children to anger than the mother is. So you have a special warning here". I think that's what God is suggesting here.

You see, the Greek word for "Bring them up", in verse 3, carries the meaning "to fondle", "to cherish", with "gentleness", and "forbearance". And when it says to bring them up in the discipline and instruction, or King James says, "The nurture and admonition of the Lord," the Greek word for "discipline", or "nurture", carries with it "talking". Sometimes you've got to talk to them. It has to do with exhortation and warning. You see, fathers are very apt to violate these instructions. I believe the Holy Spirit is giving a strong warning to fathers. Fathers are less likely than mothers, to be gentle and patient. I speak from experience. They are apt to be hasty, rough, moody, and unjust.

How can we provoke our children to anger? Number one. Unreasonable blame. Once on my son's birthday, he took an awful wailing, for something he didn't do. Unreasonable blame, harsh commands, unpredictable temper, or taking out the day's frustrations on the children. Boy, that will provoke them to anger! Unjust penalty, with no show of love. Psalm 104:14, speaking about the Lord's dealing with us as His children, "He Himself knows our frame and He remembers that we're dust." Oh, isn't that tremendous? Aren't you glad that in God's dealings with you, He remembers you are dust? As He brings us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, He remembers our weakness. Father's tend to deal with their children without due consideration of their dust nature.

This is not saying that your children will never rebel, and never get angry. It's saying, "Fathers, don't provoke them to it".

### Some practical advice when disciplining your children:

- #1 Let them know why they are being dealt with.
- #2 Let them know they are loved, while they are being dealt with.
- #3 Let them know they are loved, after they are dealt with.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

### Chapter 30

**Slaves and Masters** 

6:5

"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters". Let me make a passing comment about slavery as a whole, and then come back to the principles. Slavery, as ownership of men and women, has always been wrong. God has never allowed anybody, to own anybody else. Some of what's called slavery in the Bible, was really regulated servanthood. In other words, people who worked, and were provided room and board. In many cases, they were treated with dignity and respect.

Some, actually became a beloved part of the family. The case in Ephesians is drawn from Roman slavery. Which we know from history, was a terrible social injustice, and a horrible form of bondage. Dehumanizing, cruel, and oppressive. God used Roman slavery, the extreme illustration, in order to include every lesser illustration.

Now, in Romans, God chooses this strong picture to show the slavery of sin. It became, God's clear picture of sin. I point that out to show how the gospel dealt with social injustice. But also, how the gospel did **not**, deal with it. The gospel dealt with social injustice in two ways.

- #1 It changed man from the **inside** out. That's how God deals with social injustice. He works on the heart and the soul.
- #2 What flows out of changing man from within, is the eventual undermining of those social injustices, until they finally fall apart.

I call attention to that, because many Christians don't deal with social injustices, the way God does in the New Testament. We've got to get all of our principles from the Bible. We need to be men and women of the Book.

As I read the New Testament, I don't see God encouraging any kind of revolution. He didn't march on imperial Rome saying, "Down with slavery. Carry signs, and have a sit in at the palace." They didn't do that kind of thing. They didn't sign petitions. There were plenty of occasions in the New Testament that might call for a march against social injustice. Yet Jesus and His disciples never did it, and neither did Paul. They could have marched against slavery, or the inhumanity happening

in the arenas. You talk about women being suppressed and oppressed! They certainly were, in New Testament times. But they didn't protest.

God didn't like those conditions, but how did God change those practices? One by one, He began to change human hearts. And as He changed human hearts, those things fell away. Get people right with the Lord. You can't legislate love. You can't draw up a law, and say that from now on, we are going to love one other. It's the **fruit** of the Spirit.

I shudder every time a Christian asks me to sign another petition to send to Washington, hoping to change some social injustice. I can't do that. I received a ballot this morning by some so-called concerned Christian group, telling me I'm supposed to register my vote to get prayers back in the school. I didn't even read the thing. I know this. That's not how they did it in the New Testament. God changed the heart. And as hearts were changed, those social injustices were dealt with. His counsel to slaves in Ephesians, is 180 degrees from "Fight it tooth and nail. Stand up for your rights". He didn't say that. The opposite is true. He said to submit to your task masters. "The truth will set you free, but first, it will make you miserable".

Every time I see Christians marching against social injustices, my blood runs cold. I just want to say, "Let's get back to the Bible way. The way, of grace. Let's pray the Lord of the harvest, that He'll send forth laborers. Let's see the grace of God spread and change the lives of men". If you get people conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, they aren't going to be violating these principles. What is the main instruction the Lord gives to the Christian slave? In our day, we wouldn't use the word slave or slave owner. We would say employer and employee. What is the chief principle God gives, concerning human bosses? Note in your Bible these expressions,

- 6:5, "In the sincerity of your heart as to Christ."
- 6:6, "Not by way of eye service, as men pleasers, but as slaves of Christ.", "Doing the will of God from the heart."
- 6:7, "As to the Lord, not to men."
- 6:8, "He'll receive back from the Lord."

Let me state it in these words. The employee, the slave, is to do everything as **unto the Lord**. I remember how I used to misunderstand this. Right after I first trusted the Lord Jesus as my Savior, I had an oppressive boss. He mocked me as a Christian. Boy, he gave me a hard time. He would deliberately overload me with work, in order to see if I would sin. He continually hoped that I would get angry, swear, or lose my temper. On one occasion, he got what he wanted. He got me so mad, I actually punched him in the jaw. In those early days, I didn't know much about the Lord, and I don't know much more now. I didn't know what to do. I needed the job and couldn't quit. I remember studying the sister passage to this very scripture, Colossians 3:23 says,

## "Whatever you do, do your work heartily as to the Lord rather than men."

Here's the error I fell into. I thought God was saying, "Play a little game of pretend". Just **make believe** you are working for Jesus, instead of that good for nothing, inconsiderate, rotten, boss. He didn't say to pretend you are working for Jesus. That's what I did, and it worked as long as my **self-control** held up. I had sort of a "**psychological**" victory. I looked at my boss, Fred, and pretended he was Jesus. Everything he told me to do I just clicked my heals, "Yes, Sir", and I would go to town. I was pretending that I was doing it unto the Lord. It didn't take long until I fell on my face, in utter failure. I put confidence in my resolve.

Notice in chapter 6:5, it doesn't say, "As **if** it were Christ," but it says, "**As to Christ**." See what I'm saying? This is not a game. We aren't playing pretend. The slave was reminded that he was actually doing it unto the Lord. Not as if it were the Lord, or let's pretend it's for Jesus. It's unto the Lord.

Let's say that the boss is unworthy, oppressive, and cruel. That he's ungrateful, and doesn't appreciate your hard work. Certainly the slave must have felt that way many times. "What a waste of time and labor. This work is wasted on this unfeeling beast." God is saying, "A waste? Never! You are employed by the Lord Jesus. I don't care what your job is. It wasn't fate that got you there. You are to do all things unto Me".

Let me use a human illustration, and again I speak as a fool. Let's say that the Lord Jesus were to come into your life in the flesh, personally, so that you could see him. If he were to knock at your door and say,

"Would you do me a favor?" You recognize Him as the second Person of the Godhead, your Savior. He says, "Would you clean up this trash for me?" What would you do? Would you clean up the trash? You know you would run for that broom in a heartbeat!!! Would you do a good job??? Would you miss any pieces? If the Lord Jesus asked you to wash the windows, would you have trouble washing the windows? Would you leave any spots on the windows? It's not pretend. It's not make-believe.

That's what the slave was told by the Lord. You are not to do it as to a human employer. As a slave, you have a high position. You are employed by the Lord Jesus Christ. All your service, and all your ministry, is unto Him. You are to do it in sincerity of heart, not as men pleasers, but as to the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing that you will receive from Him, your wages, your final wages, your rewards.

Verse 6, "Eye service". No, not just service that looks good. I remember when I was working at a plant nursery, I was told to cut out all the weeds and put peat moss down. I said, "The boss won't know if I don't take out all the weeds. I'll just cover it with peat moss." So, I left some weeds, and just put the peat moss on top. Guess what he discovered in a couple of weeks? Eye service, or unto the Lord? You see, if we had the Lord Jesus there as our employer, we wouldn't cheat or cut corners. We wouldn't waste things, or be sloppy and slipshod. These are not games. It is the Lord Jesus we are working for. The slave was told to submit to his master, not for human wages, but for eternal rewards.

Do you realize that every time we **complain**, it's a practical **denial** of the **sovereignty** of God? No matter what we complain about. In this case I'm talking about our jobs. But really, anytime we complain, we're saying that God has nothing to do with it. It denies His absolute sovereignty. Answer this for me. If God could burn this principle indelibly into your heart and you lived accordingly. Do you think that any human boss on the earth would be disappointed? If you did it to please Him, you'd be the finest worker on earth. Verse 9,

"Masters, do the same things to them. Give up threatening, knowing that both their master and yours is in heaven and there is no partiality with Him."

Masters are always ranked higher than slaves on earth. The employer seems to have it a bit better than the employees. Those who work for someone else, are just a number, just hired hands. Sometimes they don't even know you. But God is reminding the bosses, that before God, there is level ground. The slave and his master, have the same **Lord in common**. Christian bosses are to see their employees as the Lord. What a different work environment that would make. Once again, the Spirit of God is doing what He's done throughout this chapter. He's calling attention to the vertical (Heavenly) relationship.

Let me summarize, by underscoring the great principle. Wives, submit to your husbands. Children, submit to your parents. Slaves, submit to your masters. IT DOESN'T SAY THAT! It says, wives **look to the Lord**, in order that you might submit to your husband. Children, obey your parents **in the Lord**. Slaves, do it **unto Christ**. It's union with Jesus Christ. Again, a great principle, and blessed responsibility.

If I'm surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, being rightly related to Him. I am not going to have trouble, in my people relationships on earth.

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

Chapter 31

Spiritual Warfare

6:10-24

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood; but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

"Finally," or "Let's bring this thing to a climax". Everything has been moving toward this. It's a consummation, a goal. In that sense, this section is the summit, of the book of Ephesians. In 6:10, we have the culmination of everything that's been on the heart of God. Everything, He intended for us to have, and how to live richly in Him. He's going to do two things. He's going to summarize what has gone before, and then clinch it in our hearts to make it real.

What is this climactic responsibility, this blessed responsibility, for every Christian? Chapter 6-10, "Finally," finally what? What is He building up to? Let me state it for you in simple words, and then go back and break it down. It can be summarized in these words,

"The Christian's responsibility is to have full victory, at all times, over all his enemies."

That's the heart of it. As you notice, this is about a holy war. There are two sides. There are soldiers in armor. There are schemes of the devil. There are swords and flaming darts. We're in a struggle, wrestling against spiritual wickedness and unseen powers. Watchman Nee calls this, "The Warfare of the Ages." One commentary on Ephesians puts it like this. "The wealth, the walk, and the warfare of the Christian".

In Watchman Nee's classic treatment of Ephesians, "Sit, Walk, and Stand", he suggests that we **Sit** before the Lord, we **Walk** before the world and then we **Stand** before the enemy. It ends with a war, a conflict, and a battle. In the third chapter of our Bible we are told there's a war coming. "The seed of the woman is at war, with the seed of the serpent". Two thrones at war. Satan's throne. God's Throne.

Anyway, this section ends with a battle, and because it ends this way, it's often misunderstood. Some have trouble putting it together. Is there a war, or is it **finished**? I thought the war was over at Calvary's cross. Where does the struggle fit in? If Christ conquered Satan, sin, death, hell and every evil, then how come, I'm still struggling? In what sense are we wrestling?

Try to catch the impact of this. The book of Ephesians is telling us how rich we are in Christ. It's a tender book, speaking of our beautiful mystic union with our loving Lord Jesus. What it is to walk in fellowship with Him. Overflowing with peace, tranquility, humility, love and unity. Then all of a sudden, you come to chapter 6:10, the scene changes, you open your eyes, and you're in enemy territory.

Look at verse 20, "For which I am an ambassador in chains". When Paul wrote this, he was chained to a Roman guard. It's a shock to come to this chapter and this passage. It reminds me of Revelation 1:10, where the Apostle John was on the Isle of Patmos all by himself, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Wasn't that tender? I Picture him sitting on a rock, and looking out over the water. Meditating in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

### "I heard behind me a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet".

Picture that, sitting on a rock in quiet prayer, and all of a sudden behind him, a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet. When he heard that blast, he spun around and said, "I fell at His feet as a dead man." That would have scared the daylights out of me! I would have jumped right out of my skin. That's, how 6:10 hits me!

I'm reading about all this wonderful wealth. Loving wives, having our children obey, submitting to the authorities, and seated with Christ. All of a sudden, I'm standing in full armor, in enemy territory. Now I'm braced, to stand against all the powers of hell. Something has changed, and the Greek illuminates it further. It talks about minor skirmishes, and major attacks. All-out offensive warfare, and an army that's organized, brilliant and greater than flesh and blood. Our enemy is superior to the whole system of this world.

The Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force, don't stand a chance against them. He says it's bigger than all that. This is against the wiles and the schemes of Satan and his demons. You are warring against principalities, powers and world rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. I say, "What's going on? What happened? I was sailing pretty good, and all of a sudden a big wind came and toppled my little boat. How am I involved in this?"

Whatever the war is, and whatever our involvement is, we need to know. We are **responsible** to have **full victory** in it. Just like in chapter 5, where we were responsible to walk in the **light** of the Lord, in the **joy** of the Lord, and in **union** with the Lord.

In order to get this truth meaningfully before you, let me identify the principle illustration used here. I pointed out last time that you've got to distinguish between the **illustration**, and the truth itself. Thousands of Christians look to the illustration alone. They get so hung up on the picture, that they completely miss the reality. People will say chapter 5 is a passage on light, or on wine, or on family. It's NOT. It's a passage on **union with Christ**, illustrated by the family. The husband and wife relationship, is not His point. He said that he wasn't speaking about that. He was talking about Christ and the Church.

In chapter 6:10-20, the physical illustration is a Roman soldier dressed in his armor. After being chained to one for four years, the image of a Roman soldier and his armor was burned into Paul's being. Now remember, they changed guards every 4-6 hours for four years.

Some people who don't understand the illustration, draw spiritual truths that are **not Biblical**. They say things like, "Have you ever noticed that there is no armor for the back? Therefore, when people turn around or backslide, they're in big trouble. If you turn around, and run from the Lord, then Satan will have an opening. You'll be exposed, because there is no armor for the back." Well, that kind of interpretation shows you haven't understood the illustration.

Because in 6:14, you have the armor for the back, it's called the "Breastplate of righteousness". You might say, "It's just the breastplate and not the back plate". Well, if you understood Roman armor, you'd know that the breastplate went over the head, and covered the back, as well as the front. It provided all around protection. I'm trying to show that you need to see the illustration first, before you can draw your principles from it. Whatever God is illustrating by the Roman armor, He's certainly not suggesting that the soldier is exposed to injury.

Paul describes this armor in spiritual, and not logical order. Paul started in the middle and mixed it all up. Commentators tell us that this is the order in which the soldier actually got dressed. We are to put on our armor, as they put on theirs. In verse 14, he starts with the military belt. It is put on first because everything else depended on it. It was studded with nails that secured everything. It secured the breastplate and the sword. It was the most important part, the anchor. And I suppose, if you are going to draw a spiritual application, the belt is **truth**. I can see how truth can be a belt, holding everything else in place. If any part of my life is **unreal**, or untruthful, to that degree I am threatened with a moral breakdown.

In John Chapter 4:24, "God is a spiritual Being, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit, and reality". The same is true of all Christians. We can say that the military belt is truth. Verse 15, "Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The military sandal was called a "Caliga". It was a thickly studded sandal, with spikes or nails that dug into the soil. The nails in the ground gave stability and anchored the soldier so he could hold his position.

When He tells us to stand. We can't be moved because we are held safe and secure by the nails that held Jesus's body to the cross. We are anchored, and held in position by His sacrificial love.

The caliga went half way up the calf, with a hard shield for the ankles. This protected the soldier from snake bites as he was walking through brush, bramble and briar. Genesis 3:18, describes the earth we have to walk in, "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you".

Remember Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." Interesting that the sandals protected the heel of the foot, from the serpent's bite!

Verse 16, "Take the shield of faith." There were two kinds of shields that the Romans used. The one called "Scutum", was a semi-cylindrical long shield. It was used when they spied. It was in the shape of your body. The bottom was flat, and they would stand it on the ground and hide behind it. They also used a small one strapped over their arm. This allowed them to swing it back and forth with dexterity. Both of these

shields could be made of wood or brass, but they were always covered with animal skin (like the tabernacle of Moses). Before a battle they would soak them with water so they could literally,

### "Quench the fiery darts and arrows".

The Scythians had a different kind of arrow. They didn't dip it in pitch so they could light it on fire. They preferred to dip them in the venom of asps and snakes. They actually had, "poison-dipped darts". Maybe Paul's reference to fire, was speaking of the burning inflammation from those poison darts. Anyway, they had a shield to counteract fiery attacks of all kinds. The small shield around their arm was called a "buckler". You see that a lot in the Old Testament, "Thou art my shield, and my buckler."

In verse 17 we see "The helmet of salvation". The Roman helmet was the one with the high crest. Before the helmet was passed on to a soldier it would undergo something called, "The test of the battle axe". It was placed on the ground, and a big tough Roman soldier would swing down on that helmet with his axe. If he dented it, it was rejected. This was high quality protection, for the soldier's cherished head.

Verse 17, "The sword of the Spirit". I thought, the sword was one of those real long swords the Spaniards used. But that's not the word used here. This is a small dagger, attached to the military belt. It was extremely sharp so he could cut and thrust with it. They would test the swords sharpness by throwing a piece of silk in the air. If the silk was not sliced in half as it gently fell on the sword, it wasn't sharp enough.

The sword is a picture of the "Word of God". Some people tend to emphasize the defensive qualities of the armor. They say that the only offensive weapons, are found in verses 17 & 18, "The sword of the Spirit", and "Praying in the Spirit". Well, that's not 100% true, because the sword was both offensive and defensive. It protected and pierced, which is also true of our prayers.

We have just discussed the illustration. Now the question comes, "What is God illustrating with Roman armor, and all its various parts? They say the armor is not one thing, but **many things**. There are many things a Christian needs to secure his safety.

They insist, "Paul is saying that you need head to toe protection. If you have faith, but the belt is loose, Satan will have an 'in'. If you have the

helmet of salvation on, but your feet are not shod with the gospel of peace, then you'll probably stumble and fall. If you have your shoes on correctly, but you are not girded with faith, then Satan is going to get you. You drop your shield, and a fiery dart is going to find its mark. It might be poisoned with a false doctrine, or worse you'll be consumed by the fire of passion". Fear, fear, fear!

"You are at war, Christian", they say. So you better keep your helmet on, because bad thoughts are going to come into your mind. You'll be entertaining doubts and suspicions. If you don't keep the belt on, your loins girded with truth, then the breastplate of righteousness will be compromised because it's attached. If you neglect the breastplate of righteousness, then your heart is going to be exposed, and Satan is going to get through and wound you.

And don't forget to use your sword for offense. Memorize those verses! Learn those proof texts! Show what you believe and why you believe it! You must cut down your adversaries, and show when they are wrong! Learn your doctrine! Learn to handle your sword. Learn to be able to say to Satan, 'It is written"! And don't forget to pray, because prayer changes things! Satan trembles when he sees, the weakest saint upon his knees!

I hope you picked up the **sarcasm** in all I just mentioned. For years I believed that, and I can't begin to tell you the trouble it caused. I used to believe that if I wanted to be safe, I had to have all seven pieces, at the ready, all the time. Have you ever tried to live that way? Let me describe my life.

"I was busy working on my sandals, to make sure that I had peace in my heart, and that I was sharing the gospel of peace with others. While I was working on my sandals, I got stabbed in the chest! So I decided to work on the breastplate instead of my sandals. Then, while I was working on righteousness, I got struck in the head. So I went back to my helmet. While I was getting my helmet in place I tripped over a stone. Of course, this led me back to my feet, and the sandals once more. So, I was working on my sandals and my helmet, while trying to hold onto my breastplate of righteousness and wouldn't you know it, my belt fell off. While I was fixing my belt, someone stole my shield. You ever feel like that?

I read a verse like 6:16, and it mocked me,

"You will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Yeah, right! I couldn't quench any of them!

And here was God, saying that I would be able to quench them all. I felt like I was stabbed to death by a porcupine. I didn't feel like I was getting any victory in my life. I think every Christian has tasted the bitterness of sinning before his God. We fall down, or we fall into rebellion. I tell you, I was a slave to my old nature. I would sin against God, and I would apologize in tears. He would restore me, and then I'd fall on my face again. Then God would have mercy, and restore me. I would confess my sin and I would get right with God, and go out and do the same thing. I had no power over my life, whatsoever. The more I would work on this gospel, the worse it got. Those verses which were supposed to give me hope, "You will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one," mocked me. I was defeated, not victorious.

It caused me to doubt that the Bible was really as sweet as honey, like I was told. I wondered if everyone was really having victory like they said, because I wasn't. Then I read a verse like 6:12. Now God tells me I'm up against "Principalities and powers. Spiritual wickedness in heavenly places". I couldn't even hold my tongue! And now I had to fight all the powers of hell.

What a great way to end the book of Ephesians! It begins building me up. Telling me how rich I am in Christ. Then it commands me to beat back the forces of hell, while destroying all the powers of wickedness. I'm ordered to take control my old nature, and make sure that I fulfilled my responsibility to have victory all the time. You might as well have told me to swim the ocean, or just flap my arms and fly. What's he talking about?

You see, people take the illustration and **think**, they know what it is picturing. But you've got to know what it's **really** picturing. It's not picturing the awful burden I just described. That is NOT God's intention and it never was God's intention! The responsibility of every Christian is to **have victory**. But victory is not an "it". Victory is not an event. Victory is a **Him!** Victory is a Person. We are married to the Victor!

"The King of Kings and Lord of Lords".

# Studying EPHESIANS to Know God

**Chapter 32** What/Who is the Armor?

6:13

Most Christians think of victory, as a "thing". When asked if they have victory they might say, "Well, sometimes." We don't have victory sometimes! We have victory, all the time! We all, have victory right now.

Because victory is not a thing, nor is it the result of anything we do. The illustration of the Roman armor, is not a picture of the Christian's life. It is not a picture of the awful struggle between two natures. It is not a picture of the awful war going on between heaven and hell.

Let's go back to prison with the Apostle Paul. He was in a Roman prison chained to a Roman soldier for four years. Every six hours they changed the guard. So, that meant that over seven thousand times, he saw a soldier approach him dressed in full armor. Then, when God the Holy Spirit inspired him to write Ephesians, God dawned upon his heart a most beautiful picture. He looked at the soldier, all clothed in his armor and thought, "Now there's the perfect picture of the Christian, clothed in his God." Put on Jesus Christ. Verse 6:11,

### "Put on the full armor of God."

OF GOD! Not the armor God gives. But the armor God is! Verse 13, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God."

This is not Iron Man's suit. It's Himself! God is the armor! That's why in verse 10 it says,

### "Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."

We read in the sister passage, Romans 13:14, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Why should you put on the Lord Jesus Christ? Because you are clothed in Him, as the soldier was clothed in his armor. Paul saw the soldier in his uniform, and thought of the Christian in his uniform. The armor of God is a Person. **Victory**, is not a **thing**. **Victory** is a **King**.

Every Christian is responsible to have victory. Every Christian is responsible to stand clothed in his God, from head to toe. That's why we can read in verse 11, "Stand firm". That's why we can read in verse 13, "Stand firm". That's why we read in verse 14, "Stand firm".

The Holy Spirit did not change horses midstream. He didn't say, "It's rich, but it's going to be tough. You have amazing strength in Christ, but you're going to struggle." He didn't say that. He said, "You are rich and wealthy." And then He brings it to a climax saying, "You are clothed in God." How much safer could you be!

Now, I get excited that **100**% of God lives in me. The indwelling Christ, the indwelling God, all of God, in me. Do you know how Ephesians ends? Not, with **God in you.** But, with **you in God.** He's the armor. And you're inside. It's wonderful to know that Christ is in you. But even better to know, you're in Him! See, that is part of your wealth. That is, being **"Rich in Christ"**. It's tragic to see Christians so afraid. Afraid of sin. Afraid of Satan. Afraid of poverty. They tremble at world events, and physical threats. God never intended that!

If I would ask, the most instructed group of Christians, to list the greatest blessings in their lives, would any of them dare to mention Satan. As you go on in the Lord, you're going to see that he's a great blessing in your life. God makes Satan sweat, to make you a mature Christian. If anything, doesn't the Book of Job teach us that. Wasn't Job a lot better off after Satan attacked, than before.

Job in the beginning, worshipped a harsh God, he couldn't see or hear. At the end of the book, and at the end of Job, he surrendered to the "Omnipotent Lover of his soul", who he both heard and saw.

Would you be a better Christian right now, if there were no devil? See, you wouldn't be. God uses him on your behalf. It's tragic to see Christians who think they are soldiers with a battle to win. There's no battle to win. There's no struggle. He doesn't say, "Attack! March! Charge! Go forward! Take the land!" He just says, "Stand!" Why does He say, "Stand"? He says stand, because there's nothing left to do. There's no territory to win. There's no land to be conquered. This is not struggling to take another hill, and then struggling to take another piece of land. We are as safe as a baby on his mother's breast. You couldn't be safer.

You are clothed in God. He gets ready to close this book and He says, "What is your greatest responsibility?" Just stand in God, clothed from

head to foot. That's the greatest thing you could ever do. What a picture of rest! Hallelujah, "It is finished"! AMEN!

In Genesis 15:6 it says, "Abraham believed God". What a wonderful word. He believed God. God the Holy Spirit took those three words and put them on Abraham's tombstone. Isn't that a great epitaph for a life in God? If it were true in my life, I would love somebody to put that on my tombstone.

In the Hebrew, the word believe, is the word, **amen**. He amened God. He amened God, and it was counted as righteousness. I love simple truths, and this is one of the simplest. I <u>love</u> the word amen. I really do. Some people think amen means the end. It's over. You know, you come to the end of a prayer and you say, amen. Well, amen does not mean the end. I am glad it doesn't.

You probably have heard that the word literally means, "So is it", or, "So be it". I don't like that because that comes across in my mind as wishful thinking. You know, you say a prayer and you say amen, so be it. In other words, I **hope** so. I hope God answers this prayer. I wish that would be so. Amen does mean "so be it", but it is stronger than that. It means, "So is it because God says so", and "So will it be, because God says so". As we have said previously, Amen in the original Hebrew means, "God, my trustworthy King". Al Melech Neman.

It is those who twist the scriptures who teach, "We have to fight for victory". We do **not** have to fight for victory. We **STAND** in victory! Victory is already done. Any Christian, who tries to get victory, **loses ground**. You can't **try** to get victory, because victory is a Person. If you are a Christian, you **have victory**, because you **have Christ**.

Trying to get victory is like trying to get into a room you're already in. That satanic lie, keeps Christians spinning on a hamster wheel their whole lives. Like a horse chasing a carrot on a stick, they chase "victory". Not only do they never get to eat it, but they give our enemy Satan, the ride of his life! You may not be **enjoying** your victory in Christ. But you most certainly have it.

Let me show you how this section is a wonderful summary of the entire book. And in reality, the whole Christian life.

- 1: It lays a great foundation to rest upon. Union with Christ. "It is finished". "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit with the Lord."
- 2: It calls attention to the **Full provision.** The helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer. What's left? It's all in the armor. There's nothing left. What could you need besides that?
- 3: It's a summary that emphasizes the **Simplicity of salvation**. 6:13, "*Take*". 6:17, "*Take*". How do I enter into all this? Just "*Take*" it! Take the full armor of God. Take, the helmet of salvation. Take, the the shield of faith. Faith, is not believing, it's **taking**. Faith is the hand of the heart, that lays hold of God's precious promises and gifts. The Christian life is for "claimers" and for nobody else. It's for "takers". It's for "Receivers".

God is not a pie who is cut up in pieces. And we are not many pieces either. "Oh, God is working in **this** area of my life." He's not working in one area of your life, He's working in **every** area of your life! You didn't receive a little piece of God. "I received Him as Savior, now I'll receive Him as Lord. Then I'll receive Him as Priest and Prophet." NO! You received Him as God. As a whole Person.

If you have Him as God, then you have Him as Lord, Savior, Priest, Prophet, Advocate, Bridegroom, Wonderful Counselor and King of kings. You have Him in every way. You are clothed in all of God. You couldn't be richer. That's why He ends this way. Christians, standing clothed in God from head to foot, with all the hosts of hell surrounding and watching. Nothing could be greater than this picture of His love, protection, and provision.

Here at the end of the book, is a vault, full of wealth and treasure. He hands you the key and says, "Take what you want. Help yourself! Go nuts". In his marvelous little book on Ephesians, F. B. Meyer said,

"God will only ever, give you **one gift. The Lord Jesus Christ.** You will spend the rest of your life **unwrapping Him**."

I like that. God only gives one gift. If you have Christ, you have salvation, you have righteousness, you have truth, you have peace, and

you have *"The sword of the Spirit"*. Now remember, who wields that sword. It's the, *"Sword of the Spirit"*. He's the one wielding it. Listen to Hebrews 4:12,

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any doubleedged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account".

God doesn't hand out scalpels to children. Thousands miss it. We all have blood on our hands from slicing friends, family, and strangers, with what we thought, was "the word of God"! Powered by our immature and emotional understanding, we have tried to convict people's hearts. Forgetting, or never knowing, only God's Holy Spirit, can do that. We foolishly try to imitate our Lord's successful exchange with Satan in the wilderness. We arm ourselves with topically relevant scriptures, then throw them like spears. Hoping to kill enemies, and destroy situations.

Only failure, and an honest look at ourselves, can spare us from a life of denial and hypocrisy. "Whom the Lord loves, He disciplines." Real experiential knowledge of our weakness, is our best gift from God. It crowds us to loving surrender, as it did so effectively, for Job and Paul. It is the lot of every man or woman in the Bible who really desire to know God.

We look at people and situations and **think** we know what is needed, or what is supposed to happen. Isn't that just eating from the "Tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? That's spiritual death. No wonder thousands of Christians have no joy, and no real peace. Once again the book of Hebrews points us to God's heart in 4:7-11,

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their own works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest,"

The work of faith is not to imitate Jesus. It is to "Enter His rest". Remember the problem of legalism, is not keeping too many laws. You can't keep too many laws. It's trying to keep the laws of God, by your

**own strength** and through you own understanding. That's why Jesus excoriated the "Law Keepers (Pharisees) saying,

"If you were blind, you would see. But because you say 'We see', your blindness remains".

The Lord Jesus lived our life for us, and continues to live His life, through us. We don't have a changed life, we have an **exchanged** life. We died with Him on the cross, so we could join Paul and say,

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Romans 6:11,

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord".

Reckoning, doesn't make it true. Believing, doesn't make it true. I don't reckon the color of my pants. The manufacturer did that. I just put them on, and walk in them. Get your eyes off of faith, (your ability to believe), and put them on the Lord Jesus Christ. Just take it, saying "Amen" (God is a trustworthy King), and enter into the wealth.

Let me close with a clincher verse from Psalm 81:13 & 16,

"Oh that people would listen to me. I would feed you with the finest of wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

I hope this study is just the very beginning of your "Magical Mystery Tour" into the depths of this epistle. Infinite blessings and blessed responsibilities that will continue for all eternity. Ephesians 6:23-24,

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible."

May all who have received this marvelous truth, Sit, Walk and Stand in union with the Lord. Living as multi-billionaires, sons and daughters, joint heirs, and best of all, **His Beloved Bride!** 



# Studying EPHESIANS To Know God

We are here to study **Christ.** Not to study Ephesians. To see **the Lord**, through the wonderful book of Ephesians. Each book in the Bible gives a revelation of Christ in a different way, each emphasizing a different aspect of His glory.

In the book of Ephesians, there's a picture of the Lord Jesus, not found anywhere else. I speak as a fool, but let me ask this question, "If God were to dip down into your Bible, and remove Ephesians. What would you be losing? What does God give us in Ephesians, He doesn't give anywhere else?

What's on God's heart? What passion is burning in the heart of the Holy Spirit? What does He want us to know? How does He want us to see Christ? What, does God want to accomplish in our lives, in the study of this marvelous book?

The King James says, "The unsearchable riches of Christ." "Unsearchable" comes from a couple of Greek words meaning, "to track out". The "untrackable riches of Christ". The idea in Ephesians is this, there are unlimited resources and unbelievable wealth in Christ.

The idea is, search all you want, because you'll never come to the end. The riches in Christ are absolutely inexhaustible. His riches are as unfathomable as the ocean, and as vast as the cosmos. That's the great theme of Ephesians.