

A BIBLICAL STUDY

OUR PART

A FRESH LOOK AT THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

Travis Welch



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(A Fresh Look at the Book of Ephesians)

BY

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What You Need To Know

1. All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God (Rom. 3:23)
2. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23a)
3. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23b)
4. Behold Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart (Rev. 3:20).

5. Will you agree with Him about you being a sinner and having a wage due of eternity in Hell? If you agree with Him, then open your heart's door and ask Him to come into your life, to forgive you, and make you into a new person. How do you invite Him in? By prayer, just bow your head and talk to Him. The next move is up to you.

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Forward

In 2007 I moved from Houston to Fort Worth to attend Southwestern Baptist Seminary. It was there where I was "Paul-ed" by Brother Travis Welch (my Pastor and Friend), who taught and lived by "...deny yourself, pick up the cross, and follow Me." It was my short time in Ft. Worth where I was infused with the following Truths: 1. Be ready to be spent by God; 2. God requires a return on His investment; 3. I must decrease so that HE may increase. "*Our Part: A Fresh Look at the Book of Ephesians*" is a book that is saturated with the three aforementioned Truths! These Truths changed my life and gave me the Biblical View of Jesus and His Love for all humanity. I encourage you to not only read what Pastor Travis has written, but also to reflect, practice, and pass it on to others..."which is given me to you-ward".

Tony Morales

I have had the pleasure of knowing Travis and his family for many years. I consider him to be a great friend and mentor to me. Over the years I have had the opportunity to minister alongside him and to be ministered to by him, during some of the most difficult times in my life. After reading his book, I was left feeling convicted, ashamed, encouraged, and filled with hope of what's to come. For the lost person this book is a blueprint unto salvation, and to the believer it is iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17). Living in this world today, being constantly bombarded with hatred and lies has a way of exhausting a believer and causing one's heart to become calloused. While reading this book I could feel the Holy Spirit pricking my heart and prompting me to action. There are so many things I want you to grasp and take hold of in this book. Each one with the ability to change the world. The one that jumped out to me the most, in this chapter of my life, is to speak the truth in love. The only thing that dispels Satan's deception is God's truth! This world needs believers proclaiming the truth and the love of God. This book can help equip you for that very purpose.

Art Blanton

This book comes with a warning, that it will change your life, and it also demands a decision from the readers, to choose between good and evil, life or death. This book is a testament of the love, dedication and commitment that Travis has towards our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a reminder to me of the collaborations and influences that go into a book of this nature. Over the years, our Lord has paired specific people together throughout the scriptures to accomplish specific tasks. For example: Moses and Joshua: Moses started the story of the Israelites, and Joshua, his assistant, continued it after Moses' death. David and Solomon: David wrote songs and prayers, and his son Solomon wrote wise sayings based on his father's teachings. Paul and Luke: Paul spread Christianity and wrote letters, while Luke, his travel companion, documented their journeys and the early church. Peter and Mark: Peter shared stories about Jesus, and Mark wrote them down in the Gospel of Mark.

Similarly, Dr. Bill Vinson and Travis Welch have been paired together. Dr. Bill Vinson, as a professor, teacher, and mentor, has had a profound impact on many lives through his teaching and ministry. Travis Welch, once a student of Dr. Vinson, now carries the torch and duties of a leader, preacher, teacher, and writer. All of these men mentioned so far have a common goal: to reach lost souls for the kingdom of God. They have a way of taking the reader to the heart of the matter by exposing all readers to the gospel message and encouraging them to live a life pleasing to God.

It all begins with God's part—justification. The point of salvation begins when one is convicted of their sins by hearing and believing the Word of God. Then, we repent of our sins, ask the Lord to forgive us, and to save us from all unrighteousness. When we believe in Jesus and invite Him into our lives, we are saved. If we all understand God's Part, and if we learn from Paul's Part, all that is left is for us to do Our Part. With the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

It has been an honor and privilege to sit under the teachings of my pastor, my teacher, my mentor, my brother and my friend Travis Welch.

Dennis Henson

Writer's Acknowledgements

One of the best theologians of our time is Dr. Bill Vinson. He is known by some but for the most part works in relative obscurity. He was a professor and Director of Undergraduate and Lay Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary long before they had an undergraduate college. When he retired, he was the Director of Seminary Extension in Nashville. Upon retirement he and Kathy moved back to Fort Worth where I had the privilege of being their pastor for many years.

I started out as one of his students in the fall of 1994 and took every class he taught. After graduating, My family remained in Fort Worth where I was pastor of Decatur Avenue Baptist Church for well over twenty years. Our church would take people in a van to his night classes every semester. No other human being has had more impact on my theology than Dr. Vinson. He has touched countless numbers of lives, and the multiplication process continues through his students.

After their stint in Nashville, Dr. Vinson and Kathy moved back to Fort Worth and now attend Decatur Avenue Baptist Church. Dr. Vinson has taught many discipleship classes at the church. He also developed an online ministry with the help of Helen Agnew and John Fields called 4disciples.org where anyone can take his discipleship classes for free.

I moved to Oklahoma in the summer of 2019 to be an associational director. The church in Fort Worth went two years without a pastor but benefited from excellent leadership from within. In the summer of 2020 Dr. Vinson preached through Ephesians. Church member Dennis Henson, who later became pastor, recorded some of the messages and posted them on Facebook. When I heard them, they were so refreshing. It made me homesick.

What made it so refreshing is that it wasn't a sermon. In typical Vinson style he just picked up and started reading, making comment and adding theology along the way. It was just an honest attempt by one man to follow Jesus. God was definitely honored.

There were problems with the recordings. Half of the lessons were missing. The first two lessons were not recorded. Then along the way there were gaps in what Dr. Vinson decided to cover. The quality of the recordings was also bad. They were recorded from the back of the sanctuary with a phone and sometimes it was faint and there was all kinds of background noise.

I encouraged Dr. Vinson to sit down and re-record all of the lessons. My plan was to develop a class for 4disciples.org. However, Dr. Vinson was not able to do it but gave me his full blessing to record my own Bible study. I knew I could reconstruct it because I already had the theology. I spent months meditating, studying, and reading Ephesians over and over again.

Then something good happened. A pastor friend of mine within the association called to ask if I would be interested in joining him on his podcast to discuss Ephesians. I took this as a sign from God. Pastor Jason Ravan and I would meet together once a week to record his video podcast. The next day I would sit in front of my computer, with a microphone, and record my own audio version, then post it to Buzzsprout.

I broke the lessons down into eight 30-minute audio recordings and turned them into a class on 4disciples.org. That was the summer of 2022. Now, almost three years later the audio recordings have been transcribed using a tool on Microsoft Word.

After much editing this is the final product in book form. Give me a little grace. Remember this originated from recorded speech. It will read like that and sound a little folksy. I also use repetition in my teaching. I toss this book out there to the Glory of God, free of charge, in an effort to bless people. I want to personally thank Pastor John Fields who maintains the 4disciples website at personal expense. It gives me a place to make this book available for free download. While you are there check out Dr. Vinson's many free books and his free online classes. I also appreciate the encouragement of Pastor Bob Ryan who helped me by proof reading and offering valuable advice.

I dedicate this work to my wife Lisa who makes great sacrifice allowing me to put a full-time effort into small places. I also dedicate this work to our children, Trista, Eric, and Blake, who always pick up the slack when I fail at My Part.

WARNING:

This Study Will Change Your Life

Introduction: (Ephesians 1:1-2)

This is not designed to be a technical study of the book of Ephesians. It's more along the lines of a quick survey. We will be taking a macro approach to each chapter, hitting some of the high points, looking for the big picture as we read every verse. So, let's begin by reading the first couple of verses of chapter one.

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the Saints which are in Ephesus, and to the faithful **in Christ Jesus** grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ:” (Ephesian 1:1-2)*

First, the apostle Paul is identified as the author. He identifies himself as the author. I know there are some people who question whether Paul wrote this or not, and that makes no sense because he straight up attributes it to himself right here.

This is also a circulatory letter. It is addressed to the Church of Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ. But it is thought this letter made the rounds. It most certainly went to more churches than just Ephesus. In fact, some people believe the church in Ephesus put their own name on it. They think it was originally addressed to “the faithful Church of Jesus.” I don't really buy into that theory but clearly the letter made the rounds.

This letter would have gone from church to church to church. It might have even gone from family to family, or from one house to another house. I don't know exactly how it was, but you would get it for a couple of days then pass it on to the next house. Someone else would get it and they would pass it down the line. Or it would be part of one church for a while where it would be read, and people would be able to hear it. One church would listen to it being read and then they would pass it on to another church. You might only have it for a few days. That is a fascinating thing to think about. Can you imagine receiving a letter from the Apostle Paul! That would be exciting! People would gather around, and the letter would be read out loud. If you were able to read, maybe you would get the chance to read it yourself. What a thrill!

At some point this letter was reproduced and then circulated on an even larger scale. It is a fascinating thing to think about. When people heard this letter being read, they understood what it was talking about. I mean, they didn't have to have an explanation for anything. They just simply knew what it was talking about. And when it spoke, it was personal. To me, that's a fascinating kind of an idea. There was just a level of genius that we do not have today. There was a level of knowledge and understanding that we don't have today. They had this letter for maybe a day or two and they could understand everything. We can sit down and read it, study it for months, I mean word by word, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter. We analyze it, dig into it, break it down, and when we get to the end, we still can't figure out what he's talking about.

Another important thing to know is that this letter was written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. One of the theories I kind of subscribed to is that Peter and Paul met up at some point in Rome. It is thought maybe Peter came to visit Paul while he was in prison. I know some people don't buy into this theory at all. They will completely reject it.

I used to read Ephesians and read 1Peter and never make the connection myself. No doubt they are two separate books, with different authors, but once pointed out you can clearly see the commonality. When I was first introduced to this idea, I thought, well, it kind of makes sense. You can read first Peter and then you can read the book of Ephesians, and you will see a lot of the same themes, a lot of the same thoughts.

It is believed maybe Peter and Paul got together; Both letters were written at about the same time. Paul was at the end of his life and Peter was near the end of his life. They were both nearing the end of their earthly ministry. The fledgling church was under heavy persecution. Peter and Paul looked at each other and said, "man, we have got to do something." "We've got to shore up some things for the church."

Peter's responsibility was to go and teach this to Jewish Christians. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He was charged with teaching the same thing to the Gentile believers. So, they are basically hitting the same thing, but they have different audiences. After you finish this study of Ephesians, go back and read 1Peter. The similarities will jump out at you.

There is more projected evidence that this was a coordinated effort between Peter and Paul. Peter references Babylon in his letter. It is generally held that Babylon was a code word for Rome. Christians were under heavy persecution in Rome. If you said anything bad about Rome they would kill you. So, they would use the word Babylon in reference to Rome. Peter used Silvanus to help him write and deliver his letter. Silvanus was a sidekick of the Apostle Paul. It can't be totally proven but I buy into this theory.

Ephesians chapter one is all about the doctrine of salvation. Chapter two continues with sanctification and the establishment of the church. Chapter three is Paul's part in advancing the church. And, in chapter four, he starts talking about our part in advancing the church. So, chapters four, five, and six are directed at us.

The simple outline we will use for this study is, God's Part (Chapter 1 and 2), The Apostle Paul's Part (Chapter 3), and Our Part (Chapters 4, 5, and 6)

Part One:

God's Part

CHAPTER ONE: (Ephesians 1:3-23)

Let's pick up reading again in chapter one beginning at verse three. This is what I want you to do as we begin reading this chapter. I want you to circle each time you see the words “in Christ” or “in him” or “in whom.” Whenever you see the word “in,” I want you to make a note of that. Circle it if you can and pay attention to how many times it is repeated.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ:**” (1:3)* There's the first one. And he is talking about the hope of heaven here. That's the hope we have in Christ. Salvation is in Jesus. And he speaks to that right off the bat in verse three. *“According as He hath chosen us **in him** before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” 1:4,5)* And so we have a couple instances there where it says, “in Christ” or “in him.” Just make a note of that.

In verse four it says “He hath chosen us **in him** from the foundations of the world that we should be holy.” This is very Christocentric. Anything that belongs to the Lord is holy. When God redeemed you, He purchased you with his blood, you now belong to Him, you are now deemed to be holy. And here's the thing, the plan of salvation has been in place since the foundation of the world. This is all about salvation being in Christ, and it has been the plan of God from the beginning, before the world was ever created God knew he was going to send his son. His son was going to die a horrible death on the cross and was going to shed His blood for our redemption. That was God's plan from the very beginning. It has always been in place. There has never been another plan outside of that.

*“He's predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of His will.” (1:5) “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted **in the beloved.**” (1:6)* So there's that “in the beloved” business again. We are only accepted by God through Christ. *“**In whom** we have redemption through his blood, and forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;” (1:7-8)* This talks about how we have redemption through His blood. When God redeems something, he owns it. That means He owns us.

He has paid the price for our sins. When God redeems something, he takes possession of it. So, we now belong to Him. Our life is no longer ours to live. Rather, He now owns it, and He can use you, spend you, do with you whatever He wants.

Now verse 9, *“Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed **in himself.**” (1:9)* I want to talk about “His will” for a moment. I am going to show you the mystery of God's will. The first verses I want to show

you are in 1 Timothy. *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)* That is God's will right there. It is God's will that all men would be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. I want you to read another verse. This one is out of Second Peter. *“The Lord who is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)* So, God wants every person to be saved. That is his will.

This is very important to understand, and we will talk about it more in just a moment. In verse 10, it says, *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together in one all things **in Christ,**’ (there's another “in Christ”) both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even **in him:**” (1:10)* The promise there is that one day everything is going to be gathered under him. Everything is going to be put under his feet and notice again how it's “in him.” It is repeated over-and-over again, “in him”, “in whom,” stressing the importance that Salvation is only in Christ.

*“**In whom** also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will:” (1:11)* And we have already talked about what his will is. *“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted **in Christ.**” (1:12)* And there “in Christ” is repeated.

Let me talk about another word that pops up here a few times. This whole predestined thing. “He hath chosen us,” or “predestinated us,” listen I believe in all of that. I believe in predestination. I believe in the election. I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe in the Providence of God. The Providence of God is just what God's purpose and plan is for our lives. He has got a purpose and a path for us. And it is up to us to get on his path. That is where living for the Lord adds up to something.

So, I believe in all that, but I don't have a fatalistic view of what those words mean or how they are often misunderstood. There are two camps in which a person falls, and you will have to decide what you are going to believe. You can probably already tell which way I am going to fall. There are those who believe a person is elected before justification. And then there are those who believe the election happens after justification. I hold to election happening after justification. Not before justification, but after. We are counted as part of the elect by faith in Christ.

This is important because whatever side you land on is going to affect the way you interpret the whole of Scripture. When I look at that word “election”, no doubt God chooses. He chose Abraham, He chose Isaac, He chose Jacob. When God makes a choice there is a narrowing that takes place. He will narrow it all the way down to one person. But the purpose of him narrowing it down to one person is so the multitude can be blessed. And God chose the Jewish people. He chose the tribe of Judah. Jesus came from the tribe of

Judah. So, God's plan of salvation is all going to be worked out. It's going to be passed along through that seed. God is always narrowing it down with the purpose of blessing everyone, not just the few, but many are blessed.

He narrows it all the way down to Jesus. There's only one way to salvation. We call it the narrow way. Salvation only comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God narrows it all the way down to the cross. Salvation is not for a select few but for the many, for the multitude, for all who will receive him. And that has been his plan from the foundation of the world.

When it comes to destination, the predestination part means that every individual who is in Christ is going to heaven. That plan has been predetermined. Jesus has gone to heaven. There is an illustration given of an airplane, and I think it's a good illustration of what Paul is describing here. Let's say I go get on an airplane in Dallas and I fly to Atlanta. That airplane is destined for Atlanta. If I'm on that airplane, I'm going to land where that airplane lands and that airplane is going to land in Atlanta. I drive to the airport. I have my ticket, I get my boarding pass, but I must get on the plane. You see what I'm saying? And if I am on that plane, when that plane lands in Atlanta, I'm going to be at the destination that had been predetermined. And that's the way it is in Christ. To make the hope of heaven a reality I have got to be in Christ and all those who are in Christ are destined for heaven. So that's where predestination and everything comes from. It is important we don't get confused about these things because it can mess people up. Countless believers get messed up here.

But let's continue reading. Verse 13 says, *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory.” (1:13-14)*

And so that is how salvation comes to us. It is in whom we have trusted. Read it again. “You have trusted in Christ, after that you heard the Word.” “You heard the gospel of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” “In whom also after that you believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” BAM!! You are saved. Choose to believe.

Next, he says, *“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the Saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;” (1:15-16)* He is always making mention of them in prayer. He is blessed by what he hears coming out of this Church in Ephesus. He hears of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love unto all the Saints. These two things always run together.

When you have faith in the Lord it is going to result in a love for the things God loves and God loves people. Our love for the Lord is especially obvious when it comes to loving fellow believers. They are connected. If you have faith in Jesus, you are going to love the brethren. It is evidence that Christ is in you and that you are in Christ.

Picking up in verse 17, *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought **in Christ**, when he raised him up from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly in places.” (1:17-20)*

Here we have the whole thing working out. He is giving praise to God for the good news he has heard regarding this church. He knows their faith is real because of the love they have for the saints. He tells them about the Holy Spirit’s power at work in them. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding. The Holy Spirit reveals things to us.

There is general knowledge that comes to everybody, it doesn't matter who you are, lost people, saved people, it doesn't matter. But then there is special knowledge, and that special knowledge can only come from the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. All revelation comes from God, but special revelation is reserved for those who are in Christ and the Spirit of God dwells in them. “That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what the hope of your calling.” He is talking about the eyes of our heart.

Here is what I'm thinking, especially as a pastor or preacher. We have got to get to the heart of the matter. I listen to a lot of sermons these days, and sermons have become nothing more than history lessons, geography lessons, maps, background information, all that kind of stuff. And there's nothing wrong with that because you have got to know the context of anything you are preaching. That background information is essential to some of our understanding, but you don't have to dwell on it.

I gave you the background information on the book of Ephesians in just a few sentences and we got busy with the Word. Most of the messages you hear today will spend 20-30 minutes just talking about the background information. Then when you get to the end there is very little devotional stuff left. But oh, we got all kinds of background knowledge. We pass all that kind of stuff along. If we are not careful, we will never get to the heart of the matter. Just get to the heart of the matter. What is the stuff that's going to change my life? Where is the devotional part that when I hear it, it's going to change something in me? You must personalize it a little bit and speak to the heart.

We have done the same thing with evangelism. Evangelism has become nothing more than just trying to win somebody over to our way of thinking. That's what most evangelism is today. It's no longer just pointing people to Jesus. Evangelism has become complicated. We are messing things up, bad.

My appeal to you is to get to the heart of the matter. Go to “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward.” He is talking about the power of the Word. He's talking about the power

of God, the power and the presence of God that is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

One of the other mistakes we make as pastors today, including preachers and teachers, is that we will explain away the power of God. The way we do that is by describing the context in which the text was written. We make that mistake all the time. We take away the miracles. We take away the supernatural. We explain it all away by just dwelling on the context of the verses.

For Example, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) That is a promise of the power and the presence of God in a person's life. Quote this verse and you can be accused of taking a verse out of context. The context being, Paul said he has been without, and he has had much, and he has learned that in whatever circumstances he is content. Well, yeah, that's the context, but it doesn't negate the truth of what he is teaching. We want to get in there and try to take the supernatural or the power out of everything.

There are plenty of verses we get accused of taking out of context. “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.” (Matthew 18:20) Quote that one and you risk being straightened out. You will hear this, “that's a misunderstanding of a verse taken out of context.” “He is talking about church discipline.” Well yes, he absolutely is, but it doesn't negate the truth of what he's trying to teach.

The power and presence of God needs to be emphasized. But we have this tendency to explain it away and de-emphasize it. And that's what he is talking about here, “that power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power,” He wants us to come into a realization of verse twenty-one. “*Far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*” (1:21) Context should strengthen our confidence in the promises of God, not erode it.

“*And hath put all things under his feet and give him to be the head over all things to the church.*” (1:22) It's just that there is Christ, and he is now far above all principalities and powers. He is higher, and higher, and higher, and higher, and he has put all things under his feet. He is head over all things to the church, “*which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*” (1:23) He is not only the head of the church, but He is above all things.

Chapter Two (Ephesians 2:1-22)

We continue our study of Ephesians by moving into chapter two. We are attempting what the apostle Paul set out to do and get to the heart of the matter. If you remember, in chapter one we looked at the doctrine of salvation. Chapter one is all about the doctrine of salvation and how salvation is in Christ. There is only one way to salvation and that is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, no other way. And we saw that God's plan was in place from the foundation of the world.

A person is saved by having an encounter with the Lord, being convicted of sins you repent and ask God to forgive you. Salvation is in Christ. Believe in Jesus and Invite him into your life and you will be saved. That is the gospel message.

Ephesians chapter two gets into the sanctification part of salvation. Paul is going to talk about grace, and he is going to talk about works, and he is also going to talk about the mystery of the new man. The mystery of the new man is basically him taking the Jews, and the Gentiles, and making them into one new man we call Christian. The church is made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Ephesians chapter 2, *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”* (2:1-3)

These verses refer to the depravity of man. When we were without Christ, we were dead, dead in our sins and destined for hell. There was no spiritual life in us at all. We were spiritually dead. The amazing thing is, we didn't even realize we were dead until we had an encounter with the gospel. As soon as we believe in Christ, we experience life. When a person comes into Christ, they pass from death to life.

These verses describe what we were before we were saved. Before we were saved, “we walked according to the course of this world,” “according to the prince and the power of the air,” “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Can you remember what it was like when you were lost? “When we had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh.” When we were lost, we acted like lost people. We thought like lost people. We spoke like lost people. This is talking about the state of depravity we were in. But here is the thing about that. We can still respond to God. We are dead in our sin, but we have that capacity to respond to God.

There are some who believe a dead person cannot respond to God. They will say, “how can someone who is dead, respond to God?” They will try to establish how there are some

people who can receive grace and there are some people who cannot receive grace. They have a skewed view concerning depravity. They also have a skewed view of grace.

We are saved by grace. Thank God for grace. None of us would be able to call ourselves Christian if it wasn't for the grace of God. And the grace of God is unmerited favor. That's what grace means. So, a person is saved by grace, but there are some who believe that God just gives that grace to certain people. Therefore, it is entirely at God's discretion who gets saved and who doesn't in a pre-determined individual selection process. Some people are created for grace while others are purposely created to be damned.

I would argue that a dead person can absolutely respond to God. The way a dead person can respond to God is through the Gospel. It takes the gospel, the word of God. Romans 1:16 says, "the gospel is the power of God to salvation." The gospel is a very small simple message. It doesn't take much.

It is true that natural man cannot understand the things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:14) It takes the Holy Spirit to discern spiritual things. So, a lost person, being confronted with the gospel, all he is going to be able to understand is the fact that he is lost and needs to be saved. And that's the kind of conviction he is going to have. Now, depending upon the choice he makes, whether he receives Christ or not, will determine if he remains dead or if new life enters him.

Once saved, the Holy Spirit comes into a person and starts the sanctification process. But it is possible for anyone to get saved. After having an encounter with the gospel, once we are born again, new life will come in to us. We will pass from death to life.

Salvation is by grace. However, some people think God is so selective on who receives His grace they won't even offer an invitation. They will preach against using a sinner's prayer. They see no need for it. There is not one prescribed method of leading someone to the Lord, but everyone is saved the same way. We should always give people opportunity to hear the gospel and then we need to give people opportunity to respond to the gospel.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved," (2:4-5)

Marvelous verses right there. This is good news. This is where we find hope. We are lost in our sins but there is hope in that, "God is rich in mercy," and "for with his great love he loved us," "even while we were dead in sins." Being dead in sin was our condition before Christ came into our lives. God is rich in mercy. He loved us before we loved him. He loved the world (John 3:16)

Paul gives us all the bad news first and describes us before we were saved. When I read those first three verses, I don't even think about the depravity of man. I recognize that's what these verses are about but that's not what I think about. I think about the lost condition I

was in. I say to myself, “Thank you Lord for saving me.” Those verses describe me before I was saved. I was lost in this. This is how I was. It's a miracle I am saved. It is a miracle when anyone gets saved.

He loved us, *“and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly place in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”* (2:6-7) Once again, the grace we need is in Jesus.

What I'm thinking is that we will be reminded of the grace of God. We will be mindful of what we have been forgiven of. We're not going to be reminded so that God can condemn us. Our personhood has been forgiven. So, if we are being reminded of anything it's not to condemn us. It's not so much about our sin but about the grace of God and his forgiveness. Just look at how good God is! Look at what we've been forgiven! Look at that! We will be able to point to God and say, just look at the goodness of God! We know the grace of God now, but it's going to be fresh in our mind. Praise you, Jesus, for the good things you bring our way. Thank you for loving us, thank you for forgiving us, and thank you for salvation.

“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” (2:8-10)

Everyone knows these verses. They are some of the most popular verses in all of Scripture and for certain, the most recognized verses in this epistle to the Ephesians. We will often use them when we are witnessing. Often people think they are going to heaven because they are good. Or they think they are going to heaven because they have good works. So, we will quote these verses to them to point out salvation is not by works. We are saved by grace through faith and not of works. Then from there we will launch into a gospel presentation. But we must show people and tell them that salvation is not by any works. You will never be good enough to be saved. You can't buy it or earn it or anything else.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about two words. I want to talk about “grace”, and I want to talk about “faith.” You can have people from different religious groups using the same words, yet each one ascribes a different meaning. People with different theologies around the doctrine of salvation will use words differently. Some people will look at those verses and they will agree that salvation is by grace through faith. Their heads will go up and down and you will think they agree with you. But sometimes people put different meanings on these words.

For instance, the grace we need for salvation comes directly from Jesus. But there are religious groups who believe grace comes to us through some kind of sacrament. They think it passes through a church or through another individual. This is called mediated grace. You must ask yourself the question, does mediated grace save? That is going to be something you must decide for yourself. I land that mediated grace does not save. Grace does not

have to pass through a church, or anyone, or anything, to get to us. It comes directly from Jesus.

There are some people who think you must be baptized to go to heaven. Or, you must have any number of other sacraments they ascribe to. That's an important word to pay attention to. You can tell a lot about a group's theology by some of the words they use. And when you hear that word "sacrament", just know a sacrament is a vehicle of grace. You receive grace through the sacrament. There is no salvation apart from the church. There is no salvation apart from being baptized or any other sacraments they hold to.

Here is the danger. If the Church is the one who controls the sacrament, and the sacrament is a vehicle of grace, then the church is controlling your salvation. Surely you can see the dangers of that. Just know this, the grace that saves, saving grace, comes directly from Jesus.

Now, let me talk about faith for a moment. There are some people who will look at those verses and they think faith comes from God and he gives some people faith, and he won't give faith to others. They make it sound like only certain people have believing faith to trust Christ. But that's not how we receive faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) Faith is contained in the Gospel. Faith is contained in the words themselves. Faith is housed in the Word.

I want to read a verse out of chapter one again. I'm going to read verse 13 out of chapter one. Just listen to this. *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."* (1:13) Can you hear that? First you hear the word of truth. You hear the Gospel of your salvation, then you believe, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Again, you hear it, you believe it, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The faith that is needed in salvation is contained in the words. And it doesn't take a lot of faith. Faith as a grain of mustard seed is all that's needed. (Matthew 17:20) It's a simple little message. And the faith you need to believe is contained in the words themselves. So, if you stick with the Word of God, if you stick with the Gospel, it is possible for anyone to get saved.

I was out on the street witnessing one night. We were in a downtown walking district of a large city where there were no cars. I was passing out Gospel tracts when I engaged an off-duty police officer. Now this guy, he was from the next city over from us. He didn't want to get caught partying in his city. So, he came over to our city and he was doing his partying there. I start giving a witness to him and he tries to tell me he's an atheist. He says, "I'm an atheist, I don't believe in God." So, I pull out my Bible from my coat.

It was cold outside, and I had a heavy coat on with big pockets. I reach into my pocket and pull out a full-size King James Bible. Now listen, people notice when you do something like that. And he says, "why read that to me?" "I don't believe in that." "I don't believe in God."

“I don't believe in the Bible.” “I don't believe it's true.” He goes on, “why even bother me with it?” I tell him he doesn't have to believe it. “Just humor me and listen a bit,” I said. He argued with me briefly but relented.

To combat his atheism, I opened to Romans chapter one. I read the part about how all creation declares there is a God. He is seen in everything, and how no man has an excuse. Well, I got his attention, and I went over the Roman Road passages with him. I could see conviction enter this man. I could see conviction come all over him. And I got to that point to where I said, “how about it right now?” “Do you want to ask Christ to forgive you of your sins and invite him into your life?”

Well, he turned me down because there were other people with him and they were mocking him, but the conviction was there, and I could see it. So, I just gave him a gospel tract. I stuck the tract in his front pocket, and I said, “in the morning when you get up, or whenever you sober up from tonight, take this tract and be reminded of what we've talked about tonight.”

All I'm saying is, just stick with the word of God, stick with the gospel even when they say there is no God, or that they are atheist. They know better. Everyone knows there is a God. Even the atheist knows there is a God. He may have convinced himself in his heart or deceived himself into thinking there is no God, but he knows better. All of heaven declares that there is a God, and so he knows better. If you stick with the gospel, just stick with the words of God, there is enough faith there for anybody to believe. They can resist it if they want, but there is enough faith there for them to believe.

Once Again, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” (2:8-9)* To reiterate, you are not saved by any work. You can't buy it, earn it, or anything else. It is all by the grace of God. But our works do matter. *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (2:10)* We are not saved by works but we are saved unto good works. There is work we are called to do, and he says that these works have been before ordained, that we should walk in them.

When we get saved, God sets us on a course, he sets us on a path. His Spirit comes into us, and we are given spiritual gifts. He has a calling on our life and there is ministry to do. We are going to be judged and held accountable for those works. Works come into play during the sanctification part of our salvation. The path that God has for us is specific to each individual person. And it is up to everyone to get on their own individual path. If we don't, we will suffer loss. We don't lose in our justification, but we can suffer loss in our sanctification, which has a direct effect on our glorification.

So, you can blow it. You can waste your whole salvation. However, it will be detrimental to you because we are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account

of what we've done in the flesh, whether it be good or bad. (2Corinthians 5:10) When the believer stands before the Lord, it's not going to be about if we are saved or not. That judgment was taken care of when you, being convicted of your sins, asked Christ to forgive you and invited him into your life. When the believer stands before the judgment seat of Christ, it is our works that will be judged. He will ask, "what did you do with the salvation I gave you?" That's what he's talking about right here. So, we are saved by grace and not by works, but we are saved unto good works. There is work that needs to be done that we are responsible for, and we will be held accountable.

Then it says, *"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"* (2:11-12) Now he is addressing the Gentile population, and he is comparing them to the Jewish population.

Referring to the Gentiles, and remember Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, He says, "you are called uncircumcised by those who were circumcised." You see, there is always that distinction, there is always that separation between the Jew and the Gentile. He says, "you were without Christ being aliens in the Commonwealth of Israel. Strangers from the covenants and the promises, having no hope and without God." The Jewish people were seen as having God. That doesn't mean they were saved, but they had God. They knew of God. They are God's chosen people. They were the ones who had the prophets and the covenants and all of this.

The Jews were considered near to God. The Gentiles were seen as being far away from God. The Gentiles were without hope, and they were far from God. Whereas the Jews were considered near God and had all the covenants and the Old Testament and all that kind of thing. But now that has all changed. It has all flipped.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (2:13) The Gentiles were considered far off, the Jews were considered near, but now Gentiles have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So, the Gentiles have made-up some ground here. There is no longer the distinction between Jew and Gentile because of the work of Christ. Salvation is now available for everybody.

Now, here's the thing you must remember too, the Jews were supposed to be a witness of God. They were supposed to be the ones who showed God to the world, and they were supposed to be looking for the coming of the Messiah. They were supposed to be the ones revealing God to the people. But they failed in that. Instead, they closed themselves off into their own little private sect. They kept the barrier up between themselves and everybody else and saw themselves as being better than everybody else. Much like John the Baptist

was the forerunner of Christ. The Jews were supposed to have that function in the world, but they failed at it. That's why we get John the Baptist.

Let's continue, *“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;”* (2:14) There were walls, there were literal physical walls in society separating Jew and Gentile. That is all ridiculous now, because of Christ and his finished work on the cross.

There is something else at work here now. *“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinance; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:”* (2:15-16) This is the mystery of the new man. He has taken two. He has taken the Jew, and he has taken the Gentile and from those two he has made one new man.

Everyone gets saved the same way is the point here. A Gentile must become something else to be saved. He must become a Christian to be saved. A Jew must become something else before he can be saved. A Jew must become a Christian to be saved. So, both Jew and Gentile need to be saved.

Not only has Jesus broke down the enmity between Jew and Gentile but also the enmity between us and God. James 4:4 talks about how if we love the world and the things of the world, we are at enmity with God. And then in Romans 8:5-7, It talks about how the carnal mind is enmity with God. And so, we are at enmity with God.

Remember the description he gave of us before we were saved. We were described as enemies of God, and there was enmity there. So not only has the enmity between Jew and Gentile been broken, but the enmity they had with God has also been broken. These two become one new man. The Lord's church will be comprised of both Jewish and gentile believers. It is a phenomenal thing to think about. How in the world did all this come about? It is fascinating to think about everything God has done.

Now think about this. Because of what Christ did on the cross, we now have access to God. These days however, we no longer practice personal holiness or separation. The Church is becoming like the world, and we act like the world. We pursue our own selfish desires, and covetous wants. We love the world and the things of the world. Many will compromise everything to be accepted and loved by the world. At one time we were delivered from all of that and brought into salvation. Now the church finds itself drifting right back into it again.

We can still set ourselves up and be at enmity with God. I am not saying we lose our justification or anything like that, but sin separates. So, if we insist upon living our own life, doing our own thing, with no consideration of the “good works God hath ordained, that we should walk in,” we will be suffering great losses in our sanctification, and most won't even realize it until it is too late.

But anyway, it says, *“And he came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”* (2:17) So the gospel message is coming not only to you, who are afar off, but it is also coming to those that are nigh. *“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* (2:18) Everyone gets saved the same way. It doesn't matter who you are. Being convicted of your sins, having that encounter with the Lord, you repent. You ask Christ to forgive you, invite him into your life and you are saved. It doesn't matter who you are, every person is saved the same way.

Right there in that verse 18, you also see the Trinity at work. It says through him, talking about Jesus, we both have access by one Spirit, unto the Father. So, we have the Trinity. There is no calling yourself a Christian if you deny the Trinity. That is just basic Christian doctrine.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (2:19-22) God is framing us together into this new building. Jesus himself is the cornerstone, and we build upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets. *“No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1Corinthians 3:11) The prophets built upon that foundation; the apostles built upon that foundation. Then we come along, and we build upon that same foundation. He is our solid rock.

The problem is we are out there doing our own work instead of his. We are building our own buildings. Oh, we like to have contact with the foundation. We will partly sit on the foundation. Half of us hanging off the foundation just dangling. All our works are in jeopardy if they are not built on the firm foundation of Christ.

Remember also, we are the temple of God if the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Then it all comes together, Jew, Gentile, it doesn't matter. We come together and are fitly joined together in a spiritual house. It's a beautiful picture.

Part Two:

The

Apostle Paul's Part

Chapter Three (Ephesians 3:1-21)

We are going to continue our study of Ephesians, picking up in chapter three. You remember the first two chapters deal primarily with the doctrine of salvation, especially in chapter one. It was established in chapter one, that before the foundations of the world, God's plan of salvation was already in place. Salvation only comes through a personal relationship with Christ.

Then in chapter two, Paul continues with the doctrine of salvation, but this time it's about sanctification where he talks about grace, and he talks about works. Also in chapter two, he introduces us to the mystery of the new man. It is a reference to the church, and how the church is comprised of both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Jews and gentiles both get saved the same way.

Now in chapter three, Paul is going to talk about his part in advancing the gospel and advancing the church. Everything God reveals to Paul, he is going to pass along to us. Let's begin by reading the first two verses.

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given to me to me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.)” (3:1-4)

Something special has been revealed to Paul. And what has been revealed to him, he is now going to pass along to us. I like the way King James says, “to you-ward.” The idea is that everything given to the apostle Paul is being passed along to us. Whatever grace was given to him. He passes it along. Whatever understanding he has gained, he is passing it on to us. Whatever revelation Paul received is not being kept to Himself but is passed along to us-ward exactly as God gave it.

We should be the same way. No matter what God has graced us with, when God blesses, it's not to be kept and hoarded to ourselves. We take what God gives to meet our needs but there is always more. There is always extra, more than enough to be able to bless other people. And that's what Paul is doing here. He is talking about the revelation that was made known to him. He is now going to share it with us.

In the doctrine of revelation, there is general revelation. General revelation can be received and understood by anyone. But then there is also special revelation. Special revelation comes from God to someone specific. This is something special that is being revealed only to God's people through the Apostle Paul. And that's what Paul is talking about, in reference to “the mystery.” The mystery being revealed to him is the church, and the whole idea of how the Gentiles will be able to come into the church. Before Paul, no one had ever seen this before. And so, this mystery has been revealed to him through the Holy Spirit, and Paul

is passing it on to us. Then the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, gives us the understanding we need as believers.

He says in verse 4, *“whereby, when you read, ye may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ”* and the mystery he is talking about is the church. *“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”* (3:5-6) And that is what’s being revealed to him here. The way Gentiles will come into salvation is through the gospel.

There was no way anyone would ever be able to figure out, how God was going to bring the Gentiles into the church. In the Old Testament there was no revelation of this. There was no concept of the church in the Old Testament, how it was going to be made with both Jew and gentile. This comes to us through the revelation that was given to Paul. Everyone who came before Paul never smelled it coming. But everybody is going to come to Christ through the gospel. Anyone, any person, can be saved through the power of the gospel.

“Wherefore I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;” (3:7-8) This is the Apostle Paul’s calling. And he is always mindful of his shortcomings. He is always mindful of his failures. He is mindful of how undeserving he truly is. This is a man who was once a persecutor of the church. He used to kill Christians. He is fully aware of the grace that was given him.

I dare say this is true for all of us. We are all saved by grace through faith. We have already established that. Every Christian is gifted, and every Christian is called to the ministry. And there is a ministry function and life purpose every believer is called into. Every bit of it is by the grace of God. Every Christian should be able to relate to this. However, there are some people God separates for a specific ministry such as a pastor or missionary. That too is only by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God any of us can call ourselves a Christian, much less be used by Him in some special capacity and Paul is very aware of it.

This is genuine humility being exhibited by Paul. There is nothing fake about the Apostle Paul. The greatest quality of any leader is humility. So much of the time today we hear braggadocious boasting coming from our leaders. As leaders we will often operate out of our own wisdom and knowledge. Much of the stuff we say and do is just flat out manipulative, obnoxious, and disrespectful. We have an elevated view of ourselves. Just keep this in mind. It is only by God’s grace he is using you to begin with. You don’t deserve to be here.

“ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now

unto the principalities and powers and heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God,” (3:8-9) He is talking about the mystery that was given to him and how he was the only one who received it and now it is being passed on.

Here is something else to think about. All of the other apostles were called to minister this gospel to the Hebrew believers. Only one of them, the Apostle Paul, is called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. And through his obedience, salvation has come to the Gentiles. I sit here today, and I'm saved because of the obedience of one man who carried the gospel to the Gentiles. And now it comes all the way down to me.

This whole concept of the church is being revealed to him. He looks at that and it's an amazing thing to see. He is the very first one to see it. I had not thought about this before. I don't know why, but I never thought about Paul being the first one to see how the Gentiles were going to be brought into the church. Or, how the church was going to be advanced like this. The angels didn't even know this. This is something that wasn't even revealed to them.

Paul says, *“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,” (3:10)* What he is saying here is that the angels look at us and they marvel. They scratch their heads and think, man, we never smelled this coming. They look at it, they study it, they analyze, and they just marvel over it. They look at how God deals with his people. They look at how God deals with his church and it's just amazing to them.

Referring to the “principalities and powers,” that is basically the power angels, the authority angels. There are whole theologies built around these different levels of angels but that doesn't concern me now. The main point has to do with the fact these angels didn't even understand what was happening. The Angels are fascinated by it, they look at us, they look at the church, and they analyze it. They study us, and they are learning from us. That is amazing to me.

If the angels are studying us, maybe we need to look at ourselves and study ourselves a little bit. Churches are becoming more dysfunctional all the time. Maybe we need to revisit the whole purpose of the church, think about what God is doing, how he brought it together, the history, the miracle of it all. We need to study ourselves.

“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in Him.” (3:12) That's another thing the angels are learning by looking at us, that we gained access with confidence and boldness. This is something we need to be careful of. It's not an arrogant kind of thing. Once again, we are looking at the humility of Paul. And so, this boldness, and confidence he speaks of is not arrogant, or abusive. It is very much out of humility.

He says, *“Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at the tribulations for you, which is your glory.” (3:13)* Paul is saying, “look at all the trials I am going through.” “The trials that I am going through, you can be strengthened by that.” “What I'm going through is your glory.” Paul is

suffering and he says that his suffering is our glory. The whole idea of that is mind boggling. We will revisit this thought again in a few more verses.

Verse 14, *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* (3:14) A lot of causes right here. The responsibility he has been given is tremendous, he is now going through much tribulation because of the revelation given to him. And it is all to our glory. It’s a heavy burden to carry. When he bends his knees and starts to pray, he prays for us, he prays for the church knowing this revelation will mean tribulation for us as well.

“Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is name,” (3:15) That includes all of those who are in Christ. In chapter 1 Paul establishes that all those who are in Christ are saved. Right here he is also talking about all of those who are in Christ. *“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;”* (3:16) Paul goes to his knees. He is praying to the Father, and he is praying for us. The example of self-denial and sacrifice is being exemplified in Paul’s own life. It is all to us-ward. That’s what he is showing us. Now he is praying that we be strengthened with might by the spirit in our inner man. And listen, the inner man is the weakest part of us. It’s the part of us that needs strengthened.

We naturally operate from the outer man. We are working all the time in our own strength, our own wisdom, our own natural abilities, and our own knowledge. We do most everything out of the flesh. We oftentimes attribute our actions to the Holy Spirit, only to find out later God was never involved. We starve when it comes to anything supernatural.

It is a mystery how it all comes together, fitly framed, formed together, and working. And if there is going to be a deeper understanding in the things of God, He will have to grow and expand our inner man. If we are ever going to get to a place of self-denial like the Apostle Paul, a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will have to start in the inner man. If we ever get to a place where it is no longer about us; rather, it’s about Christ living through us, our life will have to come to an end. It can’t be about us anymore, our secret ambitions, selfish desires, and covetous wants. It is all about Jesus and Him being able to live His life through us.

We are never going to get to that place unless we be strengthened within the inner man. Without this new strength coming up from the inner man, we will never be able to live a sacrificial life. Paul knows this and he is looking at us and says, “I am praying for you; I am on my knees and I’m praying to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he strengthens you with his Spirit in the inner man.” And that is what we need, because our outer man hates it and fights against it.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, the length, the depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with

all the fullness of God.” (3:17-19) This is Paul’s prayer for us, and it is going to come from the Spirit deep within our inner man, which conflicts with the desires of our outer man. But let this be our desire, that Christ may dwell in us. And listen, this is more than just being saved.

When you have been convicted of sins, and you repent, ask Christ to forgive you, and invite him into your life. You are now saved. Once saved the Spirit of God now dwells in you, but that doesn't mean that he reigns in you.

When it says, “dwells in your heart,” the word there for dwell means he has the rule of the house. He sets up his throne and has complete rule of the house. So, as believers, the inner man must deny himself and let Christ set up his rule in his house, where your house becomes His house. By faith you are being rooted and grounded in love. That love is sacrificial. Being able to comprehend with all the Saints what is the breadth, the length, the depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

This was brought up earlier in chapter two. Paul talked about the temple being a building fitly joined together, a “habitation.” Let’s look at it again. “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (2:22) The Spirit of God no longer dwells in temples made with hands, but he dwells within us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and he is forming us and building us.

Regarding the church there is also the concept of being fitly formed together with other believers. That house is being built as well, being built with other Christians. But here, he is talking about the sacrificial life of the Saints. This kind of knowledge comes from the Lord living through you. That kind of love is going to grow. It's going to go higher. It's going to be deeper. Just the breadth of it and the depth of it, imagine coming into that kind of knowledge. The longer you go with Christ, it just expands and expands and expands. It is growing more and more and more. And so, as you grow in that inner man, and you deny yourself that outer man, you will start experiencing more and more of Christ, of his grace, of his presence in your life. You will gain more and more spiritual knowledge of Him. You will grow in the love of Christ which passes knowledge. This knowledge will far surpass anything found in the world. All the fullness of the Godhead is found in Christ (Colossians 2:9). It is his desire for us to experience the fullness of God in Him.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” (3:20) Now see, here's the thing. You remember, the apostle Paul said that the things that came to him through grace he now gives to us-ward. It goes from him, through him, to us-ward. The same thing is expected of us. The process continues. It comes to us, and then through us, then out to others. *“Unto Him be glory in the Church of Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (3:21)*

Great word right there. In that last verse, we visit the thought again, “unto him be glory.” In the high priestly prayer, found in John chapter 17, Christ says, “I have glorified thee (the

Father) now glorify me.” “Bring me back into my glory.” The way Jesus glorified the Father was by dying. He glorified God through suffering. How do you suppose we are going to glorify God? We don’t glorify God by living our own life. It will be through our sufferings.

“Unto Him be glory in the Church of Christ Jesus throughout all ages.” (3:21) This is what the church is being called into, and we are trying to avoid it with everything we have in us. But go back to verse 13. He says, “wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Can you see?

Paul says, “my tribulations, the sufferings that I go through is your glory.” It is to our glory. If I suffer for you, that is your glory. If you suffer from me, that is my glory. If we suffer for Christ, that is his glory. Amen. And listen, you must be strengthened in the inner man. We are not there. We are falling way short in this area. We need to be strengthened in the inner man because everything I just said, your outer man wants to reject. But you have just heard the truth. This is divine revelation that comes from heaven to you. Pass it on.

Part Three:

Our Part

Chapter Four (Ephesians 4:1-16)

We continue our survey of the book of Ephesians by picking up chapter four. This chapter will be divided into two lessons. The first lesson is going to be from verse one to verse 16, and then the next lesson will pick up at verse 17 to the end of the chapter. You remember in the first two chapters of Ephesians; it is primarily dealing with the doctrine of salvation and how salvation is going to be found in Christ. In chapter two, he talks about the mystery of the new man and how the church is going to be comprised of both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Both Jew and Gentiles are saved the same way. Both get saved through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And that's the mystery that was first revealed to Paul.

In chapter three Paul talked about his part in the advancement of the Gospel and of the church. Remember, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. His target audience would have been Gentile believers. And so, he emphasized the Gentiles as being included in this new man, the church. Chapter four onward is going to be our part.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (4:1-3)
When it comes to our part, there is some work to do.

We need to walk worthy of the vocation of our calling. Of course, we are not talking about our worldly vocation, or the job God gives us to provide for our family. That is our vocation as far as the world is concerned. But we have another vocation, it's the vocation of our calling. It has to do with what we are supposed to be doing in the advancement of His gospel and of His Kingdom. And so, this is very, very important. There is something he wants us to do, and he tells us to walk in it.

We need to be about doing something. This relationship we have with Christ involves us walking in it, living it, doing it. And here's the deal, every born again baptized believer is called into ministry. God has saved you. He gives you the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit comes in, He gives gifts. These gifts are to be developed and exercised. We have gifts, we have talents, and they are to be used in the context of ministry.

Paul is going to continue with this thought through the next sixteen verses. But first he says, “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” And that's what it will look like when we walk in the vocation of our calling.

These characteristics should be evident in every believer's life. The first one being lowliness. In some translations it says humility and that would be correct. However, I like the word “lowliness” King James uses. It has to do with the way we view ourselves compared to others. We are supposed to esteem others higher than ourselves.

You don't see much lowliness being practiced in the church today. You see a lot of false humility, but that's nothing more than pride. Yes, even in the church there is pride, arrogance and offensive behavior. Granted, the Word of God can be offensive; but it's almost like people now enjoy being the offense rather than the Word. Everybody thinks they are smarter than everyone else and no one values the opinions of others. Most people only value their own opinions reached by doing quick Google searches. Everyone is an expert in their own mind on any given topic. There is a serious lack of humility in the church, and I tell you what, it is especially bad among pastors. Once again you see plenty of false humility among clergy, false humility is pride.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, we are supposed to practice lowliness when carrying out the function of ministry. Walking in the calling wherewith we are called is going to begin with humility. That's the number one desired quality of every born-again believer. We must exhibit more humility. It's the number one quality of any good leader, especially those in Christian leadership. The number one quality of any pastor should be that of humility or lowliness of mind. We should think more highly of other people than we do ourselves. We can't be looking down upon people; rather, we look to elevate them and bring people up. We all tend to view ourselves higher than we ought, and we don't see others as we should either. So, walk in lowliness.

The second thing mentioned here is meekness. You are probably familiar with the word "meekness," Meekness does not mean weakness. Meekness has to do with being able to submit yourself. We must listen to the Lord, be willing to follow his orders and not complain about it. You just put your head down and plow forward with whatever God has put before you.

I have heard this explained as being like a war horse. A war horse will take its commanders orders and then run headlong into battle and not flinch because he is submissive to the rider upon him. We are supposed to be like that War Horse. This demonstrates incredible strength. Jesus himself is described as meek and lowly. We don't view Jesus as being weak. We see this as one of his greatest strengths. Meekness should be one of our strengths as well.

The next word he emphasizes is "long-suffering." It means to have patience. I like that word "long-suffering" when it pertains to our Christian calling. Our calling is sometimes difficult, it may involve hardship, there can be suffering involved. God's calling is not based on our ease and comfort. One of the qualities we must have is the ability to suffer long. We don't give up. We don't quit. Whatever the Lord puts before us we endure.

Have you ever prayed to God for special provision, something like a job? You will say, "Lord, give me a job." You might even ask for a specific job. Then He gives you a job and within two weeks you're saying, "Lord, Get Me Out of here!" "Give me another job!" We are always tempted to quit. Ministers are always looking for something better as well. They will pray for

God to move them. Then when God relocates them, they pray, “Get Me Out of Here!” They prayed for God to get them out of the last spot, and when he did, they were not happy there either. But that's the way we are. Most people don't have what it takes to suffer long in their calling anymore. Churches that are built on good times won't make it either. We need to be able to suffer long because hard times are coming.

Then the Apostle Paul brings up forbearance, “forbearing one another in love.” I like that word “forbearance.” It means we should bear with one another. This individual quality is greatly needed today. Don't be easily offended, give the benefit of the doubt to other believers, don't shut people down or call them stupid.

People are too easily offended these days, by almost everything. The most innocent of comments and you can be accused of being a hater, or a racist, or whatever. Sometimes people misspeak or say something in a way that was never intended. Even when someone says something that might be offensive; Well, just don't get offended. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Listen to what they are saying. They might have said something you take exception too but maybe it was just out of ignorance. Or perhaps they just misspoke. Give people the opportunity to explain themselves.

One time I was preaching a Mother's Day sermon and one of my points was that Satan hates women. But when I was preaching, I slipped, and I said God hates women. I intended to say Satan hates women, but I messed up, and I said God hates women. And if one time wasn't bad enough, I repeated it. Then I paused for a moment. Yeah, something didn't sound right. The people who know me and love me knew I had misspoken. I had said something wrong and was in error. But don't get offended by it. And there were some people who were offended and it's easy to see why. Give me an opportunity to explain or be corrected.

If my heart was really like that and I was intentionally being offensive that might be another thing, but I am not like that. The people who know me, when they hear what I said, I could tell by their expressions I had messed up. So, I had to come back and stumble all over the place trying to correct myself. Then I probably spent two months apologizing for what I had said. But the whole deal is, take what I mean, not necessarily what I say. And even if I say something that might be offensive, please give me the benefit of the doubt. We need to be better at just forbearing one another. Have some grace. We are all capable of saying and doing stupid things.

Then Paul connects forbearance with love. The word used for love is “agape.” This kind of love is very sacrificial. We are supposed to be sacrificial when we walk out the vocation of our calling. Agape love is the kind of love Christ has for us. It's the same kind of love we should have for one another. Our love for each other should be sacrificial.

Paul then adds, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” How are we going to do that? The way we endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace

is by walking in lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering and forbearance. Unity is something that is very difficult to maintain. The challenge for us here is to “keep the unity.”

Unity is of the Spirit. The same Spirit that dwells in me, dwells in you. The same Holy Spirit that dwells in you also dwells within fellow believers. And so, we share something in common. We might have differences of opinion on nonessentials, but the Spirit will unify us around objective truths. There is always the possibility of friction within the body, but unity is in the Holy Spirit found within us. This verse assumes the Holy Spirit's presence, and it assumes unity already exist. But unity is fragile, and can be lost so easily, that is why we must work at maintaining it. Maintaining unity makes all these qualities, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance, even that much more important.

Peace is also something you must work toward. It's something we must labor at. There is a verse, Psalms 34:14, that tells us to “seek peace and pursue it.” We are supposed to seek it out. We are to pursue peace just like we would an education, or a career. If “unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” is a real goal, we would pursue it just like we would any other objective goal within the church.

Now look at 4:4-6, and every time you see the word “one” make note of it, circle it with a pencil or something. *“There is **one** body, and **one** Spirit, even as you are called in **one** hope of your calling; **One** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **One** God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (4:4-6)*

Can you see how the word “one” is prominent right there? This goes back to unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. It's talking about the oneness we have in God. The Apostle Paul is also pointing out the Trinity. There is unity in the Trinity, The Father, Son, Holy Spirit. This indicates that doctrinal unity is important. So far Paul has addressed the doctrine of salvation, the church, God, and now the Trinity.

Then we have the whole faith, hope, and love thing working out here. You see where it says, one hope, one faith, and one baptism? I am thinking baptism relates to agape love, but it can also reference the love mentioned up in verse two. The whole point being we are one in Christ. And that takes us back even to the doctrine of salvation at the very beginning of the letter. It also takes us back to the whole new man concept that we looked at in chapter two. The church is being made one in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, one in Christ.

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, wherefore he sayeth, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to all men.” (4:7-8)

God gives spiritual gifts to every saved person. He gives each individual different gifts or may even give the same gift in different proportions. But everyone receives gifts as God sees fit. I want you to go back on your own sometime and read 1Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans

chapter 12. Those two chapters are very important in our understanding of Spiritual gifts. I am going to include a few selective verses from 1Corinthians.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” (1Corinthians 12:4-6)

You see in those verses the Trinity once again. We have the Spirit, the Son, and the Father. It is the Spirit who gives the gifts (verse 4). The Lord is the one who assigns the ministry (verse 5). Then there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all (verse 6). God the Father is the one responsible for the results. Look at it again. The Holy Spirit gives you the gifts, the Lord gives you the ministry, and the results are left up to God.

In both 1Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 there is a list of different gifts that people are given. Everyone in the body is given gifts. Not everyone has the same gift, but they work together. When brought together they function as a body. There is no member any greater than the other. It takes all members working together and functioning properly to carry out the mission and ministry of the church. With that in mind look at Ephesians 4:7 again.

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:7) These gifts are given as Christ would have us to have them. Over in 1Corinthians we read much the same thing. *“But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1Corinthians 12:11)* The idea is you don't get to pick and choose what gifts you have. God is the one who gives those gifts, and he'll give them in proportion as he sees fit.

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (1Corinthians 12:18) So, not only do you not get to pick the gifts you receive from the Holy Spirit, but you also don't pick the ministry you are called too either. That is something the Lord assigns.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

And so, here's the deal. He gives every person gifts. He then turns around and gives some of those gifted people back to the church for a particular office, but all believers still retain the function of ministry. For instance, he says he gave some to be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. There may only be a few who have the office of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher; but every born-again believer still has the function. The office holders are limited. There are qualifications and disqualifications when it comes to the offices, but every person has the function, and the only qualification is you must be born again.

For instance, when it comes to apostles, there is only a certain number of apostles and when the last apostle died that office came to an end. But the truth is we all have an apostolic function, and it has to do with missions. The function of the apostle is still working today in our missionary efforts. There are some people who are called specifically to be a missionary to a specific people group, but every believer is supposed to be involved in missions. The office holders are few, but the function includes everyone.

How about prophets? We no longer have prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah today, but the church still has a prophetic function. We are supposed to be going before the people, including our government leaders, with “thus sayeth the Lord.” “This is what the Word of God says.” It was the prophets who stood before the king with a Word from God and a message of repentance. Sadly, the church has lost much of its prophetic function in the world. There might be a few people with prophetic gifts within the church, but we don't have the office anymore; However, we still have the function.

Then there is evangelist. Not every person has the gift of evangelism, but every believer has the responsibility to evangelize. That is given to us in the Great Commission. How about pastors and teachers? God gives you a pastor and generally it's just one person God has set aside to fill that role of pastor. The pastor is called to equip the flock, protect the flock, lead the flock, and teach the flock. But there are other people within the congregation who have pastoral gifts, they just don't have the office, nor should they even seek it. Remember, the office has qualifications and is restricted but the function does not. The only qualification to the function is you must be born again. What is supposed to happen, in a congregationally lead church, is the congregation and the pastor come alongside each other, and the ministry is shared.

The same thing is true with teachers. There is generally more than one teacher in every church. The pastor is often seen as being the head teacher, which is true, but there are other gifted teachers present as well. Granted some people have no business teaching but generally there are other teachers around who can share the responsibility. It also helps protect against error because multiple teachers tend to keep each other in check.

It's all for a purpose, *“for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* If we are using our gifts, where we are supposed to be using them, actively advancing the Gospel, the church will be advanced as well. The ministry is being carried out, not by professional clergy, but by all God's people. It's a picture of shared ministry, with common goals, and common purposes. And man, that's the way it's supposed to work. This is a very hopeful kind of thing for me. If we could only figure this stuff out, think of what could be accomplished. We are sitting around here not doing half, not even half, of what we are expected to do.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith,” there's that word unity again, *“and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,”* this perfect man can be connected to the new man

concept we talked about earlier, *“unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:” (4:13)* that's our goal right there. *“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie and wait to deceive;” (4:14)*

In this type of unity, there seems to be a system of checks and balances. You listen to each other, you value each other. It has a way of weeding through the deception, weeding out the garbage. Sound doctrine tends to prevail. There are people who come to deceive. They come to lie, cheat, steal, and destroy. And when that comes into a church, it will play havoc upon the fellowship. If deceptive theologies and heresy come into a church, one of the signs is a fractured fellowship. And so, we must be on guard against such things. It is good for the church to be functioning and working as a body, that we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. We must grow up into that perfect man.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” (4:15) This is a wonderful thing to think about. When we are concerned about lies and deception, and the church is working as a body, there is a healthy interaction taking place between believers. We often err in two different ways. We will either speak the truth minus love or we will love minus truth. But, when lowliness, meekness, long-suffering and forbearance come into play, it affects the way we interact with each other. We will grow up into Christ, which is our head.

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

When there is unity, there is supply being made in the union, there is supply being made to each other. I compare it to a married couple. In my marriage there is supply being made to both me and my wife in the union. The same thing is supposed to be happening within the body of Christ.

Then you begin to see health, healing, and growth. When these things are being walked out and lived in, healing takes place. You experience healing in the body. Just like your natural body can heal itself, the church can be healed. We go to the doctors and take our medicines but it's God that brings about healing. All healing comes from God.

Paul is telling us how to bring healing to the body. There is the natural ability for the body to heal itself. What God prescribes is for us to, *“walk in the vocation wherewith we are called, in lowliness, and meekness, and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.”* Keep the spirit of peace in the unity of Christ. Exercise your gifts, share in the ministry, speak Truth in Love, and healing will happen.

Welch – Our Part

Healing can happen in a church where you never thought you would see it. If we are on path with the Lord, healing is going to take place. Then growth will take place because he says, “the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” And so right there he is telling us how the body can experience healing and growth.

Chapter 5 (Ephesians 4:17-32)

We will continue reading in the second half of Ephesians chapter 4, starting at verse 17. But, before we get there, I need to do a little house cleaning. I intentionally skipped two verses in the last lesson. They are Ephesians 4: 9-10. The reason I skipped them is because I was working upon a thought found in verse 8. *“Wherefore he sayeth, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto all men.” (4:8)* And so I talked about how God is the one who gives you gifts. You don't get to pick and choose. I then skipped down to verse 11. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.” (4:11)* We continued from there talking about spiritual gifts, gifted people, and the function of ministry.

I did not include verses 9 and 10 because they are parenthesis. It's just something Paul threw in because he made that comment about, “when he ascended up on high.” I believe he was thinking, “while I'm here I will briefly elaborate on that.” So, he adds what we read in verses 9 and 10.

“(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above the heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (4:9-10)

These verses are often linked with 1Peter 3:19 where Peter alludes to the fact that Jesus descended, and he preached to the spirits that were in prison. In the Old Testament there is one word to describe hell and that is the word Sheol. Sheol basically means the abode of the dead. They didn't really have a concept of heaven in the Old Testament as we think of today. Everyone who died went to the same place and it was called Sheol. Now, there was a good side of Sheol and there was a bad side of Sheol.

Think of the rich man and Lazarus story Jesus tells in Luke 16:19-31. Lazarus found himself in the comfort of Abraham's bosom while the rich man was in torment on the other side of the chasm. In the New Testament there are three different words translated Hell. The New Testament equivalent of Sheol is the word, Hades. The thought is there was a good side of Hades and a bad side of Hades. Jesus was going to be the first one to ascend into heaven. *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” (1Corinthians 15:20)* Following the resurrection, Christ would be the first one to enter heaven.

During the time between his death and his resurrection, it is believed Jesus descended into hell and brought those out that were his. There is something also about how Jesus preached to those that were in prison. I don't know exactly how it all plays out. I will leave you to draw your own conclusions, but that's my attempt at understanding the parenthesis. Those in hell now have no chance of it ever getting better. It will only get worse when they are brought out of Hell and tossed into the Lake of Fire.

We now pick up where we left off in the last chapter. *“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:” (Ephesians 4:17-18)*

Keep in mind Paul is talking to Gentiles. Paul looks at these Gentiles and he says don't act like those other Gentiles. He is reminding these saved Gentiles not to walk as they used to walk. You were once completely alienated from God living in darkness through your ignorance and the blindness in your heart.

Paul told them at the first of this chapter (4:1) to walk in the vocation of their calling. And then he gives a wonderful description of what that should look like. Now he is telling these same people, don't walk like you used to walk, in the vanity of your minds. He already told us (4:2) to walk with lowliness, meekness, long-suffering and forbearance. Vanity of the mind is the opposite of that. Vanity is self-exaltation characterized by selfishness. It is all about self. It is just opposite of the lowliness which God has called us to walk in.

Now here's the crazy thing. Everywhere I look, I see the vanity of the mind. Vanity is when we think like the world. It is a worldly kind of thinking. Lowliness, meekness, long-suffering and forbearance is the way God thinks. That is the spiritual way to think. I look at churches today, and I look at Christians, I hear what is being said, I see what is being done, and it's mostly vain worldly thinking. God is warning us here; I don't want you to walk like that. I want you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Don't think we can't fall back into the vanity of the mind. (4:18) This describes us. Don't go back there.

“Who being passed feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness and greediness.” (4:19)

There are those who have gone past feeling. They no longer have a conscience. Some translations say they have become callous. They have been given over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness. I am reminded of what Paul says in Romans. He says God will give us over to uncleanness, (Romans 1:24) vile affections, (1:26) and a reprobate mind. (1:28) That basically means we get to the point where we are no longer able to discern what is right and wrong anymore? That which is good has now become evil, and that which is evil has now become good.

Ephesians 4:19 says we can be given over unto lasciviousness. Lasciviousness is an interesting word. We look at this as believers and we don't think we could ever fall guilty of such a sin. However, God warns us of something in Jude 4.

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God in lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 4)

Anything labeled as lascivious is utterly filthy. There is a warning given here and it concerns grace. There are those who take the grace of God and turn it into lasciviousness. Now, think about that for a moment. How can we take something as beautiful as the grace of God and turn it into something filthy? The grace of God is a wonderful thing. None of us could be saved apart from the grace of God.

One way it happens is by continuing in sin. We can take those things God hates, or even calls an abomination, and somehow call it good. We can even develop our own little theologies that allow us to hold on to them. The church is falling guilty of this all over the place right now. We turn the grace of God into lasciviousness just by going out and living our own life and living like the world. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2)*

God is gracious and he does forgive. You can count on the grace of God. But when we have the mentality that we can live however we want, and God is going to forgive us. Well, that is turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. There is all manner of things God has called evil we now see as normal acceptable behavior. So don't look at this and think he's just talking about lost people here because the church is every bit as guilty of this lasciviousness stuff. Because we have not learned Christ.

“But ye have not learned of Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:” (Ephesians 4: 20-21)

Christians today know a whole lot about Jesus. We go to Bible studies, we read books, we read what other men have written. We know the history, background, and culture. We have verses memorized. We know a lot of the facts concerning Jesus. But there is a difference between being taught about Jesus and being taught by Jesus.

That last verse said, “If so, be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. (4:21) Now there is nothing wrong with knowing the facts about Jesus. But we must get to the point where it's the word of God teaching us with illumination from the Holy Spirit. Jesus can teach you theology, let him be your teacher.

I will give you an example. In the last chapter when we were challenged to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. (4:1-2) Well, how do you learn those things? How do we learn lowliness? And by lowliness, I mean humility. You won't learn humility apart from Jesus being your teacher. If we have an issue with pride the Lord will come along and bust us. The Lord has a way of humbling people. If we get too high on ourselves, he will come along and knock us back down to size. I don't know about you, but when I learn from the Lord it often involves pain.

Long-suffering is translated into patience. How do we learn patience? We learn patience through the things that we suffer. “The trial of our faith is more precious than gold.” (1Peter 1:7) We are told Jesus learned obedience by the things which he suffered. (Hebrews 5:8) How will you learn obedience? By doing your own thing? When praying for patience, I’ve heard it said, be careful what you pray for. Patience is learned the hard way. When you pray for patience, God will teach patience, with trials and tribulation.

Maybe you are a better student than I am. I am a slow learner and a little hardheaded. There are times when I think I know everything. I think I have everything figured out. Then the Lord will come along and knock me on the head with a two-by-four. Or whatever it takes to get me back on path. But it's the Lord himself who teaches these things and these things are often taught through pain and suffering. I wish it wasn't that way, and I hope you are a quicker learner than I am, but I tend to learn things the hard way. I am thankful for such a good teacher.

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Paul tells us to take the former man off and be renewed in the spirit of our mind. This reminds me of Romans 12:2, when he says, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” When the word of God gets in you, you begin to learn what God thinks. You start taking on the mind of Christ. (Philippians 2:5-8) When you start following the sacrificial life of Christ, the transformation of the mind begins. You will start thinking differently. Those ungodly things that used to make perfect sense to you, you will renounce.

Now, what I want you to see is that this is based upon choice. When Paul says, “don’t walk as other gentiles walk,” or “take off the old man and put on the new man,” this is a choice. God gives every person a free will. The downside to having free will is, sometimes we choose the wrong thing. We can go the wrong direction and blow it, either intentionally or unintentionally. Either way there are choices and decisions involved. The Christian Walk is made-up of choices and decisions. God tells us to take this off and put this on. He says, walk as you are supposed to walk, not as you used to walk. These are volitional choices.

In the trichotomy of man, man is made-up of body, soul, and spirit. In a lost person the will is in bondage to the flesh. A lost person is going to do what a lost person does every time. Even the little bit of good a lost person does is still carnal. But when the Spirit of God comes into a person, that bondage is broken. A believer is ontologically different, and the difference is the Holy Spirit. We now have decisions to make we could not make before. We are now free to choose. We can walk in the spirit or walk in the flesh. We can walk in the vocation worthy of our calling, or we can walk as the gentiles walk. We can take off the old man and put the new man on. When we start living for the Lord, and following him, a transformation

takes place. Our mind is being renewed, and we are becoming more like Christ. The further we go down that path, the more Christ-like we become. It is all based on the decisions we make, and God is the one giving us choices.

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.” (4:25)

A lot of times people read this, and they will focus on the lying part, but the point is we need each other. Just be honest with people, speak truth with your neighbor. Our witness and testimony for the Lord should be one of love and truth. This extends beyond our Christian brothers and sisters. This needs to be our witness to everyone.

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.” (4:26-27)

We are not supposed to hold grudges. God warns us in Hebrews, *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” (Hebrews 12:15)* If we are easily offended, or stay angry, Satan can use that to gain a foothold into our life. If bitterness or anger creeps into our spirit, we are disqualified from doing ministry. As believers we must deal with disappointments and anger properly or we risk giving place to the devil. Considering the previous verse, when we speak truth with our neighbor our motivation should be love and not anger.

It's not that we won't get angry. We see Jesus demonstrating anger when he ran out the money changers and turned over the tables. (Matthew 21:12-13) We know Jesus did not sin when he was angry because Jesus had no sin. So, there is such a thing as righteous anger, but there is still an element self-control. Jesus was not flying off the handle. We can't live in anger, become bitter, plot revenge, or get even, and I think that is what he is warning us of. Anger can quickly digress into sin if we choose to dwell in it.

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the things which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4:28)

These things are found in the ten commandments. “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15) And “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16) The point is, as Christians, we are called to a higher degree of righteousness than what the law requires.

Jesus gives us similar examples. “Ye have heard it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgement:” (Matthew 5:21) Here is another example, “Ye have heard it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”(Matthew 5:27-28)

We are called to a higher degree of righteousness than even what the law demands. You might say to yourself, “I have not killed anyone,” Well, good for you, but if you have hatred in your heart toward a brother you have already committed murder. You might say to yourself, “I have not committed adultery,” But if you look upon another person to lust, you have committed adultery in your heart.

I think of this when Sabbatarians push their Saturday worship. Sabbath does not mean Saturday, Sunday, or the Lord’s Day. It means holy, sanctified, set apart for God’s use. We are supposed to be that every moment of every day, not just Saturday or Sunday. I wish it meant a specific day, that way I could check it off my list and feel good about myself.

When it says, “do not bear false witness,” it’s not enough to just stop lying. You must also speak truth in love. And it’s the same thing when he says, “let him who stole steal no more.” It’s more than just not stealing. You might say to yourself, “I have not stolen anything,” but that is not enough. We are called to a higher degree of righteousness than not stealing. Rather, we are supposed to get a job that we might give to those in need. As the Lord blesses you, you bless others.

This is a thought that goes back to Ephesians 3. You remember when the apostle Paul told us what he had been given, he now sends us-ward? Revelation came to Paul, then through him, and on to us. We concluded that whatever God blesses us with, we are supposed to pass along and be a blessing to others. We are channels of blessings. The Lord has blessed you; he has given you a job. Not only are you able to provide for your family, but there is always enough for you to bless others.

Ephesians Chapter 4 ends by emphasizing “Our Part.” God has done his part, the Apostle Paul has done his part, this is what he now expects of us. Walk like this, not as the Gentiles do. Our lives are supposed to be distinctively different. We are supposed to take off the old man and put on the new man.

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” (Ephesians 4:29)

We have got to be careful of our words. Our words should not be used to tear down or to manipulate but to build up. Always strive to be truthful, be honest, speak the word of God, know the mind of Christ. We shouldn’t be expressing ourselves in anger. Speak words that are edifying to the hearer.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (4:30) I think corrupt communication wearies God.

I have heard this preached before; how corrupt communication wearies God. I believe it’s true. I remember in my younger days I said a whole lot of things that were hurtful, probably still do. I have been destructive in my preaching. I used to do a lot of yelling. We need to be

careful of that sort of thing. Most of my yelling was just out of frustration. When I didn't think anyone was listening, I would get frustrated. Out of frustration I would get louder and louder until I was practically yelling at people.

As preachers we sometimes demand attention, and we want people to listen. We will try to command authority. What I have discovered is when you have the authority, in our case the Word of God, we don't have to do all the yelling. The authority is just there. I suppose if we are easily excitable, or very passionate about something, we might still get a little loud but once we start using our words to tear down it will grieve the Holy Spirit no matter the volume. I think theatrics used to manipulate also wearies God.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:” (4:31)

This must really be important because he is warning us of bitterness, wrath, and anger again. Don't let any root of bitterness enter you, because once bitterness enters, you are not good for anything. You will become defiled and disqualified from doing ministry.

Therefore, “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (4:32)

I come back to the point that our Christian Walk is made up of choices and decisions. It is possible to walk worthy of Our Calling, but it's a choice. Think about it, don't walk as the gentiles walk. Choose to take off that old man, put on the new man. Be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Be subject to the word of God. Let Jesus teach you. Don't be dishonest, don't tell lies, but speak truth to your neighbor, love your neighbor. Don't steal but go get a job and work with your hands and be generous. These are choices we make along the way. We chose to believe, and we chose what to believe.

Yes, we have a sin nature, but the Holy Spirit now resides in us. We are now free to choose, do I walk in the flesh, or do I walk in the Spirit? Every time you are overcome with anger, that is a choice. Every time you tell a lie; you choose to tell that lie. You can choose to bless your neighbor, or you can choose to curse your neighbor.

Love is a choice. Forgiveness is a choice. I can choose to be offended or choose not to be offended. I can give people the benefit of the doubt. There is a decision involved when exercising patience. Making bad choices will harden your heart. A lifetime of bad choices will pile up with terrible consequences at the end.

Chapter 6 (Ephesians 5:1-21)

“Be therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becoming Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: But rather giving thanks. (Ephesians 5:1-4)

Ephesians chapter five picks back up talking about the importance of our words. Chapter four instructs us not to speak words that slander; Rather, speak words that edify and build up the hearer. The importance of words continues in chapter five. We must replace our filthy, foolish, jesting with words of thanksgiving. This takes conscience effort.

This chapter also continues with the importance of decisions of choice. Put on the new man, take off the old man. That is a choice and there are decisions involved. The old man is characterized by speaking lies, being angry, and stealing. The new man is characterized as being truthful, loving, not angry or bitter, he works hard, and is generous. There is a compare-and-contrast thing going on and it continues into chapter five. So, make good decisions and choose rightly.

In verse one Paul reminds us we are God’s children. As God’s children we should want to please Him and obey Him. Paul tells us to walk in love as Christ has loved us. The word used for love is “agape.” Agape love is selfless and sacrificial. If our life is going to be a sweet-smelling savor to God, it too must be selfless and sacrificial. Once again, we can see the compare-and-contrast between the old man and the new man. Fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are selfish worldly kinds of love. It’s all the old man was capable of, whereas Godly love is very sacrificial.

Let’s consider what it means to be a “follower of God.” Jesus himself gives us clear instructions. *“And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it.” (Luke 9:23-24)* No one can follow Christ while living their own life or doing their own thing.

To be a follower of Christ, you first must deny yourself. This means you can’t go where you want to go or do what you want to do. A disciple of Jesus doesn’t get to do his own thing. He does God’s thing. Your life is no longer yours. Jesus now lives his life through you. After you deny yourself then you can pick up the cross. The cross is very, very sacrificial. But you will never get to the sacrificial part of following Jesus until you first deny yourself. These things are sequential. First deny yourself, then pick up the cross, and then and only then are you able to follow Jesus. Today there are many believers, people who are saved, going to heaven, and trusting Jesus for their salvation, yet they have never reached the point of following him. They haven’t even got past the first step of self-denial. Much is being lost here. *“For this ye*

know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:5-7)

Now here is the problem. I see all kinds of Christians participating in all manner of filthiness, foolishness, uncleanness, being covetous and full of idolatry. Those things, he says, “Don’t let it once be named among you,” we do. While reminding us that no whoremonger, unclean person, covetous man, or idolater has an inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, we are eyeball deep in this stuff. There is a warning here even for believers.

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” (5:6) Now I want to share something with you here. The wrath of God is not going to come down upon the children of God, as far as being cast into hell and all those kinds of things. We are not counted among those in that kind of judgment as far as our personhood is concerned. Lost people will have to stand before the Lord and give an account of their personhood, whether they are saved or not. Believers made that decision; they chose Christ and are the children of God. However, even the children of God will have their works judged. When a true believer stands before the Lord it’s not going to be an issue of whether we are saved or not. The issue will be our works.

Just like the wrath of God is going to come down upon the children of disobedience; Well, the wrath of God is going to come down upon our works. Our works will be judged. Now, that should strike some fear into your heart. Let me remind you of something here. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, for what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so by fire.” (1Corinthians 3:11-15)*

Our salvation, as far as justification is concerned, is not based upon work but works count for something. It is going to be to our shame, it will be an embarrassment to stand before the Lord having wasted our salvation. Think of all your life’s pursuits, all the selfish wants, selfish gain, your covetous desires, the time spent trying to please the world rather than live for God. All that is going to be put to the fire. The wrath of God is going to come down upon our works and we will suffer loss. You will get into heaven, thank God for that, but you will still suffer loss. That is why we need to be living for the Lord now, learn of him, follow him, get on His path for life. Followers of Jesus become more like him with every passing moment. Walk in agape love, be sacrificial, let the mind of Christ be in you. Deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Jesus. Only then do our works add up to anything.

There is a strong warning here for us not to be counted among the children of disobedience. *“Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:7)* The wrath of God is going to come down upon them.

We have other warnings like this in the Word of God. *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Revelation 18:4)* John is talking about Babylon, but God is warning his people not to be sitting in Babylon when judgment falls upon it. If God’s people are found in Babylon when judgement falls, they will suffer right along with Babylon. You don’t want to be where the judgment of God is coming down.

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:8-10)

We are supposed to be light; Jesus is light. God is light and in him is no darkness. (1John 1:5) We should be reflectors of that light. We are told to walk as children of light. Earlier he said, “be ye followers of God as dear children.” Now it’s “walk as children of light.” Now here’s the crazy thing. There are Christians today, all over the place, not contributing anything to the light. They are not walking in the light. They are walking in darkness, and they even contribute more to the work of darkness than they do light. There is plenty in 1John concerning this. *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all unrighteousness.” (1John 1:6-7)* We don’t want to be contributors to darkness. But there are plenty of professing Christians today doing exactly that. We need to let our light shine amid darkness and not be counted among those doing evil.

“And have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:11)

This reminds me of when Paul addresses being unequally yoked, “what communion hath light with darkness.” (2Corinthians 5:14) Here he says, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Our presence should be a reproof to darkness if we are walking in the light, as He is the light. We are not the light; Jesus is the light. But if we are walking in Him our lives should reflect it. And so, our very presence is reproof to darkness.

There are times when our presence is like judgment to people. They will hate it. If you are an actual Bible believing, living it out, kind of Christian, and since light is a reproof of darkness, you can easily be hated. It will be like judgment to others. But that is exactly what we are supposed to be, a reproof to darkness.

“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” (Ephesians 5:12) Have nothing to do with the things of darkness. All kinds of sin takes place in secret places of darkness.

There are some things I'm better off not knowing. I don't need to know everything. I am better off being ignorant about some things. There are some places I'm not supposed to go. There are some things I'm not supposed to see. There are some things I should not be saying. There is that element of holiness, as far as our behavior is concerned, we should be striving for. *“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:” (1Peter 1:15-17)*

There are times I will hear a word, some modern-day slang, and I will wonder what it means. So, I will go online to look it up. I will type the word in only to discover it has some kind of perverted sexual meaning or something. Oh, I didn't need to know that. I would have been better off not even bothering to look it up. There's a reason I didn't know the meaning. Some things we are just better off not knowing.

“But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” (Ephesians 5:13) And once again, that is supposed to be us. We should be reproof to the darkness, by just being in the light and walking as children of light. Christians are not much of a reproof anymore because we no longer walk as children of light, and our lives manifest it. The Christian witness is dimming. Allow the Word of God into your life, believe and follow Jesus, walk as children of light, and let your light shine.

“Wherefore he sayeth, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light:” (Ephesians 5:14) Wake up Church! Wake up Christian! Before it is too late! Arise from the dead! And Christ shall give you Light!

I want to go back to a previous thought found in this chapter. “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” (Ephesians 5:6) Vain words go like this: “don't worry about it,” “God loves you,” “He's not going to be upset with you,” “You will never suffer lose,” “He did all the dying so we can do all the living,” “It's okay to be vulgar and profane,” “No evil will come upon you.” That is vain foolish talk.

When someone is speaking peace, when there is no peace, these are lying deceptive words. Real peace comes through repentance and believing in Jesus and His Word. You can't participate in works of darkness and think you are safe. This is worldly thinking that leads to vanity of the mind. We can be led astray by the vanity of our own imaginations where we think God approves of everything we do. Listen, our lives are not ours to live. Our lives must come to an end. To walk as children of light we must let Jesus live his life through us.

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of God is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The hour is late. It is getting dark. Isaiah speaks of a darkness covering the earth and even gross darkness upon the people. (Isaiah 60:2) Granted this is Old Testament and a reference to Israel, but the idea of gross darkness being upon the people is applicable. There is darkness, but then there is also gross darkness. Gross darkness is the type of darkness you can feel. You can smell it. You can taste it. The darkness is so thick our senses detect it.

There are references in the Bible to the Lord’s return being at the midnight hour. (Matthew 25:6) I don't think this literally means he is going to show up when the clock strikes midnight, but it's reference to how dark things are spiritually. We need to be about redeeming what little time we have left. We are quickly running out of time. Time is no longer a luxury. Don't be stupid with your time. Be wise, understanding what the will of the Lord is. I have a strong sense of urgency. Whatever we are supposed to be doing, we better be doing it now. Don't waste your salvation. We better be figuring this stuff out and we better figure it out now.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein in excess; but be filled with the Spirit:” (Ephesians 5:18)
OK, I want to talk to you about being filled with the Holy Spirit for a moment. The verse directly before this one said, *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (5:17)* There is a connection between being filled with the Holy Spirit and the will of God.

When you are saved, you receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in you. You are not going to get any more of the Holy Spirit. But there are these moments where people are described as being filled with the Spirit. Even in the Old Testament, there is at least one guy who is described as filled with the Spirit. His name is Bezalel who served as sort of a contractor God used to build the Tabernacle. (Exodus 31:3) What that means is he was gifted at a specific task, he was given a task to perform, at a certain time. So sometimes being filled with the Holy Spirit has to do with a specific calling, at a specific time, for a specific purpose.

But now in the New Testament, we have the Holy Spirit in us because we have accepted Christ. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was with you. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is not only with you, but He is also in you. And then we have times when a person is described as filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't understand it all, but it appears to me that every time in the New Testament someone is described as filled with the Holy Spirit, at that moment they are 100% in the will of God. For instance, when Stephen was stoned, it says, *“he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55)* Talk about a sacrificial walk, as he is being stoned, Stephen looks up, being filled with the Holy Spirit, he sees the Lord standing

to receive him. That is a powerful image, and that's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At that moment Stephen was 100% in the will of God.

There are books written about how to know and do the will of God. There are countless number of articles and books on what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't pretend to understand it all and I can't explain it. But what I want you to see, right now, is that being filled with the Holy Spirit relates to being in the will of God.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein in an excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit; Speaking to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;” (Ephesians 5:18-19) One of the evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit is joyfulness.

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (5:20) Another characteristic of being filled with the Holy Spirit is being thankful. Not only are you joyful, but you are also thankful. Then he adds, *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (5:21)*

So, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will have joy, you will be thankful, you will be submissive, and you will fear God. I know plenty of believers who possess none of these qualities.

Chapter Seven (Ephesians 5:22-6:9)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:22-27)

Wonderful word right there. In the previous verse (5:21) Paul told us submission is one of the signs of being filled with the Spirit. Now he is going to elaborate on what submission looks like. The first thing I want to draw attention to is the relationship between Christ and his church. It says here that Christ is the head of the church. It also says he is the Savior of the body. And it says that the church is subject unto Christ. Christ is not subject to the church, rather the church is subject to Christ. Christ loves his church.

The Apostle Paul illustrates the relationship between Christ and his church, by comparing it to a husband and wife. We don't have much trouble with that until we get to the submission part, then we start stumbling all over the place. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord.” Here's the thing. We too often have a negative picture in our mind of what submission is. We see it as something bad and oppressive. But we don't think of submission to the Lord as oppressive, at least not as believers. But somehow when we see “wives submit to your husbands,” it gets twisted around to mean something negative.

But this goes back to 5:15-18, when he taught us to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” And he says, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.” And he goes right into, “be not drunk with wine, but being filled with the Holy Spirit.” Submission has to do with that “knowing the will of God” business. We need to be submissive to the will of God.

We have a free will, but it should always be our desire for God's will to prevail over ours, because it will. We must always be about knowing and doing the will of God. God's will should be embraced. Whatever that might be. So, being submissive to God's will is the same as embracing God's will. We should want it above anything else. We must embrace submission.

The church is expected to submit itself to the Lord. Well, that's a good thing. We just accept it and embrace it. The same thing is true when it says, “wives submit yourselves to your own husbands.” It's not intended to be oppressive. Otherwise, we have a completely wrong understanding of submission. Following the Lord is sacrificial, and it requires submission for all of us, just embrace that. He will call us to do some very hard things. So, wives, when

you see, “submit yourselves to your own husband,” this is something you have got to agree with. You grab on to this, embrace it, and accept it as being God's will for your life.

There is something else taking place here. You remember the original outline, chapters one and two were about the doctrine of salvation. That is God's part. Chapter three was the apostle Paul's part in advancing the church. Once we get to chapter four the focus is now on our part. Your home life, your family, the way we relate to each other as husband and wife, these things are a testimony to the goodness of God. The Christian's homelife is a witness to the world. It doesn't mean your family is perfect but there should be something distinctively different about Christian families as opposed to everyone else.

Ladies, if you are working in the public sector, and you are one of those who actually loves your husband, you have a good marriage, you speak highly, and reverence your husband, those other women you work with, they can't stand that. Or maybe you are a stay-at-home mom. Maybe you homeschool the kids. That requires a ton of sacrifice. Some people will be happy for you, but others might hate you because of it. They don't have any peace or happiness in their lives when it's void of Christ. They will pay extra close attention, watching how you handle things when crises come. It's almost like they are waiting for you to mess up. They want you to fail. They want to see you complain about your husband. It makes them feel better about themselves and their miserable existence.

The same thing is true for the men. Men, when you go to work, and you hear guys say derogatory things about their wives, that doesn't speak well of them at all. But when you come along as a Christian husband, and you love your wife, you edify her and speak highly of her, you tell everyone how blessed you are to have the wife you have, those other guys look at you like you're nuts. But one thing is for sure, they will be able to see the difference. I'm not saying your home life must be perfect. There is no way it can be, but your relationship with your wife reflects the relationship you have with the Lord.

The Christian home is a witness to the world and our marriages reflect the relationship that Christ has with His Church. So, we need to keep that in mind. He says, *“for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and Savior of the body.”* (5:23) Amen, agree with that. *“Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”* (5:24) And once again, men are not to be abusive. You don't put the old thumb screws down on your wife and make life miserable for her. That's not what submission means in marriage. Submission is not a forced kind of thing when it comes to home. It is done willingly, and there is fulfillment.

“Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands and everything.” (5:24) And then he says, *“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.”* (5:25) There is a lot more instruction here toward the men than there is to the women. He compares the love we have for our wife to his love for the church. Do you realize how much Christ loves the church? He died for it!

We are supposed to love our wives like that. *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”* (5:26) There is something about being under the Word of God.

The Word of God is refreshing. It's like taking a bath. There is something cleansing about it. Let me suggest you try something here. Try reading the Word of God or just speak the Word of God over your spouse. It will bless them. Don't use it as an opportunity to get your digs in, don't point out flaws, or what they ought to be doing. That's not the purpose of this exercise. That is abusive in and of itself. Learn together, grow together, love your wife, bless her, speak the words of God over her. *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* (5:27) That it might go well with you.

“So, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church:” (5:28-29) The Lord loves and cherishes the church. We are to love and cherish our wives. The Apostle Paul reminds us that husband and wife are one. We nourish and cherish our wives for the good of our own wellbeing.

If you are one who slanders your wife, or speaks badly of her, that doesn't reflect upon her. It reflects upon you. You are the one who looks like an idiot. If you are abusive, in any way, it is a very serious offence because it reflects upon the Lord. He loves and cherishes the church. There is a very public witness going out by the way you treat your spouse.

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (5:30-33)

Again, Paul references the one flesh relation found in the marriage union. “This is the reason why a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and the two shall be one flesh.” Let me also say this. This is the reason God hates divorce. God allows for divorce. Yes, there is biblical grounds for divorce. But God hates divorce. One of the reasons divorce is hated is because it doesn't fit into the model of him being savior of the body. Divorce messes the whole picture up. Divorce does not play into that at all.

We take these verses and tend to focus on the husband-wife relationship, but this all started out being about submission and how the church is subject to Christ. In the next verse he tries to bring it back around full circle. *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (5:32) The Apostle Paul brings in the marriage stuff to aid our understanding of Christ and his church. However, he knows our minds will automatically put emphasis on the husband-and-wife. Rightly so, he continues, *“Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

(5:33) It is important to the Apostle Paul, even as a single person, that married Christians get their act together. It is also my opinion that when our focus is upon the Word of God in the home, Christianity is less institutional.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long and on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Paul goes from talking about the husband-and-wife relationship to the children in the home, but even this illustrates, “submission in the fear of God.” (4:21) Again, the Christian home should be distinctively different from the rest of society. We have the whole picture drawn out for us. The husband is the head of the home. He is submissive to the authority of Christ. In fact, there is mutual submission in the fear of the Lord. Wives submit to their own husband, and now we have children obey your parents.

Today this is turned upside down, women are not going to submit to their husbands. Shoot, if anything, the men are expected to submit to their wives. The roles have been switched around, nothing as God intended. We often have a worldly view of the way things ought to be. We model rebellion, not submission. No one wants to be submissive to anything, much less be submissive to God’s will. Husbands are now submissive to wives rather than Christ. Wives rebel against any notion they are to be submissive to anything. And, instead of children obeying their parents, children are the ones running the place.

The modern family is completely upside down and dysfunctional, mainly because there is no order. Commit your life to Christ and be committed to your spouse. It's not saying your home has got to be perfect. But obedience starts early for a child, for good reason, “That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” (6:3) It’s just the right thing to do. The problem is that undisciplined parents cannot raise disciplined children. It is impossible.

There is a verse coming up that instructs Christian parents to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (6:4). We need to teach our children the fear of God, not just the love of God, but also the fear of God. And we begin when they are young. Submission is first learned from our parents, who should be modeling it. A child learns to submit their will to God by first submitting to their parents. The time will come when they no longer can get by on their parents’ faith. They will have to choose for themselves self-denial, sacrifice, and following Jesus. It doesn’t come naturally, it is learned. We raise our children in the way they should go, teaching them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. But we can only take them so far. At some point God takes over the raising. It is up to us to give God something to work with, so he doesn’t have to start with zero like he did me. Lessons learned tend to get a little harder the older we get.

Getting our part right impacts the whole world. As followers of Jesus, we don't live our own life. God gives us a free will, but to follow Jesus we must submit our will to Him. It all starts in that parent child relationship. Now as your children get older, they don't have to obey you as they did as children; However, they still must obey God. Part of obeying God is honoring our father and mother. My children right now are in their 30s. They are not going to obey me for anything. But at the same time, they still honor me as their father. Honoring God involves obedience, submission, and living a life pleasing to him. We need to learn how to properly honor God.

Father's Day just recently passed, and all three of my children publicly honored me. I am proud of them for that. I believe it is going well for them, and they will have a long life. Honor your parents. Honor them even if you don't think they deserve it. Some people have a hard time with this because they've been through an abusive situation. Finding a way to honor parents can occur simply by doing nothing else to dishonor them. They have already done much harm and disgrace to themselves. Honoring them doesn't mean you put yourself in an abusive situation or ever trust them again. Your parents may not even be saved for that matter, but God used them somehow to bring you up. You don't have to agree with their lifestyle or anything like that. The best thing any of us can do to bring honor to the family is turn things around and start living a God honoring life.

If we don't start teaching our children how to submit, obey, and give honor. The time will come when the police and judicial system will. They will be forced to submit, obey, and give honor against their will. We can spare our children a lot of pain by doing our part. *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (5:4)* We have all probably failed in some regard when it comes to this verse. Just don't be unreasonable when dealing with your children and don't lose your head. Some people will raise their children to be angry people. They will instill in them some type of bitter spirit or anger. It's like living under a curse. Be cautious and aware of that. Children will take our bad qualities and multiply them by ten. Don't be unreasonable, don't provoke them in anger, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We must raise our children up in the Lord, with a fear of God. We often focus on the love part but fail when it comes to the fear part. We must have both. It is like opposites of the same coin. If we love God, we will fear him, and if we fear him, we will love him. So, teach your children to both, love God and to fear God. When we do, reverence, respect, submission, obedience, and honor becomes instilled in them, impacting the future of the church.

With further emphasis on submission, Paul moves into the relationship between a servant and his master. *“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With*

goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall be received of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatenings: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.” (Ephesians 6:5-9)

Our part involves living a God honoring life in the workplace. The Apostle Paul addresses the relationship between servants and master. The King James version uses the word “servant”, but other translations say, “bond servant.” The Greek word is Doulos, and it means “slave.” Now, I know in this country we have the images of African slavery burned into our brains. But it's not exactly like that. The bond servant is different from that kind of slavery. However, it's not like there is a good kind of slavery and a bad kind of slavery, and in no way do these passages condone slavery, but we can gain insight into the way we relate to people in authority over us. The best comparison we can make today is how we relate to our bosses. Though keep in mind, we are instructed to be slaves of Jesus. In many of Paul's letters he identifies himself as a slave of Jesus. A slave does not get to do his own thing. He does his masters thing. Jesus has redeemed us and therefore he owns us, never lose sight of that. We benefit by having a good master.

Paul says to servants, “be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling and singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.” (6:5) Singleness of heart means you are focused on pleasing God. You are not out to please man, but you are out to please God. Pleasing God is the goal.

Just like the Christian's home ought to be distinctly different. There should be something distinctively different about Christians in the workplace. There should be something different about a Christian in every environment. A Christian in the workplace should be different than everyone else. The workplace these days is a hostile environment, but we are called to be lights in those dark places.

The difference is Christ in us. Now, there will be people who hate that. Lost people will hate it. Rebellious Christians might even hate it. Their hatred might be directed toward you personally. They might throw more work at you, and be more critical of you than anybody else. Some people can seemingly get by with murder. They can show up late, cheat the time clock, they can get caught doing something immoral and often get away with it. But let a Christian mess up one time and they will dogpile on you. Christians are held to a higher standard; that's for sure, but God holds us to a higher standard as well. It's our part in advancing His Kingdom. We are working to please Christ, not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. There is reward in it for us as well, “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” (6:8)

Now Paul has a word for the masters. Masters will be held accountable for the way they treat their servants. You can have a mean master, or a mean boss, or employer who

mistreats the people. Well, they will have to answer to God for the way they treat their employees. The boss is not getting away with anything.

“And, ye masters, do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening:” Don’t be threatening or abusive to the people under you. “Knowing that your Master, also in heaven; neither is their respect of persons with him.” (6:9) God is not so impressed you are the boss. He is no respecter of persons. There is no difference between you and the people working for you. I am thinking of Matthew Chapter 7:2. “For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with the measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

All those abuses and threats will come back and be used against you. No one is getting away with anything. In fact, the standard you use to judge is going to be used against you. So, if you find yourself as the boss, or the manager, or the one in authority, keep that in mind. God is not impressed. We are held accountable for how we treat others.

Chapter Eight: (Ephesians 6:10-24)

We are at the final lesson of our study in the book of Ephesians. If you remember, the last lesson spilled over into Ephesians chapter 6 talking about the Christian's family dynamic. We pick up now where we left off at verse 10 with a new thought. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the devil.*" (Ephesians 6:10-11)

When Paul says "finally," he wants us to reflect on everything we have talked about thus far in this letter. At first Paul was establishing the doctrine of salvation, how salvation is in Christ. Chapter 2 moved into sanctification. Then he started talking about the church and how God was going to take both Jew and the Gentile to form one new man. Both Jew and Gentiles get saved the exact same way, through a personal relationship with Jesus. Salvation is only found in Jesus. Then in chapter 3, Paul acknowledges his part in advancing the church through the Gospel and from Ephesians chapter 4 onward, this is our part in advancing the church, the Kingdom of God, through the gospel.

Half of this letter is our part, but we are held accountable for all of it. The Apostle Paul is trying to shore up some things for the church. God has done his part. The Apostle Paul has done his part; Now, it is our turn to do ours. With all that in mind, he says, "finally." We are getting to the end of this letter. What comes next will be vital to our success.

Satan is working hard to take you out. He wants to chop the legs out from under you. He opposes you. He opposes the church. He opposes the advancement of the gospel any way he can. If you are a born-again Bible believing Christian, who lives it, just know Satan is coming after you. What Paul tells us here is to anticipate the attacks and be ready. Put on the whole armor of God to stand against the attacks.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness in this world, against the spiritual wickedness in high places." (6:12) The wiles of the devil mean it's going to be a spiritual conflict, involving powers, principalities of powers, and spiritual darkness. Some people will oppose you just because of who you are. Worldly Christians don't pose much of a threat to Satan but the believers who are walking in it, and living it, your enemies will be numerous. You won't have to go looking for trouble, trouble will find you.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood; our battles are spiritual. We can have literal physical enemies. Our enemy can have a face. It might have a name. We can have human enemies. But the real enemy is not a person but the spirit animating the person. There are demonic forces, numbering in the millions, driving all manner of evil.

If an enemy is attacking me, and it's in a physical form, I can take a gun and I can shoot it and kill it, but the spirit that is animating it will just jump over into somebody else and keep coming. There is no stopping it. The attacks are continuous.

We see wave after wave of evil taking place in our nation today. We have mass killings that never seem to end, wave after wave of death. All of it is demonically driven. We have politicians trying to pass laws in an effort to curb the violence. Well, maybe you can to a certain extent, but there is no stopping evil with mere carnal weapons.

Let me remind you of this one. *“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2Corinthians 10:4-5)* We fight in the spirit to the tearing down of strongholds and our enemy, Satan, is all the time trying to build strongholds. He will build them in your home, your church, your family, even in your mind. These strongholds are designed to take us down. Be aware of the devil's many schemes and stay vigilant. Don't let your guard down. The attacks will come, and they will come from a multitude of different directions.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Ephesians 6:13-16) The fiery darts are coming, and you can't stop it from happening. But we have been given fair warnings and ample time to prepare. Ready yourself, be on guard, and put on the whole armor of God.

I am not going to spend much time explaining each piece of armor. I am sure you have heard multiple sermons, and Sunday school lessons on the topic. There are books written exclusively about the armor of God. I once had a three-volume set about the armor of God. So, there is plenty of good material out there. I am just going to quickly go over each piece one item at a time, using just a few sentences. Fundamentally, every component of the full armor of God is an element of sustained prayer. Each piece listed and explored below is a description of warfare prayer.

Paul admonishes us to put on the whole armor of God to withstand the evil day. He has already identified it as being an evil day. You remember, in a previous lesson he told us to “redeem the time for the days are evil.” (5:16) Stop wasting time. Make good use of your time because the days are evil. We live in an evil day, and evil increases with each passing moment. We must be able to stand in it or else we die.

We have got to be smart about things. We need to understand the schemes of the devil. We are supposed to take everything Paul prescribes in this letter and do it. And having done all

of it, then stand. Walk in it, stand in it, live it and believe God. Make up your mind right now to glorify God, and I promise, God will do whatever brings him the most glory. Can God be glorified in our trials, tribulation, and suffering? Yes, He can!

Often, when I talk with someone facing health issues, I will try to encourage them in the Lord. I remind them we must face everything God puts before us. When facing a difficult situation, we must look at it and say, “Okay Lord, what am I supposed to do?” God seems to guide us down certain paths. Sometimes there are decisions to make, other times there are not. We do all we are supposed to do. We go to the doctors, we take our medicines, we have our surgeries, sometimes these things are beneficial, other times maybe not. All healing comes from God, and after having done all that you know, then stand in it. Stand in it, and rest in the strength that comes in the power of his might. (6:10)

We stand in there having our loins girt about with truth. (6:14) I see this as an integrity issue. The belt of truth is often described as a girdle. The belt is what holds it all together. If I don't have my belt on, I look like a slob. But if I've got my belt on, I look like a soldier. The armour of God description is supposed to conjure up images of a soldier in our mind.

We must be all about the truth. Jesus is truth. We walk in truth, live in truth, truth in front of us, truth behind us, truth all the way around, on either side. There is too much dishonesty, too much lying and exaggeration. People grow weary of manipulation in the House of God and there is a ton of it. There is too much dishonesty in the world and once integrity is gone, it's gone forever. Once you are found to be a liar, or caught cheating, being deceptive and dishonest, ministry is over for you. If you are suspected of having selfish ambition or motives, it will erode people's confidence in you. Integrity is such an important issue for believers that once it's gone it's gone forever. You might be able to restore your reputation partially given time, but regaining trust must be earned.

I know guys who are gifted preachers and teachers, known for being theologians, but their integrity is gone. There is nothing they say I am going to pay much attention to. I might hear it, but I think to myself, yeah, but I know too much about this guy. His heart has already been exposed to me; therefore, I dismiss much of what he says.

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness” also relates to truth. (6:14) First of all we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. Justification is only found in the righteousness of Christ and not of any personal righteousness of our own. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. We are not justified by our own merit. We are deemed holy before God due to his righteousness. He has redeemed us, and he now owns us. Anything that belongs to God is holy. Only when justified in Christ are we declared righteous and holy.

However, our works are not righteous. Our works need to be brought up and sanctified before they are declared righteous. Sanctification of our works take place through self-denial, sacrifice, and following Jesus. Don't dismiss works. Good works are important and

add up to something. The power of a blameless life is worth pursuing. Someone might be able to falsely accuse you of something. But if your life demonstrates the righteousness of God, and you are living in truth, it will give validity to your words, and your witness, because there is no hypocrisy.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;” (6:15) I've heard this preached before where the gospel is what shod the feet. But it's not the gospel. It says, “the preparation of the gospel,” not the gospel itself. This represents you taking the gospel out. For example, “how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” (Isaiah 52:7) It has to do with taking the gospel into enemy territory. This is a work of righteousness. You are righteous. You are all about truth. Your integrity is not compromised. There is a powerful witness. You take this gospel message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, how salvation is in Christ alone, you take that message out in the power of God and stand in it. The attacks are sure to come, but the gospel still goes forth, and people get saved.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” (6:16) The fiery darts of the wicked are coming. It is a sure bet, but we have the shield of faith. I am reminded of the definition of faith found in Hebrews. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)*

These demonic forces, the powers and principalities of powers, all that spiritual darkness we have been talking about, well, guess what? I have never seen a demon. Not one I would care to elaborate on. I have never seen demonic forces with my own eyes. As far as I know, I have never seen Satan. I've never seen anything like that, but I know they are real. I have seen evidence of them. I have been under spiritual attack before, and I have seen other people under attack. Spiritual warfare is very real. There is evidence all over the place, and it's real. I have never seen Jesus. I have never seen angels, unless completely unaware, but by faith I know they are real. The Holy Spirit dwells in me, and I can see the evidence of it. I have never seen God with my own eyes, but I see the evidence. The shield of faith speaks toward things like that.

But then there is also the substance of things hoped for. I am hoping for heaven. My hope points toward glorification. I hope to be with Jesus where he is. My hope is eternal and it's out there in the future. So, I set my mind on following Jesus, a life of self-denial and sacrifice. (Luke 9:23)

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” (Ephesians 6:17) I have heard this described as being the assurance of salvation, or the security of the believer. That very well might be part of it, but that's not all of it. I think it has to do with getting your thinking straight. Our thinking gets straight with good theology. We must have sound theology. The helmet of salvation takes us back to chapter one of this study. Do you remember how the first of this letter is all about the doctrine of salvation? We were taught how salvation is in Christ. Doctrine is very, very important. And so, we have got

to have a good solid theology. Where there are weaknesses in our theology, the enemy attacks. The most vulnerable spot for Satan to attack is where our thinking is messed up. The enemy is going to attack the weak areas of theology in our mind. Bad theology is detrimental to our wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. We have got to get our thinking straightened out. Put on that helmet of salvation and keep it on.

That is true concerning every piece of armor. From here on out, keep it on. I mean, you sleep in it, you swim in it, you never take it off. If you ever take it off, weaknesses will be exposed. Satan will come, and he will attack you in those unprotected areas.

A lot of people look at the Armor of God and they think defensively. But at the same time, there is a lot of offensive strength in it as well. Just like when we take the gospel into the enemy's territory, that is being aggressive. I have a story of how preaching the gospel literally saved my life. I have a few stories like this, but I will share only one.

It is never a good idea to go street witnessing by yourself, especially at night. But one evening my wife had made a pot of stew and I decided to take the leftovers under a bridge where homeless people sometimes hung out. I took my thermos of stew and started walking under the bridge when I startled someone. A Mexican man was sleeping at the top of the embankment just under the bridge. He accidentally dropped his beer, and it rolled all the way down the concrete embankment breaking when it hit the bottom. The man came up cussing in Spanish. The only Spanish words I know. He told me I was going to buy him another beer. I told him I was not buying him any beer and I started walking away. I instantly realized it was a dangerous situation. I was alone at night with a half crazed drunk. As I turned to walk away, he grabbed hold of me, spun me around, and held me by the collar, demanding money. I reached into my back pocket and pulled out a New Testament. I told him I was there to talk to him about Jesus. He looked at me confused. I asked him if he had ever asked Jesus to forgive him and invited him into his heart. He opened his shirt and showed me a Jesus tattoo on his chest. "No," I said, "I'm not talking about a picture of Jesus on your body." While thumping him on the chest with my finger, I said, "I want to know if Jesus lives in you." That's as far as the story goes. He was too drunk to reason with. I prayed for him, and he had calmed down enough to let me exit. Sometimes preaching the gospel will get you into trouble but other times it might get you out of trouble. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Some of these defensive weapons are a little more offensive than we give them credit. We can deflect off the attacks if we have these things on our person.

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. The word of God has got to be in us, so that when the Lord needs it, he can pull it out of us. The word of God is essential in our spiritual warfare. The best example is found in the temptations of Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11) Following Jesus' baptism, he was led of the Spirit and tempted by Satan forty days in the wilderness. The first time Satan comes up to him, Jesus was hungry having fasted from food for 40 days. Satan

tempts Jesus by saying, “If thou be the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.” Jesus answers back with Deuteronomy 8:3, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Jesus used the Word of God to deflect the fiery darts. When under attack use the Word to deflect the lies of the enemy.

Not only can you use the Word of God to deflect the attacks, but you can also thrust with it. The second time Satan tempts Jesus, Satan himself uses scripture. The devil takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempts him to jump by quoting Psalm 91:11-12. “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Jesus fires back with the Word of God, this time he is not only deflecting but thrusting. “It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

In the third temptation Jesus takes the sword, and while still deflecting, he fully thrust with it. The devil takes Jesus to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world. He tempts Jesus by insinuating he doesn’t have to die to come into his kingdom. Satan told Jesus he would give him all the kingdoms of the world. All Jesus had to do was to fall and worship him. With an offensive thrust Jesus says, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The devil then leaves. The temptation of Jesus is a good illustration for the armor of God. After having done all to stand, Jesus stands, and walks out his calling all the way to the end.

Back to Ephesians, the Apostle Paul moves into the prayer part. *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” (Ephesians 6:18)*

Perseverance has to do with hanging in there. We are always tempted to quit or give up. Having to endure, what seems to be a constant barrage of attacks, we can wear down. The fiery darts keep coming. It’s one attack after another. You have been standing in there a long time taking your licks. Just know, God is making a warrior out of you. It’s not going to get any easier. It will only get harder, because the days are evil. Just as we get past one trial, another one awaits, which promises to be more difficult than the last. It is easy to tire and lose sight of the goal. The way we maintain our focus is through the connection we have with God through prayer, and the relationship we have with other believers in the battle.

“Supplication of all the Saints,” means we are supposed to be praying for one another. We lift one another up. There are times I may be going down. Maybe I am tempted to give up, quit, chunk it in, and run. But then there is another brother out there who will come along and lift me up. A fellow believer will come along to encourage me and help me. They might even step into the battle to allow me to catch my breath. This kind of prayer and supplication strengthens me. It keeps me going.

But it won't be long until that same brother who helped me, might be in trouble. He is now the one going down for the count. I now come alongside him and lift him up. I have a responsibility to pray for him and help him in his walk. It is continual and it takes all of us working together. I want you to see prayer not only as a defensive weapon but as an offensive weapon. You really learn this when you go to battle for your children. There are some people who cannot fight for themselves spiritually speaking. They are simply unable to fight the devil. We must step in and fight some spiritual battles for them.

Then Paul asked people to pray for him. *“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:19-20)*

I ask the same prayer for myself, and my situation is not as dire as his. Paul is in prison in Rome while writing this letter. He is writing this letter to the church in Ephesus knowing it will ultimately reach countless numbers of people. He just called everyone to pray, including us. He said, “I need words to speak.” “And when I get those opportunities, pray that I speak the word boldly, that I'm not ashamed to speak the words of God.” So, I pray for Paul and the Word God gave him. I pray they reach an even wider audience. When I get to heaven I intend to take Paul's class on the book of Ephesians, and all his others.

Until then, pray for me. Pray God gives me opportunity, that He opens doors. Pray He gives me utterances and gives me boldness to speak. Pray for this little book that it falls into as many hands as possible. Pray God gets all the mileage he can out of this little book. I am not a writer. This is nothing more than an honest attempt at following Jesus and doing my part to advance the kingdom. Take it and run with it.

Paul Continues, *“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known unto you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.” (6:21-22)*

Tychicus is known as an amanuensis. It basically means he was Paul's secretary. Tychicus probably even pinned some of the words of Paul for this letter, taking dictation as his secretary. We know Paul had some physical limitations. They were probably the result of beatings, imprisonment, and shipwrecks. We don't know for certain, but it is speculated Paul might have had poor vision. Because of differences in some of the Greek between Paul's letters, it is believed he sometimes had help in writing them. Tychicus is one of the guys believed to have helped Paul. Paul probably dictated this letter to Tychicus. Now, Paul is sending Tychicus, a faithful minister of the Lord, to the Christians that are in Ephesus, that they might know all these things.

Welch – Our Part

He sends Tychicus to minister, comfort, and encourage. This is a time of heavy persecution. The Christians in Ephesus would have been experiencing the same persecution Paul was subjected to in Rome. There is a ministry for Tychicus to do, but his main assignment is to get this letter to them.

We need to be like Tychicus. Just think about it for a moment. Tychicus carried this letter to Ephesus. We now sit here today reading the same letter. Only now in English, but still, we are reading a letter that originated with God, written by Paul, and hand delivered by Tychicus. We can now read it with our very own eyes in our own language. This letter has been on an amazing journey to get to us.

We need to be able to take this word, and the lessons we have learned, and carry it forth. Start sharing it with others, preach it, teach it, all in the name of Jesus. This began as a circulatory letter, starting with Ephesus it made the rounds. Initially it might have been from house to house, or one church to another. This letter then went from city to city. It has been copied and shared so many times it has gone around the world, and now we hold it in our laps. It has come all the way down to us.

Then Paul wraps up with these last two verses. *“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. (Ephesians 6:23-24)*

Grace to them who sincerely love the Lord Jesus. They will take His word seriously and apply it to their lives. They will make all the necessary changes. They will assume responsibility and accept accountability. Take what you have learned in this study and start doing it, walk in it, live it, and teach it to others.

Conclusion

Why write another Bible Study on Ephesians? It's not like there is a shortage of commentaries. There is plenty of good material out there written by people much smarter than me. This doesn't have to be perfect. It's just my attempt at doing my part. If this study is different maybe it's in the simplicity of things.

When you read this, depending on what you do with it, you could be holding a blessing. It might also have the opposite effect if you choose to do nothing. Once again, life is full of choices. Ask yourself, what am I going to change based on what I have learned?

I feel like I've done my part by putting these words on paper. This work is made available for free. There is no copyright. All Bible quotations are KJV and in the public domain. You are encouraged to make as many copies as you want for study groups or for free distribution among friends. Now go, do your part.

“Hallelujah!...I am excited for you. May God lead you on this wonderful journey.”

Dr. Bill Vinson

About the Author

Travis and Lisa Welch love their ministry in Ponca City, Oklahoma, at Crestview Baptist Church where Travis is affectionately called, “The Preacher.” They have over thirty years’ experience in vocational ministry both in urban and rural settings. Lisa has been teaching in public schools since 1986. They have three grown children being used of God, and eight grandchildren.

Travis has been on a number of mission trips, teaching in Mexico, England, Asia, and Puerto Rico. He also served as Director of a Baptist Association for five years. God has raised up men to be pastors under his ministry. He has been a friend and mentor to many. Travis currently posts some of his audio messages to traviswelch.buzzsprout.com and teaches online discipleship classes at 4disciples.org.

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