

## Ephesians - Commentaries by Thomas Leslie Mather

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.18 (6:23-24)

### PAUL'S CLOSING BENEDICTION

A reciprocity of divine interest and affection between Paul and the Ephesians shines out at the close. He takes for granted their interest in his welfare as a prisoner. Tychicus ministered to the aged Apostle, Timothy not being in Rome at the time. So Tychicus is called not only a beloved brother but a faithful minister in the Lord. Paul sends him from Rome to Ephesus but does not mention him here as the undoubted bearer of this priceless letter. Instead his mission is to inform the Ephesians of Paul's affairs, and to encourage their hearts also. Apart from Tychicus the letter closes without Paul's customary salutations so noticeable at the end of Romans. Surely he must have known the brothers and sisters at Ephesus as well or better than those in Rome. He had not visited Rome at the time he wrote that letter, but he had spent so much time in Ephesus he must have known it and the Christians there as well as his own town of Tarsus. What explains this silence at the end of the Ephesian letter, broken only by Tychicus? One wonders if it is not the mountain top character of the Ephesian letter the most profound truths calling for the utmost brevity.

And so the closing benediction is "peace to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption." Notice how Paul's message from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ reverses the order of the words "grace" and "peace" at the beginning. The letter opens with grace and peace 1:2 but closes with peace and grace 6:23, 24. The reason is that our blessings in Christ at the beginning, are unqualified. At the end, too, peace is unconditional. It is the portion of every believer through the blood of the cross. But grace is looked at in a slightly different light now that the Ephesian letter has been made public. Paul told the Corinthians that many corrupted God's Word see 2 Cor. 2:17. So the message of grace that is the enjoyment of divine grace is extended only to those who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption." Such see themselves as God sees them as heavenly men, seated in heavenly places in Christ. They deport themselves that way in the circles of this temporary life's activities and relationships chapters 4, 5, 6 to verse 9 and face Satan with courage in the armor and with the weapons God has provided them. May God keep us the reader and the writer in this incorruptible love, in Jesus' precious Name. Amen.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.17 (6:10-24)

### WAGING WAR IN HEAVENLY PLACES WITH THE UNSEEN HOSTS OF DARKNESS (Suggested Reading: 6:10-24)

Paul tells us that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That is, it is God breathed it comes from the Holy Spirit, is the imperishable written Word of God, and is for eternal service. But God also allowed it to be written by men like us, with distinctive styles of writing, whose thoughts, under God, were molded by impressions from their daily lives. These impressions came both from education and training in divine things and from their circumstances and experience of life. We see this in Paul, who wrote this letter to the Ephesians from his prison in Rome. One indelible impression was that of the Roman soldiers who guarded him constantly covered in armor which he vividly describes here. The other impression was his recollection of Israel's wars with the seven nations in Canaan, in Joshua's time. Both these impressions run into one another in the passage we are about to consider.

### Carnal Warfare in Canaan and Spiritual Warfare in Heaven

The cause of war is the clash of opposing wills. And the great subject in Ephesians is the will of God which is vigorously resisted by Satan. The will of God for Israel His earthly people was to bring them into Canaan; the will of God for the Church His heavenly people is to bring us into the heavenly places where He already sees us.

But in divine wisdom God does not exert His will until He first teaches us His ways. When God saved Israel from the slavery of Egypt He could have brought them instantly into the promised land for such was His will for them; when God saved us He could have taken us to heaven at once, for that is His will for us too. But in His ways toward both Israel and the Church He chose to test His people in this world. This testing makes clear the poverty of our hearts toward Him and the richness of His heart toward us overflowing in grace. That is why He let Israel wander forty years in the desert, and why we have to pass through this world too. Wasn't the walk of the Christian the subject of the preceding chapters? Of course it is not wilderness experience there but rather the walk of the heavenly man on earth. Still, what figure can walking convey to our minds except going from one point to another? It is not the will of God that we should settle down in this world but rather that we should walk through it as Christ walked until we too reach the same destination as our Head. Again, when Israel entered the Promised Land their battles began. When Joshua was near Jericho he met a man with a drawn sword, who told him he had come as Captain of the Lord's army Josh. 5:13, 14. So with us. Ephesians finds us in heavenly places in Christ at the beginning where the will of God is unfolded. It is fitting that we should be found in heavenly places at the end too. We cannot lose our standing in heavenly places in Christ. At the beginning, though, we are before God in rest; at the end we are before the devil in combat. He opposed Israel's entrance into the land and he opposes us in the True Canaan the heavenly places.

There are important differences, however. First, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal as Joshua's were. Secondly, Israel drove out the original inhabitants of the land with the sword. But the original inhabitants of heaven are the angels, many of whom are fallen and, under Satan's leadership, in rebellion against God. We are not called upon to drive them out as Joshua did. Michael and the holy angels will do that

for us some day Rev. 12:7-12. All God asks us to do is to stand to hold firm against them in this evil day when Satan accuses us before God day and night Rev. 12:10. Satan's hosts are against us but we are not to yield heavenly ground for it belongs to us "our struggle is not AGAINST blood and flesh, but AGAINST principalities, AGAINST authorities, AGAINST the universal lords of this darkness, 'AGAINST spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies.'" The mind of Christ is that we take the whole armor of God in our struggle against the powers of darkness.

If Paul reverted in his mind to Joshua's war in Canaan, surely his circumstances made another and equally strong impression. This would be the battle gear of the Roman soldiers who guarded him, the clank of their armor, the tramp of armed soldiers. But the thoughts which formed in his mind were not of these carnal weapons but of the spiritual ones God has given us. So he opens the subject of "the whole armor of God." This contains a sword an offensive weapon which might make us wonder why it is included as armor. But the expression is a wide ranging one just as soldiers today call tanks "the armor" or talk about "the first armored division" etc. even though tanks are really designed for attack, not defense. "The whole armor of God" in Ephesians then, is the spiritual counterpart of what a combat soldier would draw from Quartermaster stores if his regiment were mobilized his complete fighting kit. He would be responsible to maintain every item and carry it in its proper place. He would not be properly dressed, as soldiers say, if a single item were missing. With us the armor is all figurative, but it has deep moral teaching.

#### Our Struggle

The full armor of God speaks of the Christian's state of soul. This is what he must pit against the devil who may know him better than he knows himself. He only has to detect some piece of armor we have forgotten to put on and he is ready to probe the weak spot. The devil doesn't care how much truth you have as long as you don't practice it. We cannot fight the Lord's battles unless we are in communion with Him. What we really are before God shows up when we are in combat with Satan. If we are walking with God the Scripture will apply "resist the devil and he will flee from you" James 4:7. He flees because he has no armor to shield him from our great offensive weapon the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is the weapon the Lord used against Satan in the temptation. On the other hand if we do not resist him he will soon make us run away from him. Then he can wound us easily for God does not issue us armor for our backs. In other words Satan can only wound us if he can reach our flesh. He cannot harm us if our practical life clearly shows that we are in Christ.

To stand against an enemy a soldier must know something of his battle tactics. The Scripture briefs us about these. We are told that Satan always comes at us in one of two ways as an angel of light to deceive, to corrupt with guile or subtlety as he did to Eve in Eden see 2 Cor. 11:14 or if that tactic fails, as a roaring lion 1 Peter 5:8 attacking us and persecuting us violently. The whole armor of God is our only protection against either form of attack. We put it on to protect us from his angel of light character 6:11 and against his roaring lion character too 6:13, 16. His wiles are traps, lures, ambushes raising doubts in our minds as to the purpose of life or whether God cares for example when we see incomprehensible things happening like a promising young man killed accidentally and an apparently useless old man living on and on. Or it may be stirring up heresies and evil doctrines in the Church, or getting Christians to dissipate their strength by fighting one another on remote points of doctrine. He has his bait ready for the careless in the world too success, promotion, ambition, the love of money, carnal and mental allurements. These are only a few examples of the hidden traps he springs on the unwary. His fiery darts are more offensive weapons. He might raise up enemies against us, or tribulation in the flesh as in Job's case. How successful he was with Job's wife, whose advice to her husband was "curse God and die" Job 2:9, not understanding that Satan caused Job's troubles.

The devil also has innumerable evil spirits under his command in this spiritual warfare. Our struggle is not with men of flesh and blood. Hitler once wrote a book called "Mein Kampf" "my struggle" which became a Bible to his followers. But this is "our struggle" 6:12 and it has been written for Christ's soldiers. Our struggle is not against men we can see but against the devil's armies "against spiritual (power) of wickedness in the heavenlies." In God's eyes they are usurpers there for He sees us seated in heavenly places in Christ. Therefore we are not to give up the heavenly ground on which He sees us but to hold onto it against our diabolical enemies. They will try to coax us off it by subtlety or force us off it by open warfare. We are not ordered to advance against them that is take the offensive but to stand. This is because we are seated in heavenly places in Christ. It goes without saying that there can be no advance beyond that standing. So Paul commands us time and again TO STAND not to give up in practical life the standing in the heavenly places God has given us. This command TO STAND rings out time and again, as from a soldier's superior officer when his men are under fire. First it is that we may be able to stand verse 11 Then that we may be able to withstand verse 13 that is resist both appeals in connection with putting on the first three parts of our armor. Then having accomplished all things we are to stand verse 13. "Stand, therefore" says Paul.

The order in which the parts of the armor is put on is moral. It is unlikely that a Roman soldier would pick up his shield before putting on his helmet, for example. But this is divine armor, and the order of dress is arranged to teach us how to survive in spiritual warfare. Our battle orders begin with "be strong in the Lord, and in the might of His strength.\*2 It is His armor we are to wear the armor of God not our armor. We are exhorted to put on the armor so we can stand against the devil. Then the devil's fighters are identified wicked spirits and this is given as an additional reason to take the armor of God "in the evil day." Finally Paul describes the armor of God.

#### The Seven Parts of "The Full Armor of God" 6:14-18

The four things which maintain our state of soul when attacked  
Stand, therefore, having girt about your loins with.....TRUTH  
And having put on the breastplate of .....RIGHTEOUSNESS  
And shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of.....PEACE  
Besides all these having taken the shield of.....FAITH  
The three things which help us repulse our foes  
Receive the helmet of.....SALVATION  
And the sword of the.....SPIRIT

## Praying at all seasons in the.....SPIRIT

Paul first writes about those parts of the armor which morally strengthen the Christian soldier against the stratagems and assaults of the unseen enemy. The armor serves three purposes to protect us against the devil's cunning v.11 to protect us against his spiritual allies in evil, the wicked spirits vs. 12, 13, and to protect us against his outright attacks v.16.

### Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Faith—the Things Which Maintain Our State of Soul When Tempted or Attacked

The girdle of truth. From ancient times men knew that they could amplify their physical strength for a task by girding their bodies "gird up now your loins like a man" Job 38:3. In modern times we strengthen sagging muscles with belts, trusses, corsets, braces, etc. and athletes brace their firm muscles with specially fitted girding devices. So did the Roman soldiers. When on duty they wore the engirdling belt to which Paul refers here, buckled around the waist.

The spiritual application is the heart aroused to attention and expectancy see Luke 12:35 or the mind kept sober 1 Peter 1:13. Our emotions and wills inner thoughts, feelings, affections, purposes whatever is circulating in the heart and mind, must be girded that is subjected to the Truth to the revelation of God to divine principles and precepts. This will produce practical godliness. Just as a belt around his waist strengthened the Roman soldier, so the application of the truth to our inner thoughts and emotions strengthens us in combat with Satan. What do I want of his world, for example, when my desire for it is bridled by a Scripture such as "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" 1 John 2:15.

If we do not control our thoughts and emotions we are like the soldier who neglects to buckle on his engirdling belt, and so cannot amplify his strength in battle. When Satan is expelled from heaven with his hosts Rev. 12:7-9 and we are in our Father's house we can un-gird ourselves like the Roman soldier at rest in his barracks. For then we will not have the flesh in us to contend with the inner enemy or Satan the outer enemy. Then our warfare will be over. But in the meantime the warning note sounds out "but be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like a man observing his own face in a mirror who looks at himself and goes away, and immediately forgets what he looks like James 1:22-24.

The breastplate of righteousness. This is practical righteousness, not the righteousness of God we have in Christ. Conclusive proof of this is that we don't wear the armor before God but before Satan. The righteousness of God is the subject of Romans, not Ephesians, which does not consider the question of man's responsibility. In Romans we are told to put on the armor of light Rom. 13:12 needed in the night. Nothing is said about it, for the devil cannot touch those who are protected by the light of divine righteousness.

However Satan is quick to see failure in practical righteousness in a Christian's life. Here failure to put on the breastplate is more related to neglect of the exhortations in Chapters 4, 5, and the beginning of Chapter 6. But an attack can come even if our motives seem unclear to worldly people, who after all are only Satan's pawns although they do not know it. As a boy I recall a wealthy old Christian whom I will call 'Sam' here to prevent identifying him. In spite of his riches Sam dearly loved the Lord and liked to preach the gospel on the street. The regular crowd of trouble makers who came to the preaching tried to discourage him. Their tactic was to fill all their pockets with coins before they arrived. Then when Sam started to preach they would jingle the coins and chant "how about the money, Sam, how about the money?" Since Sam made his money honestly he did not let this opposition stop him. But the devil knows our weak spots. He wants to wound as many of Christ's soldiers as possible. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness. Note too that each piece of armor we put on is one step closer to the use of all the armor in open warfare... Army boots The Roman legions were famed for long, forced marches over rugged terrain. Their sturdy boots were built to take this punishment. Our feet are fitted with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We must have applied the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness to ourselves before we are prepared to preach the gospel to others. Bruce says\*3 that the Greek word we translate 'preparation' is used of a ship's tackling, is best rendered 'equipment' but may carry the abstract sense of readiness. But if a peaceful walk with God prepares us to carry the gospel of peace to others, open war is near, for Satan is opposed to the gospel. Up to this point we have been considering how to meet the wiles of the devil his 'angel of light' character. But as soon as we put our army boots on and are ready to march into Satan's territory, he changes from an angel of light to a roaring lion, and is now called "the wicked one." We face him in "the evil day" v. 13 his day.

The shield of faith- The weapons of the wicked one are inflamed darts which he hurls at us. In ancient warfare these darts were tipped with incendiary material. When masses of soldiers hurled them they filled the air like a shower of arrows, burning and wounding the unprotected. This form of warfare was the ancient equivalent of the modern flamethrower.

These inflamed darts of the wicked one speak of random, distant, harassing warfare. It is field warfare now, and these weapons are dangerous if they penetrate. They could represent any assault of Satan against the heavenly man. Trials now arise in the circles Paul wrote about the Christian circle, the family circle, the occupational circle. We are to meet them by lifting up the shield of faith with which we will be able to extinguish all the inflamed darts of the wicked one. The shield of faith as a piece of military equipment is distinct from the body armor. It speaks of confidence in God when Satan assails us, and we are having a hard time. We rely on what God has told us of Himself in the Bible. These things are invisible, but that is just the point. The fiery darts are visible faith, the guiding principle by which the just lives, is invisible. Faith counts on the ultimate triumph God has promised us and extinguishes the fiery trials of the moment.

### The Assurance of Salvation, the Scriptures and Prayer—the Things Which Help Us Repel the Attacks of Our Foes

There has been a gradual progression in Satan's warfare. First he engaged in skirmishes guerrilla warfare traps and ambushes. This is implied in "the wiles of the devil" 6:11. When the whole armor of God foiled this he came into the open in field warfare. He was met once more with the whole armor of God 6:13. Now he prepares for close, hand-to-hand fighting. But we have the helmet of salvation to protect us the sword to drive him away. Satan has no sword. He is at a disadvantage if we know how to wield the Sword of the Spirit against him. His weapons are fiery darts, which speak of distant warfare. If he comes close to us as the imagery suggests he does, we have a weapon for hand-to-hand fighting, and he has none.

The helmet of salvation is linked with the last two pieces of armor the Sword of the Spirit and prayer. The helmet of salvation is confidence that we are secure. This assurance comes from reading the Bible the Sword of the Spirit. Here we receive battle orders from our superior officer and then report back to Him in prayer. We do not fight alone any more than the Roman soldier, who was in constant communication with his Centurion in battle. If we try warfare in our own strength we may share the sad fate of a Christian man whom my father-in-law found in a jail where he used to preach. Asked how he ever got into such a place he replied "lack of reading the Word of God and prayer."

The helmet of salvation -Though the soldier holds his shield up and quenches the fiery darts, he still wants to know where they are coming from. To look out he must expose his head. But this is covered by the helmet of salvation, saving him from a serious wound. The helmet of salvation speaks of absolute confidence in our personal salvation in the finished work of Christ on the cross who died for our offenses but was raised again for our justification. We know that the blood of Christ has washed our sins away and so Satan has no real power over us now cannot deliver a vital blow. We are assured of victory, for Christ has met Satan before and overcame him, and we are in Christ. Note that this is the knowledge of these things not the things themselves, which are dealt with in Romans.

It is the knowledge that all is settled to God's satisfaction. My responsibility as a man is never the subject in Ephesians.

The Sword of the Spirit. The most feared of all weapons at close quarters was the Roman short sword in the strong trained hands of the legions. It was pointed at the end for a piercing thrust, and tapered to a cutting edge on both sides. It is this latter feature which the Scriptures draw to our attention "the Word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" Heb. 4:12. It is two-edged because it can cut at our flesh as well as at our enemies. The Lord used the Sword of the Spirit against Satan in the temptation driving him away. We find Him judging the Church and smiting the nations with it in Rev. 1:16 and Rev. 19:15 respectively.\*4

The Sword of the Spirit is not meant to be kept in its scabbard. From earliest youth our children are to be taught how to fight with this weapon -6:4. Parents must read the Bible to their children constantly, teach it to them, encourage them to memorize Scripture so they can quote it later. This may be compared to oiling and honing the sword. Then when our children are saved, the Scriptures they have imbibed from infancy will be explained to them by the Holy Spirit, who will then indwell their bodies. He is the real Teacher. It is His sword not ours. The Bible is the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

We also profit from those who give us instruction in the use of the Sword of the Spirit. The young soldier must learn swordsmanship, and honor those who have instructed him Heb. 13:7. Our fencing masters are to be counted worthy of double honor 1 Tim. 5:17. Diligence in studies brings God's approval 2 Tim. 2:15. Then the time comes when we leave the training barracks behind and go out with drawn sword on the battlefield to meet the wicked one and the evil spirits under his command. We tend to think of the battlefield as the world because in a practical sense that is where we meet conflict. But God looks at the source of the opposition to us the wicked one and his fallen angels in heavenly places. It is the heavenly places we now occupy in God's eye which Satan contests. He does not want man to stand on heavenly ground.

Prayer and supplication in the Spirit Prayer is our great unseen weapon against Satan. Paul stresses earnestness in prayer "praying at all seasons" "watching unto this very thing with all perseverance." It is the fervent supplication of the righteous man which has much power see James 5:16 for great is our adversary. The end of Ephesians finds us praying before God and armed before Satan. If we are to enjoy our standing at the beginning of Ephesians then our moral state at the end of Ephesians must correspond to it, or we cannot resist Satan. Satan will not allow us to enjoy heavenly things undisturbed. Christ, on the other hand, gives us His place (heaven) and His power (the Holy Spirit) to repel Satan's attacks. The Christian soldier arms himself for conflict, but it is Satan who launches the attacks on him. Why? There are several reasons but they really center on one our union with Christ in the heavenlies. Because of this we displace Satan and his fallen angels, in God's eyes, from the heavenly realms they now occupy. But morally we also displace them from the earth too, by obeying God's precepts in a world he still rules as god and prince. Morally, then, he finds the heavenly man displacing him in both heaven and earth that is universally. He knows that one day we will displace him actually from both places when we receive our inheritance 1:10. He will not willingly surrender his authority, which he wields not only over evil spirits but over the world and the flesh.

Victory Over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil

THE WILL OF GOD

1:4 according as He has chosen us in Him

5 according to the good pleasure of His will

7 according to the riches of His grace

9 according to His good pleasure

11 according to the purpose of Him who works all things

PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER

19 according to the working of the might of His strength

THE WORLD AND THE DEVIL

2:2 according to the age of this world

2:2 according to the ruler of the authority of the air

3:3 according as I have written before briefly

7 according to the gift of the grace of God 11 according to the purpose of the ages

#### PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER

16 according to the riches of His glory

20 according to the power which works in us

#### PAUL AND THE EPHESIANS

4:7 according to the measure of the gift

16 according to the working in its measure

21 according as the truth is in Jesus

#### THE FLESH

22 according to the former lifestyle

22 according to the deceitful lusts

24 according to God is created

6:5 according to the flesh

We have prepared a chart which makes this startlingly clear to the eye. Here the setting of the verses visually demonstrates the battle between prayer and Satan's efforts to nullify the power of prayer. The natural man thinks prayer is weakness but "My strength is made perfect in weakness" 2 Cor. 12:9. If it took a strong man to wield a Roman short sword, it takes a stronger man to wield the Sword of the Spirit. Prayer and the Sword of the Spirit go together. Prayer supplies the strength and energy to wield the Sword of the Spirit against Satan. Notice how the divine arrangement of the verses in the chart illuminate the battle between prayer and the devil's attempts to oppose it. What is of God and what is of the devil is in harmony with ("according as" or "according to") good or evil. The workings of God and the workings of Satan clash openly. Following the first apostolic prayer the world and Satan's authority over it is introduced in the text, showing him as the evil influence who would hinder the first prayer if possible. How? By offering the present world as an alternative to the heavenly places and our inheritance the very things Paul was praying that the Ephesians might understand. Paul's second prayer was that the Ephesians might be strengthened with power by the Holy Spirit in the inner man 3:16 our holy and spiritual nature. Satan counters this by offering the flesh instead the corrupt old man with his deceitful lusts. The world, the flesh and the devil, then, are the things which Satan offers to lure the Christian away from the understanding of Ephesian truth and the practical application of it in his life. The Apostle's prayers are still efficacious against these allurements.

Paul, As the General of the Lord's Armies, Longs to Besiege Satan's Fortifications in the World in Scripture the Battle Between David and Goliath Is a Distinct Foreshadowing of the Warfare Between Christ and Satan. David Stunned Goliath With One Stone, and He Fell a Figure of Christ Overcoming Satan at the Temptation. Then David Cut off Goliath's Head With His Own Sword a Figure of Satan's Power of Death Annulled at the Cross "That Through Death He Might Destroy Him Who Had the Power of Death, That Is the Devil, and Deliver Those Who Through Fear of Death Were All Their Lifetime Subject to Bondage" Heb. 2:14,15. That Is Why, As Ephesians Closes, the Christian Has a Sword but Satan Hasn't, and Must Fight From a Distance, Hurling Fiery Darts.

Paul exhorted the Ephesians to fight defensive warfare, holding their ground when attacked. He himself wanted to take the offensive. He wanted to be certain that the Ephesians wouldn't yield ground so he would be free to make further conquests. So he urges the Ephesians to pray for him to make war against Satan in the world "that utterance might be given to me, that I might open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of Christ, for which I am an ambassador in bonds. That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." The acts of the Apostles is the record of Paul's open warfare against a world ruled by Satan. It explains the siege warfare he wrote about in 2 Cor. 10:4 "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The two church epistles, Ephesians and Corinthians, thus give us a picture of a militant Church in Ephesians standing against Satan's attacks in Corinthians attacking and demolishing his fortifications in the world. Our study here really ends with Paul, a prisoner of war, longing for combat as the chief soldier of Jesus Christ. So he asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he might speak boldly again in renewed warfare against Satan.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.14 (5:23-33)

#### CHRIST—THE PATTERN HEAVENLY MAN—IN ALL HIS RELATIONSHIPS

The temporary earthly relationships given to us in the Ephesian letter are written in the light of our eventual role as rulers of the universe with Christ. This rule is bitterly contested by Satan who resents any erosion of his own authority. He is still "the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" 2:2. Satan is opposed to the will of God, which is the keynote to the Ephesian letter. To emphasize the theme of the will of God certain subjects are prominent in Ephesians, while others we might have thought important are ignored. Why is it, for example, that Church rule is found in Corinthians and ignored here in the epistle of the Church? Or why is our obedience to government in the world not mentioned when the Lord Himself told us to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's? The

answer is that these subjects are treated in their proper place. Here Paul's subject is the warfare of the heavenly man against Satan and his hosts. Only trained soldiers can wage war and the beginning of every soldier's training is obedience to the orders of his commanding officer.

Our obedience must be tested. How can we rule others if we are rebellious ourselves? "For be sure of this, that none guilty of unchastity or of impurity or of greed which is idolatry enjoys inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God" 5:5. Those who would rule with Christ must first demonstrate submission and obedience in this world. If I am a married woman I am to submit to the order of the natural creation and acknowledge my husband as my head. If I am a child I am to obey my parents in the Lord. If I am a husband I am to love my wife and educate my children in divine things. If I am an employee I am to obey my supervisor. If I am an employer I am to rule my subordinates in the Lord. If I do these things well I will receive the future approval of the Lord and present persecution of men, who unwittingly are mere agents of Satan. This is because we have obeyed Christ's marching orders, and Satan is opposed to Christ. Also we tend to look at the visible, which is a mistake. We look at men, who are rewarding us evil for good, failing to see the real source of the persecution spiritual forces of evil headed by Satan, who use men as tools. This is why Peter warns us not to be surprised "at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in Christ's sufferings, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed" 1 Peter 4:12, 13. That is the key Christ has been there before us. The best trained soldiers depend on the strategy and experience in war of their Commanding General to crown their warfare with victory. Christ is our Commanding Officer. The Ephesian relationships which we are called upon to acknowledge and honor are ones He Himself has fulfilled some actually, some figuratively. As the pattern Heavenly Man He does not ask us to do what He did not do Himself. He is the Captain of our salvation the Commanding Officer in our warfare against Satan. In World War 2 The Royal Air Force had a top bombing squadron known as "the pathfinders" whose task was to locate a target for following bombers, marking it with flares. Its Commanding Officer was dubbed "the King of the Pathfinders." So it is with the Lord, who has marked the path out for us. He is truly "the King of the Pathfinders" in our war with Satan.

The Perfect Submission and Love of Christ. Christ's first great act of submission was to become a Man. Although equal to the Father in the Godhead, He subjected Himself to His God and Father when He became a Man. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death see Heb. 2:9 for man ranks lower than the angels in the order of creation. Now if the woman is asked to submit herself to her husband in this world, how little God is asking of her compared to Christ's submission. "A body hast Thou prepared Me" Heb. 10:5. It was a body in which He should suffer and die supreme humiliation supreme suffering but supreme submission.

In Ephesians husbands are told to love their own wives. This is a pale figure of the immeasurable love of Christ for the Church the love of Jesus Christ the Same yesterday and today and forever Heb. 13:8. Yesterday He gave Himself for it v.25 today He sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the Word v.26 forever He shall enjoy the Church as His spotless bride after her presentation to Himself. So we have the Church in three time aspects past, present and future. Christ seeking her in love so great that He gave Himself is the first consideration He poured Himself out in all the richness of His divine eternal being. The Lord Himself gave us an illustration of this in the merchant who sold everything he owned to buy one pearl of great price. The pearl was the Church, the great price was the cost to Himself He gave Himself. This is the past, and how we rejoice that grief can never more be His portion for He is risen from the dead.

But what of the present? What does Christ do now for the Church? Well, He sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the Word applying the Holy Scriptures to our needs. To sanctify is to set apart in holiness. The Lord anticipated 5:26 in His prayer to the Father in John 17:19 "and for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Finally the future of the Church is given us in 5:27 "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and blameless." "Holy and blameless" these are the words used in 1:4 where we are seen in heavenly places in the Father's presence in love. Here God's purpose is realized holy and blameless, Christ presents the Church to Himself where she can be seen. Later Christ and the Church will be publicly displayed when the time comes to make war on our enemies Rev. 19:7-14. But here the beauty of the Church as the result of Christ's work for her, and in her, is our subject. The brown spots and creases which show up as our skin ages and which disfigure the beauty of an earthly bride "or any such thing" will never be found in the bride of Christ. Instead she will be "holy and blameless" which as already pointed out was God's thought in choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world 1:4.

The Lord Jesus, then, in His deep love for the Church, is the pattern for husbands to love their wives. The love revolves around our union with Christ. As the woman is united to the man the Church is united to Christ. "This is a great secret but I speak concerning Christ and the Church" v.32 must be connected with v.30 "for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." There could be no unity in flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God 1 Cor. 15:50. The Lord shed His blood and is now a Man of flesh and bones Luke 24:39. Paul is directing our thoughts back to how Adam secured his bride and Adam is the figure of Him who was to come Rom. 5:14. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its stead" Gen. 2:21. In figure this is the death of Christ the purchase price of His bride. The rib was removed this would come out of Adam's side (it was the side of Christ which was pierced on the cross when He was already dead fulfilling the type of Adam's 'deep sleep'). Then the Lord God built the rib He had taken from man into a woman. No other female creature ever came into being that way. It was His sovereign act in creation to show how Christ the last Adam was to receive His bride union with Christ based on His death and the blood which flowed from His pierced side. Woman in Hebrew (Isha) means "out of man" (Ish), so Adam exclaims "this time" (he is contrasting Eve with the animal creation which passed before him with which union was impossible) "it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh this shall be called woman because this was taken out of man." How perfect this type is Adam, no doubt instructed by God as to what had taken place, does not call Eve his flesh and blood. He speaks of bone and flesh as Christ the Last Adam did in resurrection Luke 24:40 and as His Apostle Paul does here. The blood of Christ was shed in redemption when the Roman soldier pierced His side. Even as he is a Man of flesh and bone so shall we be when we receive our glorified bodies. In Ephesians we are viewed as "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones."

Such are God's thoughts of us. Now what are our thoughts of God? Have our meditations deepened our understanding of the love of Christ to His bride the Church, or have we merely acknowledged the truth intellectually? God the Father would have us worship Him in spirit and in truth John 4:23. He has given us the Holy Spirit and to the extent we find joy in the love of Christ He touches the strings of the harp of the renewed heart to respond to that love in praise worship and adoration. Well did J.G. Deck the hymn writer pen the following lines:

The Perfect Obedience and Rule of the Lord Jesus

Having submitted to the will of God to become a Man, Christ became perfectly obedient to His Father. "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" John 6:38. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered see Heb. 5:8. This means that He experienced obedience as a blessed Man passing through a hostile world something He could not learn until He became a Man.

He learned obedience in Ephesian relationships our subject here the relationship of a child to His earthly parents in the relationship of servants and masters.

Children and parents His Apostle's injunctions are "children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother" 6:1, 2. As a child of twelve the Lord went down to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and remained behind with doctors of the law in the Temple, discoursing with them over the Scriptures. When His mother told Him how distressed she and Joseph were He replied "did you not know that I ought to be occupied in My Father's business?" Luke 2:49. Having satisfied the higher claims of God He then returned to Nazareth and was subject to His parents. Here we find a beautiful blend of submission accepting the role of a child to parents in the order of creation and obedience to His Father's will, whose business occupied Him in the Temple. A closing thought on this phase of the Lord's earthly relationships is that the Savior not only obeyed His parents in the Lord but also honored them. At the end of His life, on the cross, He provided a home for Mary in the Apostle John's house John 19:26-27.

Servants and masters When the Creator of the universe came to dwell with man He did not choose to be a renowned architect and leave great works behind. Instead He became a lowly carpenter like His earthly father Matt. 13:55 Mark 6:3. A carpenter must execute the designs of others submit to their will. Amazing grace that God would so humble Himself before His creatures. If we are called to do the same thing perhaps working for a man of lesser capabilities than our own let us think of Christ our example and glorify God in the midst of our humiliation. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a Man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" Phil. 2:5-8.

He is the perfect Master as well as the perfect servant. Masters were to do "the same things toward them" i.e. toward the servants. The Lord told us to do to others as we would have them do to us see Matt. 7:12. And there is no respect of persons with Him. He will reward us with administrative office in His coming kingdom according to our faithfulness to Him in this world where He is rejected. While even the least of Christians will sit on His throne Rev. 3:21 That is, share the reign of the universe with Christ they won't share equally. High office, positional distinction in the kingdom, is awarded to the faithful. This is a searching thing for all of us. The Lord Himself told us it will be so. "He said therefore, a certain high born man went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and return. And having called his own ten bondmen he gave to them ten minas and said to them Trade while I am coming. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him saying we will not that this man should reign over us." Here we will pause and comment that this was the stoning of Stephen. To continue "and it came to pass on his arrival back again, having received the kingdom, that he desired these bondmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him in order that he might know what everyone had gained by trading. And the first came up saying My Lord, your mina has produced ten minas. And he said to him Well done, you good bondman, because you have been faithful in that which is least, be you in authority over ten cities. And the second came saying My Lord, your mina has made five minas. And he said also to this one, And you be over five cities. And another came saying My Lord, lo, there is your mina which I have kept laid up in a towel. For I feared you because you are a harsh man...He says to him. Out of your mouth will I judge you, wicked bondman...why did you not deposit my money in the bank and I should have received it at my coming with interest? And he said to those who stood by, Take from him the mina and give it to him who has ten minas" Luke 19:12-24.

The great lesson in this parable is that the Lord gives us administrative positions in His coming kingdom (in figure rule over cities) in proportion to what we have done with the gifts we have received from Him. He gives us the interest we earned on his capital if we are faithful. If we are unfaithful we lose the capital itself. It goes to the most productive servant, who knew how to invest it. He who has ears to hear, let him hear that warning.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.13 (5:21-33)

## THE SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE OF THE HEAVENLY MAN IN HIS EARTHLY RELATIONSHIPS

(Suggested Reading: Eph. 5:21-6:9)

The relationships to be considered in this chapter concern our practical life on earth. There are seven, but we have grouped them in this chapter because the Apostle addresses both sides of a relationship. The Christian may or may not be involved in one of these relationships at any given time but he must honor them. For example the relationship of husband and wife only applies if one is in the married state of employer and employee if working, etc.

The relationships involve submission and love obedience and light. Since God's nature is love and light this is what we are called on to display in submission and obedience. Submission means acknowledging and honoring these temporary earthly relationships obedience is to the will of God.

### Submission and Love—the First Three Relationships

Relationships in the Christian circle. The first exhortation is "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" 5:21. This fear is the dread of offending Christ our Head through lack of grace to those who are His members on earth. Paul learned Christ's love to His members on earth on the road to Damascus Acts 9:3, 5. He wants us to apply it practically. If we do not submit ourselves to one another we have forgotten our common membership in the body of Christ and the love of Christ for His body 5:29. Our submission to one another in the fear of Christ is how the Church expresses its subjection to Christ 5:24.

Earlier, the Apostle had prayed for the Ephesians. Because they loved all the saints the Apostle continually gave thanks for them "making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" 1:16,17. This earlier prayer had been answered. For the way in which the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God was seen among the Ephesians was in their submission to one another in the fear of Christ. They were not only conscious of their union with Christ, but of their membership of one another. As J.B. Stoney said "membership implies activity and life, responsibility to the Head, and care for the members."<sup>1</sup> It is because he is convinced that his earlier prayer has been answered that the Apostle encourages the Ephesians to give thanks always as he did to God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ."

The relationship between husbands and wives- The wife is to submit to her husband v.22, and respect and honor him v.33. This tests the wife if her husband is not her equal in natural or spiritual things. But the principle must be honored. Exceptions which seem to challenge the principle can never be made the rule. The husband is called on to love his wife. If he does this in the role God has given him head of the wife v.23 the marriage will be crowned with the blessing of the Lord. Paul insists on the headship of the man in marriage, comparing it to Christ being the Head of the Church. He adds what appears to be an extraneous thought in v.23 "and He is the Savior of the body." On the contrary this assures us of Christ's fervent love for us. We are not forgotten in a grave, should we die, or our loved ones. He will raise the body in power and glory, for He is the Savior of the body as well as of the soul. Having assured us of His love even in death, lest we question it like Martha and Mary John 11:21 and 32 The Apostle continues "therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." The natural man, who is all chaos, rejects this teaching as tyranny. But in Christian marriage no trace of that should show. Any tendency to it is checked by a commandment to husbands to love their wives. This is to be an overriding love, like the love of Christ for the Church.

Divine order is beautiful, as we perceive it intellectually but more beautiful when put into practice. One is viewing the beauty of a flower the other smelling its fragrance.

In writing of the relationship between husband and wife it is clear that Christian marriage is predominantly before the Apostle's mind. Needless to say these verses in Ephesians are read as frequently at Christian wedding ceremonies as the passage in John's gospel which tells us how Christ graced the wedding at Cana of Galilee with His presence. The institution of marriage antedates both Christianity and the law of Moses for it was God's provision for man as a creature from the beginning. But in Christianity there is no provision for divided affections. David and Solomon had many wives, but now that the light of Christianity has reached man the institution of marriage rests on the principle "husband of one wife" 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6. This is the teaching here too. In the other earthly relationships covered in the Ephesian letter there are exhortations of great weight, but nothing as profound as this. Paul has deliberately intertwined the marriage relationship with the relationship of Christ and the Church, making the separation of the two subjects virtually impossible.

#### Obedience and Light—the Last Four Relationships

Obedience here is listening to and doing the will of God in two distinct relationships the family and the work-a-day world. The light is the light of God which is to be maintained in the Christian home. It is clearly spelled out as the spiritual education of our children. "The children of Israel had light in their dwellings" Ex. 10:23. So with Timothy "from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus" 2 Tim. 3:15.

.. The relationship between children and parents. Like marriage, out of which it flows, the relationship between children and parents antedates both Christianity and the law. Under the law these relationships were harsh. In Christianity grace rules. There is brevity in precept and mutual consideration in practice. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord 6:1. Christian children living in a pagan household must honor their parents. The only limits to their obedience would be if the parents infringed on the Lord's rights, say by demanding sacrifice to an idol. Then we ought to obey God rather than men Acts 5:29. Both father and mother are to be honored. The quotation from the Old Testament following this verse does not promise long life now for doing so but rather shows how highly God esteemed children who did so long ago. His ways did not change so the quotation is inserted to encourage children to please God by obeying their parents.

Fathers—Fathers are addressed next. Mothers have their role an important one covered elsewhere in Scripture. The reason the Apostle only addresses fathers here is that his subject is headship and authority, and the husband is the head of the wife 5:23. Fathers are given two admonitions one negative, one positive. They are not to abuse their authority over their children. Instead they are to "bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." Over-discipline has been warned against necessary discipline is commanded the form of it left to the father's discretion. Admonition, on the other hand, is a mild reproof, the giving of warning, counsel, or reprimand. The principles only are laid down. If the father loves his child he will seek wisdom from the Lord to carry them out. The writer recalls with sadness the case of a Christian father who thought he loved his children but ignored this teaching. He wore himself out working day and night so each would have a superlative education. Now an old man he has no comfort, for his children are in the world.

Occupational relationships When Paul wrote the Ephesian letter the relative terms were slaves and slave-owners not servants and masters.\*2 His letter to Philemon gives us a general picture of the social structure of the time. In the Roman Empire whole classes of professional people were slaves. Slavery or freedom hung on the fortunes of war and failure or success in business ventures. Depending on the age in which they lived slaves in the Empire might rise to positions of prominence and become rich or else be treated worse than animals. Paul's purpose in writing the Ephesian letter was not to reform the society of his times. He is concerned with the principles which are to guide the Christian in future generations during which society will assume ever changing forms. Scripture is a book of principles, and these do not vary although generations come and go establishing and overthrowing social forms to suit the needs of the age. The overriding principle here is the subjection of a subordinate person to the person who employs or supervises him not the social mold in which these relationships are cast. The society may be capitalist, socialist, or communist it may be agrarian or highly industrialized the employer may be harsh or benevolent, or even worse incompetent. None of these things are to sway our obedience to Scripture teaching. The same teaching applies to free men who do good 6:8 so that the scope of these verses cannot be restricted to slaves.

Obedience to the employer, whoever that may be, is the duty of the employee, servant or slave. But the work is to be performed as though Christ Himself were ordering it to be done. It is especially objectionable for a Christian to flatter his superior, be servile, or seek promotion

using these or other devices of worldly men. God values uprightness of heart. Man doesn't. But the Christian isn't cheated. If he has been a good workman under adverse conditions, slighted by man, his reward is only deferred. "Whatsoever good thing any man does the same shall he receive from the Lord."

The instructions to masters or employers are very brief. Basically Paul repeats his injunctions to servants or slaves. In other words they are to be upright too, seeking God's approval in their supervisory capacities, not fawning on their superior officers. The Christian employer has to report to a Master in heaven who gives him no special consideration as men do. If the employer is not a Christian he is still not absolved from answering to God for abuse for "the Head of every man is Christ" 1 Cor. 11:3.

Application of these principles to everyday life. If men had followed the simple guidelines the Apostle established here, their societies would not have been plagued by the strikes, lockouts and lawlessness which have endlessly torn their fabric. Let us see that we, as believers, honor these principles in our lives, even if men brush them aside as worthless. They will have to account for their transgressions in the Day of Judgment. "The righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning" Psa. 49:14.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.12 (5:21-33)

## THE HEAVENLY MAN AT WAR—THE SOLDIER OBEYS ORDERS

(Suggested Reading: Eph. 5:21 to 6:9)

In Chapter 3:4 we raised the question of how Christ exercises His Headship of the body. We pointed out that one way is by nourishing His body through gifts. The mouth is located in the head a simple enough figure and so the head is the source of nourishment for the body. Appropriately enough this presentation of Christ as Head of the growth of His body is at the end of the doctrinal part 4:15 and how the full light of Ephesian doctrine feeds and strengthens us.

In the practical part Christ is presented as Head of authority 5:23. The figure is again apt for the activities of the human body are responses to the direction of the head of the body. So the subject here is our natural response to the authority of Christ's Headship. This is because we are the members of His body, and so subject to the direction of our Head.

The Meaning of "Submission" and "Obedience" in the Ephesian Letter

Until now the exhortations have been general and related to our conduct now they relate to the subject of submission and obedience to authority in specified earthly relationships. We cannot help being impressed by the number of times "the Lord" and "the Christ" titles of authority occur. This is fitting for the subject here is the Headship of the body in authority.

We are responsible to the Lord to fulfill these relationships to His satisfaction, for "each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God" Rom. 14:12. These relationships involve "doing the will of God from the soul" 6:6. Now there are times when we do not know what God's will is. But here there is no such problem. The relationships God asks us to fulfill are outlined clearly and simply. There are seven.\*1 The first three concern submission and love; the last four obedience and light (spiritual education 6:4). Of the word used for submission in the original, Vine says it is primarily a military term, meaning to rank under.

Quite simply we are being trained for war as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. This is not the world's kind of war for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. It is spiritual war with Satan. We are looked at as united to Christ, being members of His body. He is the directing Head of His members who are soldiers. He feeds His members with gifts spiritual food to strengthen His soldiers for battle. Then as the Head of authority He directs the battle. He calls us to submission and obedience. A soldier must obey orders before he can go into battle.

Indeed submission and obedience are the first demands on a new recruit. How can he ever be a soldier if he has not learned to submit to the authority of his superior officers and obey their orders. To be good soldiers of Jesus Christ we must submit and obey also. We are heavenly men at war. To submit to and obey the practical part of Ephesians is to make war against Satan who is opposed to it.

In our fifth chapter the training ground is earth in the sixth chapter the battlefield is heaven. The sixth chapter is open war, and we are told to put on the whole armor of God so we may stand in the day of battle. But only a trained soldier puts on armor and draws the sword. He must first have learned to submit to his officers and obey their orders. This is the fifth chapter the barracks square the training maneuvers.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.11 (4:17-32)

## THE CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN

(Suggested Reading: Ephesians 4-17 to 5:20)

Now we enter the practical part of the Ephesian letter. The practical part commences with the individual like the doctrinal part, but here the similarity ends. The doctrinal part tells us the privileged position of the Christian. There must, then, be a holy walk, so doctrine and practice agree. Before the Ephesians were converted they lived like other Gentiles "in the vanity of their mind" philosophical vaporings, emptiness, vacuum, nothingness. Pride of intellect went hand in hand with the most scandalous of lives. "Being darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts." The result was that they lost all sensitivity, gave themselves over to sensuality "so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." The contrast

between the opening and closing of the doctrinal part and the practical part is interesting. The doctrinal part commences with light 1:18, the will of God, holiness, and ends with love 4:16. The practical part commences with Gentile darkness, ignorance of God, unholiness, and ends with peace, love with faith and grace.

Nearly two thousand years have passed since Paul wrote the Ephesian letter, years in which society has been changed in every conceivable way. Looking backward, modern man concedes the intellect of the ancient Greeks, but remarks on the gap between their philosophically oriented society and his own materialistic one, which boasts advances in medicine, surface and air transportation, space travel, and other fruits of science and technology.

When closely scrutinized, however, the apparent progress over the ages is seen to be superficial, for man himself is unchanged. His understanding is darkened. Consequently there is the same cleavage today between the supposedly intelligent but really depraved man of the world and the enlightened Christian that there was in Paul's day. Now as then good and evil co-exist in the world, but evil tends to overwhelm the good. Swords and spears expressed the evil heart of man in Paul's time missiles with hydrogen warheads, bombers, submarines, not to speak of germ and chemical warfare, do the same thing today. Man's heart is hardened both to God and to his fellow man "am I my brother's keeper?" Gen. 4:9. Ignorant of God and His ways, abandoning the right feelings God put into the creature, they turn instead to moral degradation and debauchery. Then a shaft of light breaks through the dark clouds "but you have not thus learned the Christ, if you have heard Him, and been instructed in Him according as the truth is in Jesus."

#### The Two Great Principles of Christian Walk

We will now consider the expression "the truth (as it) is in Jesus" which can be variously rendered "the truth is in Jesus" and "as truth is in Jesus." This expression is preceded by the second and last "if" in Ephesians. The first "if" was if they had heard about the Apostle's administration of the grace of God; the last "if" is if they had heard Christ and been instructed in Him. These two "ifs" are important, because Ephesian truth is unconditional and at first glance they appear to be exceptions to this principle. But this is not so. The Apostle has inserted the two "if" clauses in the text so the Ephesians would not complacently accept the truth without applying it. Had they really heard Christ and His Apostle is the question he is asking in the two "if" clauses. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" Rom. 10:17. "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" Rev. 3:22. Only those who apply the truth they heard have ears to hear the others have ears but are deaf.

So here "as truth is in Jesus" is in contrast to the Gentiles in whom was untruth. Their sins are listed in 4:17-20. Pilate stood before the Truth and asked "what is truth?" John 18:38 but walked away so as not to receive an answer. Such were the Gentiles. But the Ephesians had not learned Christ that way. The way they had heard Christ and been instructed in Him was that the old man was put off and the new man put on. How? Well, the old man Adam and his fallen race was ended by God's judgment of him at the cross. By faith they accepted God's judgment on that man the man of sin and shame so he was put off. But Christ, the new Man, who bore their judgment at the cross, has been raised from the dead by God Himself and they accept that too by faith. They are risen with Christ, the new Man. So He is put on. This explains the meaning of the expression "as truth is in Jesus" that by faith we accept God's verdict that our old man is put off and the new Man put on. "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me" Gal. 2:20.

Such is the doctrine. But it must be applied. Since my old man is ended at the cross and I am risen in the new Man I must not own the flesh in my life as a Christian. True it is there, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. There is another principle warring in my members, as Paul reminds us in Rom. 7:23. But I do not recognize it much like a nation breaking diplomatic ties with an unfriendly nation. Christ has died for sin, so I consider myself as a man in Adam dead too. The life that is in me now is the life of the risen Christ. This is the life which is to be seen in me as I pass through this world. This life is, first of all, created in truthful righteousness and holiness intelligent as to the difference between good and evil as God Himself is for it is patterned after God. It is not like Adam in innocence who did not understand the difference between good and evil. We do but walk in the truth. Coming between the putting off v.22 and the putting on v.24 is the renewing of the mind v. 23 which is in the present tense, unlike the other two expressions. This is because the spirit of our mind must constantly be renewed by communion with God through prayer and reading of the Scriptures to reproduce the freshness of Christ in the life. The imprint of the eternal must be displayed in time.

The next consideration is the other great principle of Christian walk "and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you have been sealed for the day of redemption" v.30. Note the unique title the life of God 4:18 the new man after God 4:24 the forgiveness of God 4:32. "Sealed for the day of redemption" takes us back to Chapter 1 and the will of God. To grieve the Holy Spirit of God would be to tolerate the flesh in a body sealed with the Spirit a denial that we are dead with Christ and risen with Him. What God purposed in the new Man was the reproduction of God in man. His counsels with respect to this will only come to fruition when we are in His presence in glory "holy and blameless before Him in love" 1:4. But God is looking for the practical application of this now. The Apostle has brought into focus the two great principles of Christian life the having put off the old man and the having put on the new Man (this is done for us) and renewing the spirit of our mind and not grieving the Holy Spirit of God (this is our part what we must do). Note that Paul does not mention the earnest (pledge) of the Spirit, for that looks on to receiving our glorified bodies in the future. He speaks of sealing only. He is concerned with us walking as Christ walked in this world at the present time. The seal is the Holy Spirit Himself, who indwells the body of the Christian. If we grieve Him we lose power. But we are not to grieve Him.

#### Exhortations for a Christ-Like Walk

Following each of the two great principles of Christian walk just outlined come the exhortations in 4:2-29 and 4:31 to 5:6.

Four exhortations concerning the old and the new man

Seven Exhortations for a Holy Walk

LET not the sun set upon your wrath 4:26

LET the stealer steal no more but rather

LET him toil 4:28

LET no corrupt word go out of your mouth 4:29  
Three exhortations about not grieving the Holy Spirit  
LET all bitterness and heat of passion and wrath  
and clamor and injurious language be removed  
from you with all malice 4:31. But fornication  
and all uncleanness or unbridled lust,  
LET it not be even named among you 5:3  
LET no one deceive you with vain words 5:6

There are seven exhortations grouped in four and three the common grouping of seven things in Scripture. The first group commences with an action "putting away" and then what is to be put away wrath and anger. These three elements are found in the second group also 4:31 tying the two groups together. What separates the two groups is that four are located after one of the great principles of Christian walk 4:22-24 and three after the other 4:30.

The first four exhortations In the first exhortation we are told "wherefore, having put off falsehood, speak truth every one with his neighbor, because we are members one of another" v.25. This having put off falsehood should be connected in our minds with "your having put off...the old man" v.22. Since the old man has been put off and the new man has been put on, falsehood must not be spoken by us. Truth should "speak truth every one with his neighbor because we are members one of another." This exhortation is founded on the fact that the new man speaks truth as the old man speaks falsehood. If Christians lie they err from the faith and deny their standing in Christ. Paul's exhortation to us is founded on the new position out of Adam and in Christ. This is the way God sees us. Continuing, Paul writes "be angry and do not sin, let not the sun set upon your wrath, neither give room for the devil." Righteous anger is permissible as when Christ expelled the money changers from the Temple area. But it is not to be carried over another day. To do so, however righteous the anger may have been in the beginning, would change the anger to hate in short we would have let it seethe. Then the devil would come to fan the embers, reminding us of how righteous our original anger was. We have opened a door to his victory over us because we failed to drop the matter the same day it occurred. Treasured up grudges lead to ill health a present governmental judgment of God. The Christian has no immunity from this because he has acted contrary to what God has told us to do here.

Next come two sets of injunctions with a common teaching bringing good out of evil always a divine principle. The hand of the robber stole v.28 let it work instead and become a giver to the needy. The tongue of man is ready to speak filthy words which is really robbing God, apart from the defilement, for man was made for God. Now like the robber, the tongue is to be a giver too, edifying and giving a message of grace.

The last three exhortations. The first four exhortations follow the truth that the old man has been put off and the new man put on; the last three follow the warning not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man is viewed as an accomplished fact whereas not grieving the Holy Spirit of God is something we must be careful about. At the beginning of the first group it says "having put off falsehood" etc. (because the old man is put off) whereas at the beginning of the second group it says "let...be put away from you" that is, they must do it—it isn't done for them. This is the practical part, which concerns us we must not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. That is why the apostle's theme now changes. In the first four exhortations he had pointed out what conduct was suitable for men no longer in Adam but in Christ. In the last three exhortations our speech is paramount. The pattern of our speech is to be Christ, of whom it is written "My thought goes not beyond My word" Psa. 17:3. He was the perfect expression of the divine nature in man. Never did He grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Neither should we, Paul says. Striking this note he tells us what is pleasurable to the nature of the Holy Spirit of God and what is not. Because He is God He is love 1 John 4:8 and light 1 John 1:5.

The first exhortation in the last group tells us what we are to put away, because it is offensive to the Holy Spirit of God bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking. Then Paul tells us what is pleasurable to the Holy Spirit of God "and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Be you therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" 4:31 to 5:2.

The second exhortation in the last group is "but fornication and all uncleanness or unbridled lust let it not be even named among you as it becomes saints; and filthiness and foolish talking, or jesting, which are not suitable, but rather thanksgiving." Then he follows this admonition with warnings that those who indulge in these sins can have no part in the inheritance he spoke of in Chapter 1. They are "the sons of disobedience" and the wrath of God is their portion. The Ephesians were therefore not to be fellow-partakers with them in time since they could never be fellow-partakers with them in eternity. But in what way could they be fellow-partakers with them in time, you ask. The answer is not in sharing their sins for Paul never had to rebuke the Ephesians about carnal sins as he did the Corinthians. The danger was in making the sins of those round about them a topic of gossip, or joking about them. The City of Ephesus boasted one of the finest open air theaters of the day, with excellent acoustics, talented actors and ample seating capacity. Even a casual acquaintance with the tastes of the Greeks would tell us what the attractions of this theater would be the unholy emotions Paul warns about here the very opposite of divine love. But unholiness in the body v.3 and unholiness in language v.4 are forbidden as topics of conversation among Christians or the center of their interests. Instead we are to use our tongue to give thanks. Giving of thanks is spoken of here and in v.20. Here we give thanks no doubt in prayer, praise, worship in v. 20 in song.

The last exhortation in the group is founded upon God being light. For this reason we are children of light. There are others who are of the darkness. This contrast between the light and the darkness goes on to the end in 5:20. The last exhortation commences "let no man deceive you with vain words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." The Ephesians were once darkness too but are now light in the Lord. They are to walk now as children of light. We are partakers of the divine nature 2 Peter 1:4 which, as already pointed out, is light and love. Here we are exhorted to walk as children of light, as in the beginning of the chapter we were exhorted to walk in love (not as children of love). The distinction is that we can imitate divine love but never attain to it. The fountain of the water of life Rev. 21:6 is the Father's heart alone. But we are children of light. Verses 9-11 are parenthetical. Paul tells us what the fruit of the light is but not the unfruitful works of darkness. We can have no fellowship with them—they are to be reprov'd. Next we are told it is shameful even to speak of those things which they do secretly that is in the dark. This is another way of saying that they are not to be the topics of

conversation among God's people, as in verse 3. "But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light."

#### Different Ways of Looking at a Christian

In Ephesians the Christian is seen in three victorious and one failing posture.\*2 As the epistle opens we are seated the position of sonship in heavenly places in Christ. Then in 5:1 we are walking and this is to be in love. The epistle closes with the standing position 6:14 wearing the whole armor of God in combat with Satan's forces. But if we do not abound in love the heart will not be established in holiness before God see 1 Thess. 3:12, 13, and this will result in practical failure the sleeping posture. Eutychus in Acts 20:9 is a figure of that. We can sleep even when sitting in heavenly places in Christ because that is our standing and we can't lose that. We may be so smug about our standing that we are actually snoring away on our heavenly seat. But we can't sleep and walk or sleep and stand that is, be of practical use to the Lord. Normally we sleep at night, not in the light of day. A superficial glance at a sleeping person suggests a resemblance to death. Life is there, though, as we would quickly discover if we shook the sleeper but he is inactive. So with the backsliding Christian the man who ignores Paul's exhortations. The sleeper is told to wake up "and arise up from among the dead and Christ shall shine upon you." He is surrounded by those morally dead as the Ephesians once were 2:1. He is told to wake up because he isn't dead but actually has become a companion of those who are spiritually dead contrary to Paul's two warnings 5:7; 5:11. He has life but needs to walk in the light. His tongue is stilled for God.

The next picture is the drunkard. The Lord tells us what this figure means in Matt. 24:48-49 "that evil servant...shall begin...to eat and drink with the drunken" (that is the world). The backslider is now a full fledged man of the world. His tongue speaks folly like a drunk man. Control lost, knowledge is submerged until he is sober.

The final picture is in contrast to all this not drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit "speaking to yourselves i.e. to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, then individually singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." "In your heart" speaks of an inner joy in contrast to the false levity which the wine of this world induces. Then follows outgoing thanksgiving "giving thanks always for all things to God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thanksgiving closes off the subject of how we are to regulate our speech as dear children walking in love 5:4. "In everything give thanks" 1 Thess. 5:18.

#### The View From the Mountain Tops

Having made an inroad into the practical part of the Ephesian letter, let us climb to the mountain peaks, so to speak, and examine the vista spread before us the relationship of the first practical part the inlet to the whole to the overall doctrine of the Ephesian letter. This way the detailed study we have just completed can be better kept in perspective. We will know, in a broad sense, where we have been and where we are going or at least the general direction.

It helps us greatly, in the understanding of Ephesians, to revert to God's promise to Abraham that his seed should possess the Promised Land and to their warfare later with the inhabitants of that land to turn this promise into reality. In God's purposes the land was to be given to Abraham's seed, but in His ways He made them fight for it with carnal weapons.

Now while the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, we too must experience conflict in a promised land. Our Canaan is the glory. It is more than promised God sees us there already seated in heavenly places in Christ. This is the great thought in the doctrinal part of Ephesians. But in the practical part of Ephesians we must fight Satan's hosts, who do not want us there. Our actual warfare is on earth but we will see, as we come to the sixth chapter, that God views it as taking place in the heavens because the seat of Satan's power is there for the moment he is the prince of the power of the air. Ours is a spiritual warfare against Satan's hosts who, as universal lords of darkness pervade heaven and earth. Heaven and earth is our inheritance, which they would deny us, and heaven and earth is the battlefield. It is as though I am an artilleryman whose country is occupied by a foe and who is fighting them from the territory of an adjacent nation. I fire my salvoes from the territory of the nearby country but I direct the shells at the batteries of my enemies, who are in my country for it has become the seat of the enemy's power.

But how do you carry on spiritual warfare? The answer given in the practical part of Ephesians is to obey the orders of our Commanding Officer the Lord Jesus Christ. He is experienced in warfare with Satan. When Joshua was at Jericho, the entrance to the Promised Land, he met the Captain of the Lord's armies and Joshua is a type of Christ here. The Captain had a drawn sword in his hand. Christ has met Satan, our great enemy, in every kind of conflict, long before He called us to the battle. All the exhortations in the practical part of Ephesians then, are founded on our displaying Christ. There are two great lines in these exhortations to display Christ in our lives (which we have just considered in this chapter) and to display Christ in our earthly relationships (which we will consider in the next chapter). To Satan this is outright warfare, for he has ruled this world by sin, operating in the fallen flesh of man. To be victorious over Satan we must not only be in Christ the great thought of the doctrinal part but we must live Christ the great thought of the practical part.

This gives us the overview of Ephesians we need, just as a map guides a man in unfamiliar country. The doctrinal part of Ephesians is the equivalent of God's promise of the land to Abraham (except that what has been promised to us is universal rule with Christ); the practical part corresponds to the warfare of the book of Joshua (except that our warfare is spiritual not carnal consisting of the display of Christ in our lives in a world Satan has organized to oppose Him).

#### Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.10 (4:1-16)

#### THE GROWTH OF CHRIST'S BODY THROUGH GIFTS

A new subject gift the last element of doctrine in Ephesians, now engages our attention. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" 4:7. Grace, then, is a gift from Christ, given to each of us, but measured that is, not equally distributed.

Some get more, some less, according to the sovereign will of the Giver. Paul tells us of the gift of the grace of God which made him a minister of the gospel 3:7. Paul in turn had prayed that God would give the Ephesians "according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man" 3:16. The gifts distributed here by Christ in heaven to His members on earth are the direct answer to the Apostle's prayer.

It is clear from Scripture that one purpose of gift is the growth of the Church down here. It will not be needed in the glory for then growth will have ceased. This can be seen in the way the Holy Temple and the body of Christ are pictured. The Holy Temple, the figure of the Church as a building grows because it is not yet completed. Similarly with the body of Christ we are to grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ 4:15. Thus the body grows, like the building. Our subject here, though, is how the body grows, not the Holy Temple. The body grows through gifts supplied by Christ, its Head. Since Satan does not want to see the Church flourishing, he can be counted on to oppose all gifts Christ gives to it. For example Paul told the Thessalonians "we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us" 1 Thess. 2:18. When the Lord revealed the figure of the church as a building to Peter, He also told him that Satan's power would oppose it but would not prevail see Matt. 16:18. Now the same Lord, who revealed to Paul the figure of the Church as His body has prevailed 4:8. The meaning of this apparent digression by Paul from the subject of gift, is to show that Satan cannot prevent Christ from giving gifts to the Church, for he is a defeated foe.

#### Satan's Opposition to God and His Kingdom

Before his fall Satan was the anointed cherub who was on the holy mountain of God, who walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. He once held high administrative office in the divine scheme of things. Our intelligence of these things is derived from a veiled reference to him in Ezek. 28:13-17, a passage which also gives us a general insight into the reason for his fall pride.

Satan is presented to us in different guises in Scripture, each with its own distinctive meaning. As Satan his "roaring lion" character 1 Peter 5:8 he is the adversary as the devil his "angel of light" character 2 Cor. 11:14 he is the deceiver as "the dragon" Rev. 12 and 13 he is the persecutor as to his authority he is "the god of this world" 2 Cor. 4:4 that is its religious head and "the prince of this world" John 14:30 that is its political head as to the sphere of his authority it is the air Eph. 2:2. In Ephesians the name 'Satan' (adversary) is not used because he is viewed as a defeated foe in this letter. Instead he is called "the wicked one" 6:10 because he opposes the will of God and "the devil" 4:27 and 6:11 because he tries to divert us from the will of God by subtlety.

When Satan fell many of the angels followed him. Thus he established a kingdom in opposition to God, whose throne he challenged. Then when God created man Satan sensed a threat to his usurped authority in the mandate God gave man Gen. 1:28. So he tempted man in the garden in Eden, overcame him and organized a world system over which he presides, governing it by his principle of sin, which is lawlessness. Furthermore he obtained a great weapon over man because of the fall the power of death Heb. 2:15. This roughs out the scope of Satan's realm the world and lost man to whom God offers forgiveness because he sinned when tempted and the fallen angels and demons who sinned without being tempted, for whom there is no forgiveness. The latter are called "universal lords of darkness" because like Satan they roam both heaven and earth freely.

It comes as a surprise to some believers that the seat of Satan's authority is the heavens, not the earth. The earth is where he wields his authority but he is the prince of the power of the air a wide expression. While some of his former privileges have been curtailed Ezek. 28:16 his fall no more barred him from heaven than the fall of man barred man from earth. Satan appeared before the Lord with the other angels Job 1:6 and descended to earth to persecute Job. At present he accuses believers before God day and night Rev. 12:10 and will do so until he is cast out of heaven Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:9. Satan's angels are not mentioned directly in Ephesians. Instead they are referred to by the administrative offices they hold "principalities, authorities, universal lords of darkness" which we cannot precisely define. However, in general terms they tell us of fallen angels who wield specific power in Satan's kingdom, lawless and wicked spiritual forces. They are in the heavenlies, according to this verse, which informs us that the source of evil on earth can be traced to their continued presence in heaven. Until they are expelled along with Satan, these universal lords of darkness pervade heaven and earth the heavens the seat of their power the earth where it is wielded. This can be seen in the story of the wicked spirit in heaven who came to earth to entice Ahab with lies 2 Chron. 18:18-22.

Like Goliath, Satan was an unchallengeable foe the leader of an army which made man tremble until Christ the root and the offspring of David came into this world to take up our cause. At the temptation Satan tried to deceive Him, remembering how he had successfully corrupted the first man. He had to flee in defeat. Having failed as an angel of light at the temptation he re-appeared as a roaring lion at the cross. Satan thought he had got the victory there. But Christ rose in triumph in resurrection, breaking Satan's power of death over man on earth. Then in ascension He openly flaunted His victory over Satan in the heavens "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive."

#### The Transfer of Power From Angels to Man

It should now be clear to the reader that the heavens are the source of good and evil influences affecting the earth. Satan commands his legions of fallen angels and, subject to God's overall restraint, leads the world in opposition to God. He even boasted of his power in this world to the Lord Luke 4:6 a power which is checked to some extent by the presence of God's people in the world. In heaven too Satan's power is restrained by the holy angels (for an insight into the clash of good and evil angels in a matter affecting the earth read Dan. 10). Now while angelic influence was permitted in the ways of God, it is clear from the first chapter of Ephesians that it is the will of God that man in Christ shall have universal rule. The role of angels as servants, not sons like us, might have been better understood if translators had followed Young's usage. Young dispenses with the word 'angel' and renders it literally as 'messenger.' "And unto which of the messengers said He ever 'sit at My right hand, till I may make Thine enemies Thy footstool?' Are they not all spirits of service for ministration being sent forth because of those about to inherit salvation?"\*1

Once Christ came into this world and overcame Satan in life and death it became the mind of God to transfer power from angels to man. But not to man in Adam to man in Christ. This was what Satan did not understand when he had Christ put to death. His triumph over Adam and his race was meaningless since Christ the Last Adam triumphed over him. So Christ the Last Adam has set aside angelic rule. He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" 1 Peter 3:22. "For unto the angels

has He not put in subjection the world to come, of which we speak" Heb. 2:5. The reason we find no mention of angels in Ephesians is that power is here viewed as vested in man in Christ.

The breaking of Satan's former power over man is the subject of verse 8 "wherefore He says, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Satan had led man captive, but now a Man enters heaven who has been raised from the dead. Satan's power over man is broken, and Christ flaunts His victory before Satan's hosts in the heavens ... It is an allusion to Judg. 5:12. Next the Apostle emphasizes the magnitude of His triumph "now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"

Verse 9. The Apostle is pointing out two extremes here the grave which Christ entered in the earth, and the Father's throne on which He sits in heaven. This being so, his argument in verse 10 is that He fills all things that is all things between the two extremes the grave and the throne in the glory. Now the reason Paul introduces this theme is that man, under the influence of Satan, thought to get rid of Christ by crucifying Him. "Away with this Man" they cried Luke 23:18. But they did not get their wish. First Christ displayed His victory over Satan's hosts in heaven. Then He displayed His victory over Satan's forces -on earth when He formed the Church as His body. If His body is perpetuated on earth and He its Head is in heaven, what folly the cry "away with this Man" is shown to be. He is on earth now, represented in His body the Church, not banished from it. And from heaven the Head of the body succors the members of that body on earth. He does this with gifts which edify and build up the body. Such is the inlet to the subject of gift in Ephesians. God is a giver "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" James 1:17.

#### All Gifts Come From Christ in Heaven to His Body on Earth

The Church is passing through a wicked world. Christ is its Head. Surely He will care for it "for no man every yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church, for we are members of His flesh, and of His bones" 5:29, 30. The Lord nourishes His body, dispensing gifts to believers in measure. We must not confuse these gifts with natural ability, leadership qualities, church office, attained degree of education, or other marks of human distinction though these things often shine through as in Paul's case, making discernment of the gift more difficult. But a spiritual gift is a sovereign gift from Christ given to whomsoever He chooses, without reference to man. The gift makes the holder of the gift an instrument of divine power within the particular sphere in which the gift is intended to be used. Sometimes a gift will arouse jealousy, or criticism from other believers, who are actually quarreling with the Head of the body who gave the gift although they would shudder at such a thought. Jealousy is the sin of the elders as idolatry is the sin of the common people. The Head of the Body is not accountable to any of His members. He gives the gift for the common benefit they must acknowledge that fact. In the eyes of Ananias, Saul of Tarsus was the most unlikely of men to receive a gift from Christ. Godly as he was he had to be told "go your way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me" Acts 9:15. This same Saul of Tarsus, known to us as the Apostle Paul, wrote later "and say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it" Col. 4:17. This tells us that the recipient of a spiritual gift is not accountable to the Church for its use, but to the Lord who gave it to him, for He is the Head of the Church.

This raises the question of how Christ exercises His Headship of the body. One way is by nourishing His body through gifts. The mouth is located in the head how simple the figure is and so the head is the source of nourishment for the body.

#### The Four Classes of Gifts

Four classes of gifts are mentioned each class being distinctly identified by the word 'some' coming between them. The first two classes are the Apostles and New Testament prophets. We know these are not Old Testament prophets because the Lord told us that the law and the prophets were until John the Baptist see Luke 16:16. The ministry of John the Baptist introduced Christ, just as the ministry of the New Testament Apostles introduced His Church. The Apostles and prophets are the foundation gifts of the Church never again to be repeated. The foundation of a building is laid once only. The Ephesians understood this truth and tried those who falsely claimed to be Apostles at a later date Rev. 2:2. We tend to take the foundation gifts for granted just as we might walk into a building every day in our life without seeing or thinking about the foundations on which it rests. But every time we read the New Testament we revert to the foundation gifts of the Church. Paul certainly (and Peter probably) had all the gifts in his person Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. Peter received an evangelical gift from the Lord to be a fisher of men and later a pastoral and teaching gift John 21 (although these gifts in Peter's case actually preceded the Head being in heaven the gifts were largely used after that time as we see from Acts). There are prophetic tinges in some of Peter's writings, too, though to a much lesser degree than Paul's. The Apostle John had a prophetic gift as the author of the Revelation. Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi give us a good example of the linkage of an Apostle and prophet in the preaching of the gospel. The written and oral ministry of the apostles and prophets then, constitute the foundation gifts of the Church.

Next come the continuing gifts after the Apostles and prophets have left the Church. It was a simple matter to recognize the foundation gifts because of the powers such as miracles of healing which accompanied them. To recognize a continuing gift now requires a spiritual enough mind to identify a person through whom the Holy Spirit is working. The continuing gifts are evangelists for outside work pastors and teachers for inside work. The evangelist goes out from the Church to bring souls in the pastor to shepherd them, the teacher to instruct. Apart from gift there will always be a continuing need for such work by qualified persons until the end. But that need is not Paul's subject here. He is writing about performing this work in such an outstanding way that it is recognized as a gift from the Lord and a specific gift at that. Timothy is an example of a gifted man 2 Tim. 1:6. But the Lord did not give him the gift of an evangelist. We know this because he was told to do the work of an evangelist 2 Tim. 4:5 a plain indication that he hadn't received an evangelical gift but was to work at it in any event. The Lord has many faithful preachers of the gospel, but if we look back over the last two centuries, for example, what names stand out? Why the gifted men, of course men such as Moody, Spurgeon, Graham, etc. An evangelical gift has a purpose over and above the salvation of souls. A gifted gospel preacher stirs up God's people to the freshness of the gospel message and fills their souls with the love of God. Then they can set others on fire. Next there is the gift of the pastor-teacher. Like the Apostles and prophets the pastor and teacher may be grouped together (it is so in the Greek) but not necessarily. Again the Lord's servants may have to perform this service without a gift. If they do may they be quick to recognize those who have. D.L. Moody was a fine example of this. He spotted the teaching gift of W.R. Newell and encouraged him greatly to write and teach. Gift comes from the sovereign will of Christ the Head of the body and can be explained no other way. Even in natural things God proceeds on this principle. How many musicians lived in the days of Bache, Mozart, and Beethoven but who knows about them today?

how many mathematicians in the days of Newton and Einstein? All were useful but the great names are transcendent. But in spiritual gifts the object is not, as in natural gifts, the intellectual enjoyment of the things of this life. It is not building up the fleeting vanity of this world but building up the body of Christ. Anything done for Christ is lasting and eternal.

But now that the Church is fragmented beyond repair, we may well raise the question what about gifts now? Be assured that the Lord never ceases to raise them up. If man erects barriers between Christians Christ ignores them in giving gifts. The body is never divided in God's sight although the visible expression of it on earth certainly is. Recognizing this the gifted man should never confine his gift to where he ministers; conversely all members of the body of Christ who know about the gift should use the man's ministry for their blessing.

#### The Practical Application of Gift

The first reason for gift is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry." This is the pattern of Chapter 1, where the individual's blessings are stated before the subject of the Church is introduced. Only after the saints have been "perfected" that is, have become mature Christians do we hear about "the edifying of the body of Christ." Before proceeding further a side remark might be helpful here. Although the Bible calls all believers "saints" they themselves seldom take this name. The reason may well be that they sense the contradiction in their lives which using the term "saint" would imply.

The unity of the faith is now stressed 4:13. Previously it was the unity of the Spirit 4:3. The unity of the faith is the result of gift it binds us together. The encouraging message of the evangelist stirs us up in the glad tidings, the pastor helps the weak, the teacher strengthens everybody.

No doubt the work of the pastor-teacher is more before the Apostle in verse 14 for he desires that we not be carried about by "every wind of doctrine." Again in verse 15 Paul speaks of "growing up into Him in all things" in contrast to the deception of false doctrine in verse 14. Just as the body of a man requires nourishing food to be strong, so does gift feed the body of Christ. Here the method of feeding is important "speaking the truth in love." We can speak the truth without love for example by displaying our intellectual grasp of it before others (self exaltation) or being legal or fault finding. Truth preached that way, even if doctrinally sound, does not edify or build up the body. That is why, although growth and edification call for gift, the doctrinal part concludes with the efforts of those who have no gift we are told about verse 16 but perform these two functions growth and edification in love.

Every joint in the body of Christ i.e. every moving, active member, is fitted together into its assigned place in the body just like the stones in the Holy Temple. Because of this plan each individual makes some contribution to the working of the body in harmony with the part occupied in the body. Anything we do however humble must be done in love, showing a genuine interest in everybody an outflowing Christian love. Each Christian has a part in this "making increase in the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "Love" is the last word which closes off the doctrinal part of Ephesians. The reason for this is that gifts do not continue in the glory they are for the building up of the body on earth. The body grows until complete when the last soul is saved just as the Holy Temple grows until the last stone is put in place again when the last soul is saved. In the glory gift will no longer be needed as it was during the growing phase of the Church in this world. So Paul writes "love never fails...but whether there are prophecies they shall fail...whether there is knowledge it shall vanish away...for we know in part, and we prophecy in part...for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face...and now abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love" 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

#### Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.9 (4:1-6)

#### THE SEVEN UNITIES ON EARTH

The first three verses of Chapter 4 are really one in content, although broken down in our Bibles. They must be linked to the last three verses of Chapter 2 which precede the parenthesis as these three verses terminate it.

#### A Brief Glance at the First Three Verses

Verse 1—In this verse Paul implores the Ephesians to walk worthy of the vocation with which they are called. We know what this calling is because this is "the cause" Paul writes about in 3:1 That the Ephesians "are built together for an habitation of God in the Spirit" 2:22. This link brings us back to the subject of ourselves on earth, that is to Chapter 2 not ourselves in heaven and our heavenly calling 1:4, 5. In plain language then, Paul is imploring the Ephesians to walk worthy of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church on earth. As Paul nears the close of the doctrine of this letter he tends to emphasize the practical side of things on earth.

Verse 2—In this verse Paul tells us how to walk worthy of our vocation. Our vocation is that the Holy Spirit is present in the Church on earth, and since He is God we are to display "all lowliness and meekness" because these qualities alone are suited to man in the presence of God the Holy Spirit. But in the Church we are also in the presence of men, who often offend us, so we are to display "long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

Verse 3—In this verse Paul re-establishes the link with the Holy Temple in 2:20, 21. Living stones are continually being added to this Holy Temple as souls are saved. It is not completed yet, but growing, just like the body of Christ is. In Verse 3 Paul tells us how the stones are mortared together in the building. It is by the bond of peace. Note that Paul does not tell us to endeavor to keep the unity of the body but the unity of the Spirit. This is connected with our vocation again the Spirit dwells in the Church. God keeps the unity of the body. It has never been broken and never can be. As for the unity of the Spirit, it was publicly displayed at the beginning Acts 2:1-4 but was broken by division of the Church. We ignored the apostle's fervent plea that we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is from this point this exhortation to keep the unity of the Spirit the mortar of peace which holds together the living stones of the Holy Temple that the Apostle proceeds to the subject of the seven unities on earth.

## The Seven Unities—Introductory Considerations

It is an important principle that true unity flows from the knowledge of God. When this is given up division, chaos, disintegration follow. In the Holy City Jerusalem "the street of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The meaning of this language is that in the glory everybody will walk the same way for there is only one street because it is a city of light where God is perfectly known. This explains why the seven unities are located precisely in this part of Ephesians, because the mind of God has been perfectly revealed in the doctrine preceding the 7 unities. Unity is of God.

The fourth chapter opens with a plea for unity. Then follows a consideration of seven unities which are of God and therefore cannot be broken. These unities are characteristic of Christianity on earth. Thus we have seven unities characterizing our heavenly calling, and seven unities pertaining to earthly things.

### The Seven Unities Characterizing the Profession of Christianity on Earth

There is ONE body and  
ONE Spirit as ye have been also called in  
ONE hope of your calling  
ONE Lord  
ONE faith  
ONE baptism  
ONE God and Father of all Eph. 4:4:6

As a help in understanding these unities we will propose an illustration. Suppose you are standing at the rim of a pool of quiet water. You throw a stone in the center of the pool and a series of concentric circles form in it, beginning where the stone hit the water and ending at the pool's edge. Now let us apply the illustration to the seven unities of Eph. 4.

#### The Three Unities of the Inner Circle—Those Who Are Members of Christ's Body

Church always closest to Christ. Three unities characterize it. The first two one body and one Spirit the indissoluble unity of the body. It is the Holy Spirit who unites Christ the Head of the body to His members on earth. In Chapter 2 Paul told us there is one body 2:16 and one Spirit 2:18 but there the emphasis is on our heavenly calling here it is on the earth. The third thing characterizing us is that we are called in "one hope of your calling." The hope of our calling here is receiving the inheritance with Christ. Christ, the Head of His one body the Church, to whom we are united by one Spirit, will make this one hope good to us through grace, in the Kingdom of God publicly displayed.

#### The Four Unities of the Next Circle—the Public Profession of Christianity

The first three of these four unities characterize the public profession of Christianity the last is even more wide ranging. First one Lord, one faith, one baptism. A person who publicly embraces Christianity must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, the Christian faith, and submit to the ordinance of baptism. But at this point we come across an anomaly. There are people who have publicly professed Christianity and been baptized who were never born again and will never be in heaven. Simon Magus was one Acts 8:24 and he has many followers. Attracted by the benefits accruing to man from leading a Christian life, multitudes over the centuries "joined the Church" as the expression goes, without being joined to the Lord in His one body. True Christians and nominal believers met together in an outward public unity the common profession of the Christian faith. With some the profession was real with others feigned. Here then is a unity of profession not like the first unity the inner circle. Yet it was allowed by God, not as the expression of His mind for His people, but as a means of sheltering them from the storms of persecution which so often assailed the true Church. Furthermore it extended creature blessings to man generally as the fruits of Christianity such things as the abolition of slavery, torture; piracy and on the positive side the passing of just laws based often on Scripture precepts, the founding of hospitals, universities, etc. (Remarkable confirmation of this is the way the old evils have returned in the twentieth century as the public profession of Christianity has waned.) The Lord visualized these conditions prevailing in those parts of the world where Christianity was publicly professed in His parable of the mustard tree Matt. 13:31-32. The mustard seed, like Christianity, started out small in the earth, but as it grew great in outward profession it sheltered the birds of the air.

We will now consider the last unity of the second circle "one God and Father of all." This last of the seven unities has a wide ranging outreach. For this reason we must clearly understand the distinction between God as a Father of all men in creation and as a Father to His adopted sons in redemption our special relationship, which is not shared by any except the blood-redeemed. When I was a young man liberal theologians used to prate about "the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God." They still do, but nobody listens to them. Two world wars and the gathering darkness in the world have shattered delusions of human brotherhood, and as for God they have forgotten Him. Men are only truly brothers who have salvation through the blood of Christ. Only such know God as their Father through that redemption which also makes them His sons. On the other hand God is undeniably a Father to all men in nature which is the correct interpretation of the Scripture here. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" Mal. 2:10. Read Paul's speech to the Athenians Acts 17:25-28 it is enlightening in this regard. God fills the earth with minerals, oil, water, timber, crops, a variety of life forms, and riches of every conceivable form for our use and enjoyment. He makes no distinction as to His sun shining and His rain falling on just or unjust. This is because man was made in the image and likeness of God, and so has a relationship to God in nature. But as already stressed, to have a relationship to God in sonship we must love God John 8:41-42.

Before closing off this last of the seven unities we might distill a lesson from the theme of expansion underlying their presentation. Surely the great thought is that the ever-expanding circles are foreshadowings of God's plans for man in the future. The Church, because of its union with Christ, the Heir of all things, will be the center from which blessing will radiate to man. In the coming kingdom the world will be so filled with blessing that "they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying 'know the Lord' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more" Jer. 31:34. "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" Isa. 11:9. It is the writer's belief that

the Scripture "that in all things He might have the preeminence" Col. 1:18 is an assurance that more will be saved than lost.\*1 The reasons Christians think otherwise is that they narrow their thoughts of salvation down to the Church their own experience level instead of looking at it as only one of the families in heaven and earth. Of those who are saved, however, the Church will always be the crown jewel in the diadem of the King, understanding God's thoughts, loving Him, and being cherished by Christ. This calls to mind Sir E. Denny's lines:

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.8 (3:14-21)

#### PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER—THAT DIVINE POWER MIGHT WORK IN THE EPHESIANS TO PRODUCE A SUITED STATE OF SOUL

Paul had told the Ephesians that he was a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles and they were Gentiles. They had believed the gospel, which told them they were to share equally with the Jews in the coming inheritance. But faith is a fragile plant, needing constant watering. Even the faith of the spiritual Ephesians could be shaken by the apparent inconsistency of the Apostle's position. He had told them they were to rule the universe with Christ but he himself was in chains and the kingdom he preached seemed remote. Paul implores them not to be discouraged because of the trials he suffered for them. They need to be strengthened by inner power, which only God can give. Such is the inlet to the Apostle's second prayer.

He begins with "for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." But for what cause does he do this? Why for the same cause as in 3:1 The last link with the revealed secret before the great parenthesis is introduced. This shows that the Apostle has the revealed secret before him in both cases. Also each of the two apostolic prayers flows from the title of "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" at the beginning of the first chapter. In the first prayer God is addressed as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" here as "the Father" (of our Lord Jesus Christ) "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." When Christ took "a bondman's form in the likeness of men" Phil. 2:7 God became the Father of glory to Him. "Father" implies a spring or source and it was God's thought to find glory in a Man that is, in His own Son as Man. But as a Father God would have a family, standing in the same relationship to Him as the Man in whom He has found all His glory. The family here however goes far beyond the Church, although we are included in it as those closest to His heart. It embraces all God's family in that universal sphere which the Church shall rule every family in the heavens and on earth. The Name of "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is now universal as the Name of Jehovah was localized as the Name of covenant relationship between God and the Jew. As already mentioned "every family" goes far beyond the Church, although including it. For example the Old Testament saints constitute a family although they form no part of the church. Babies, and children who died too young to hear or understand the gospel would constitute a family mentally retarded people too for God's principle is that He only judges responsible man.\*1 Think how vast a family "the Church of the Firstborn" must be Heb. 12:23. The holy angels who never sinned are another family for it is "every family in the heavens and on earth" a wide expression. And then there is Israel on earth.\*2

But out of all these great families Paul prays especially for the Ephesians that God would give them a gift. God had given Paul a gift to administer the grace of God to them 3:2. Further God had given Paul a gift of the grace of God 3:7 and finally a gift of "this grace" to preach the gospel to the Gentiles -3:8. Now he asks from the same God who had given gifts to him so liberally, that the Ephesians might be given "according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man." The inner man is the new man in Christ Jesus the holy and spiritual nature which receives, understands, and obeys divine communications. Our old nature cannot. The inner man is capacity the Holy Spirit is power. Notice how the power and the glory go together here verse 16 and at the close verse 20. Engines vary in size and kind that is capacity but they are all useless without some source of power to energize them. So with Christians. We remain idle, unable to do useful work for God unless the energy of the Holy Spirit moves us. It is sad to see a great turbine rusting in idleness sadder still to see a Christian whom God has endowed with capacity lying idle because the power of the Spirit is missing in his life. This always happens when we grieve the Spirit 4:30 by allowing the flesh in our life.

Now we move on from capacity the new man and power the Holy Spirit to another subject love. In the first prayer the eyes of the Ephesians' heart were to be enlightened. But here Christ is to dwell there through faith. "Being rooted and grounded in love in order that you may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height" 3:17 it does not say of what but probably of the revealed secret, although we cannot dogmatize here. However we do know that the common thought that the love of Christ is meant is not tenable because this is considered separately after "height." But the effect of Christ dwelling in our hearts cannot be debated. It will stir our hearts' affections toward every other member of Christ's body on earth. We will love them as Christ loves us. If we are rooted and established in love we can, with all saints, grasp what is the breadth and length and depth and height. God does not communicate His thoughts to those who fail to display His nature as love toward "all saints" for He has no favorites in His family. But to return to "the breadth and length and depth and height." The measurements are not stated, but the terms would be meaningless unless they existed in some mind. The thought is that only God can measure what is involved. Nor are we told what is to be measured. We form a spiritual conception of these things, then, as Christ dwells in our hearts a knowledge of what is infinite, immeasurable to us but known to God the display of the divine glory in the revealed secret. The Apostle continues "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." The revealed secret gives us the scope of God's counsels. This is knowledge. But the love of Christ surpasses knowledge for it fills instead of merely measuring. It is also a measure we understand for the fullness of God is Christ. Oh to be filled with Christ. With such a thought we come to the doxology verses 20 and 21.

The second prayer may now be briefly summarized. It concerns the effects of our union with Christ. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith v.17 then we survey the outreach of His glory Isa. 7:11 et seq. can be connected with this then we are filled with Christ v.19 and then at the close the power of God in us but here it is that God may be glorified "unto Him be glory in The Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." because Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. All is to deepen our practical enjoyment of the love of Christ.

#### A Comparison of the Two Prayers

From what we have considered of the second prayer it can be clearly seen that it is subjective as the first prayer was objective. It is about our state, as the first prayer was about our standing. Each prayer can be better understood by comparison with the other. Many of the

expressions used stand in contrast to one another, and a comparison of them is worthwhile.

The power and the glory are the parent thoughts of both prayers. The Apostle, for example, begins and ends both prayers with "glory." In the first prayer he begins by addressing "the Father of glory" i.e. God seeking His glory and ends with the glory of Christ (a Man in supreme authority sitting on God's throne, and Head of the Church the Man in whom God has found all His glory): It is the glory of Christ of which the Apostle writes. It is God's thoughts about the glory of His own Son.

The second prayer begins with "the riches of His glory" and ends with glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout eternal ages. This is the application of the knowledge imparted to us in the first prayer to our actual state so we may glorify God. Again the second prayer is based on the riches of His glory while in the first prayer we are to be to the praise of His glory. The first prayer is concerned with the power which worked for us in Christ's resurrection, raising us up with Him the second prayer is concerned with the power working in us "now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which works in us." From these comparisons two common themes, differing in their application, emerge the power and the glory. In both prayers these parent thoughts are cemented together by love "the bond of perfectness" Col. 3:14. Thus it was the love which the Ephesians had to all the saints 1:15 which made the Apostle bow his knees in the first prayer. In the second prayer it is the love of Christ which is the spring of the doxology at the close a note of worship, which, now it has been struck, will continue throughout eternal ages.

In the first prayer the Apostle is concerned that we might see certain truths he sets before our eyes for example the inheritance and have our affections stirred by them so we understand our portion. In the second prayer it is more the working of divine power in us to produce a state of soul ending in the worship of the One who transcends all knowledge and leads us into what exceeds knowledge 3:19 the love of Christ. It is remarkable that the second prayer differs from the first in that it has a clearly defined termination "Amen." You cannot go beyond divine love. "There abideth these three faith, hope, and love." "Faith in the Lord Jesus" 1:15 was followed by "the hope of His calling" 1:18 and ends with "the love of Christ" 2:19. "And now these three remain faith hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." 1 Cor. 13:13. Love "is the bond of perfectness" Col. 3:14.

#### Paul's Two Prayers for the Ephesians and His Two Requests for Their Prayers

Later on in Ephesians we will come across an astonishing thing. Just as the Apostle prays twice for the Ephesians, so he makes two requests for their prayers. Even an Apostle needed the prayers of other believers. What is even more astonishing is that the Apostle's prayer requests are related to his own two prayers. We know that both of the Apostle's prayers were answered and those that were offered up for him too although this is going ahead of our subject. Prayer, while simple, and ever efficacious before the throne of grace, has thus a special teaching in Ephesians. It is related to the doctrine of the one body. Paul prays to the Head who answers his requests through His members they in turn pray to the Head for Paul and the Head answers their requests in Paul. What a golden link of unity prayer is in Ephesians.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.15 (1:23)

#### CHRIST AND THE CHURCH IN FOUR FIGURES

In the previous chapter we looked at the Church as the object of Christ's love and devotion to her. Precious as this is we would miss the big picture if our thoughts stopped there. Ephesians is the epistle of the Church and affords us a composite picture of the union of Christ and the Church in four figures the body of Christ, the Holy Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Bride. When the Lord was on earth He fulfilled three of these figures in His Person the Body, the Tabernacle and the Temple. He will one day be the bridegroom of the bride the complement of the remaining figure. But that is future in heaven, not earth. On earth "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" John 1:14. This gives us His body and the Tabernacle ("dwelt" is literally "tabernacled"). Then in the following chapter the Lord states that His body is the Temple John 2:19-21. However the teaching implicit in these figures could not be understood until Christ was glorified and the Holy Spirit sent down to earth to become our Teacher John 14:26. Just as the Holy Spirit is our Teacher, so is the Ephesian letter our textbook.

Ephesians is the epistle of the Church not in its practical setting that is Corinthians but as God sees it. Paul spent much time in Corinth and Ephesus laying the foundation of His Church work in Corinth and attaining the zenith of that work in Ephesus, where he taught the elders "all the counsel of God" Acts 20:27. In his letter to the Ephesians we find four views of the Church the object of God's counsels in Christ which we have considered one at a time as they arose in the text. The Church was viewed as the body and bride of Christ figures of living things and as the Holy Temple and Tabernacle figures of buildings, but specifically of buildings associated with worship and God's presence.

While it has pleased God to give us four separate figures of the Church, it was clearly not His thought that we should look at them in isolation from one another. For there is another way to look at these four figures that is to group and compare them. When they are related to one another and to their setting in the display of God's purposes, still further instruction is afforded us. In this connection our approach will be to study the origin of the four figures of the Church following which we will see what we can learn from grouping and comparing certain of the figures. May this deepen our understanding of our union with Christ, our longing for His presence, wean our affections from this present evil world, and cause our hearts to burn with love for Christ.

#### The Origins of the Four Figures of the Church

The Tabernacle (tent) stands apart from the other three figures on several counts. It is the only figure of the Church not conveyed to an Apostle by the Lord. Further, it is not confined to the Church as the others are. It is used as a figure both in time and in eternity which the others are not. It is God's earliest thought of dwelling with man, conveyed to Moses on the mount, and God's last thought when we are on high Rev. 21:3. The Tabernacle is taken up in 2:22 as a figure of the Church being the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is used as a figure first of God dwelling with the Jews and then with the Church which is predominantly Gentile. The only basis on which God can dwell with man is the shed blood of Christ. God looked ahead to this when He sheltered Israel from His hatred of sin by providing a provisional

sacrifice the blood of the Passover Lamb in Egypt. The final view of the Tabernacle is the dwelling of God, not with Israel or the Gentiles, but with men the race in a future eternity. This is the closing thought of the Church the Tabernacle of God with men.

This leaves us with the three figures of the Church which the Lord conveyed to His Apostles. Peter received his figure of the Church from the Lord on earth the figure of the Holy Temple. Paul received his figure of the Church from the Lord in glory the figure of the one body.\*1 These revelations agree with the roles of each Apostle. Peter was the Apostle to the Jews the man of the earth Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles the heavenly man. John, received his figure of the Church as the bride of Christ by vision in the isle of Patmos Rev. 1:1. This too was fitting, for John lay in Jesus' bosom when He was on earth. Additionally, all four figures of the Church are found in Paul's writings, since he was a minister of the Church Col. 1:25. In Ephesians he presents his own distinctive line of truth first the body 1:23 then Peter's line the Holy Temple 2:20, 21 next what came to us through Moses the Tabernacle 2:22. He presents the bride last in the fifth chapter. Partly this is because the bride is the last of the three figures in time sequence. Partly too it leaves room for the more detailed coverage of the bride in Revelation. So it is excluded from the doctrinal part of Ephesians and presented in the practical part, with the emphasis on Christ's love to the Church.

How Certain Figures of the Church in Combination Illustrate Rejection, Rule and Rest.

Rejection the Church on Earth Under the Figures of the Body of Christ and the Holy Temple the Body and the Holy Temple Go Together. Since Both Are Viewed As Growing and Therefore Incomplete, the Linkage Is Obvious. Growth Comes From the Continuous Addition of Saved Souls to the Church in the Period From Pentecost to the Rapture. During This Period the Things Which Characterize the Body and the Holy Temple in Combination Are the Rejection of Christ and His People by the World, Our Physical Distance From Christ Who Is in Heaven While We Are on Earth, but Our Union With Him in Spite of This.

The rejection is very pointed in the figure of the body, for Christ our Head is in heaven because man crucified Him. They cried 'away with this Man,' seeking to banish Him from the world. He is still here though, in the members of His body, the Church, but we share His rejection in the world for we are one with Him. So too with the figure of the Holy Temple. Every temple has a priesthood and Peter tells us that we are royal priests that is rulers in a kingdom. The Holy Temple in its future setting will be the seat of our rule but for the present we cannot exercise our royal priesthood as it is intended because the world has rejected the Cornerstone of the Holy Temple Christ.

Next there is the thought of our physical distance from Christ. In the figure of the body He is pictured in heaven whereas we His members are on earth. The figure of the Holy Temple suggests worship at a distance for there are barriers to temple worship. Not that there are any hindrances to our worship, of course, but simply that we are not physically present before the Lord as worshippers as we will be in Rev. 4:4,10,11 That is the thought.

Finally there is the compensation for rejection and physical separation in the common thought of union. In the figure of the body we gaze into heaven as Stephen did and see our glorified Head in heaven. We see ourselves united to Him and represented there in the dignity of sonship. In the figure of the Holy Temple we see ourselves united to Christ our Cornerstone on earth and to the other living stones in the Holy Temple. To complete the golden chain of unity think of it as a divine system in action. First there is Christ the Head of the body in heaven. From heaven He directs His members on earth. Then on earth those members worship Him in the Holy Temple as His holy priests. This completes the cycle, for the worship ascends to Christ our Head in heaven. While figurative, this sketches in our minds a picture of how the Church operates now it affords us a vision of the linkage between heaven and earth while we are left here awaiting the return of our absent Lord.

Rule the Church in heaven during the millennial reign of Christ under the figures of the holy temple and the Bride As soon as the rapture takes place the body and the Holy Temple, which were both growing on earth, cease to grow. We are in heaven the Church is complete. Furthermore, the physical distance which separated us from our absent Lord has ended we are present before Him. To indicate this a new figure is introduced to replace that of the body. This figure is the bride, which speaks of union in nearness as the body spoke of union at a distance. The figure of the Holy Temple is retained. It assumes a new and more important role than when it was on earth.

The Temple in Scripture is figurative of divine rule. Solomon's temple in Jerusalem was God's throne on earth. Every temple has a priesthood and so has the Holy Temple. Peter tells us that believers are holy priests for worship 1 Peter 2:5 and royal priests for rule 1 Peter 2:9. There is no change in our role as worshippers in glory, but there is in our royal priesthood. When we were on earth our royal priesthood was confined to the discernment of events in the world as they related to prophecy a passive role for we are not to reign as kings now 1 Cor. 4:8. When we take our place in the Holy City God begins a series of divine judgments on the earth which end with the crushing of all Christ's foes and the introduction of His millennial kingdom. Then we actively become royal priests wielding authority over the earth from the seat of power the Holy Temple in the heavens. The inheritance of 1:10 our rule with Christ over the universe has its center in the Holy Temple.\*2 How we should covet the reward of the overcomer in Philadelphia in that day to be made a pillar "in the Temple of My God" Rev. 3:12.

Rule too is the leading thought of the bride in association with Christ. The woman is to rule the house 1 Tim. 5:14 in the sense of managing its affairs. That is why the bride is called the Holy City Jerusalem in Rev. 21:9, 10. The Holy City Jerusalem IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST ASSOCIATED WITH HIM IN UNIVERSAL RULE. A city is a system of administration and this is "the administration of the fullness of times" 1:10 that is the millennium, when the heavenly city is to rule over the world with Christ. The thought is a simple yet profound one.

Rest the Church in heaven and earth in the eternal state under the figures of the Bride and the Tabernacle We have pointed out that during the millennium the figure of the body on earth yields to the figure of the Bride in heaven, although the figure of the Holy Temple remains. The Holy Temple remains as the seat of rule because man in the flesh does not willingly submit to Christ's millennial rule, even though Satan is not there to tempt him Rev. 20:2, 3. Man is a fallen creature in his own right. When Satan is released from the abyss at the end of the millennium, man rebels against the kingdom, but his rebellion is quickly crushed Rev. 20:7-9. In quick succession the earth and the works in it are burned up 2 Peter 3:10 and the Great White Throne is set up in space to judge the unsaved dead who are then cast into the lake of fire. Having perfectly administered the kingdom as Man for one thousand years, Christ delivers it up to the Father "that God may be all in all" 1 Cor. 15:24-28. Time ceases. Eternity begins. This is what Peter calls "the day of God" 2 Peter 3:12 when God finds perfect rest. In vision John sees a new heavens and a new earth. Righteousness dwells there 2 Peter 3:13 it is not enforced as in the kingdom it dwells, because all who are counted worthy of that blessed scene have eternal life. Their portion is to enjoy God forever. In the eternal state the Church is seen coming down from God out of the new heaven to the new earth Rev. 21:2 for the range of the universe is ours in Christ Hallelujah!

The consequence of this is that the Holy Temple fades from the scene as a figure of the Church, for rule is not needed where righteousness dwells. The figure of the body on earth (distance) yielded to the figure of the bride in heaven (nearness); the figure of the Holy Temple in heaven (rule over the earth) yielded to the figure of the Tabernacle (God's dwelling with man). The bride finds rest in the home of her husband see Ruth 1:9; the Tabernacle of God is with men. Thus at the end God has returned to His original thoughts a bride for Christ Gen. 24 and the tabernacle Ex. 40. The two final figures of the church then the Bride and the Tabernacle are the same as God's original thoughts of Christ and the Church in type at the beginning.

God's original thoughts of Christ and the Church are important because, as we have just seen, they shine forth in all their beauty in a coming, future eternity. They could not be understood by Moses, even though he was inspired to write the story of the call of the bride in Gen. 24 and to set up the tabernacle after the pattern revealed to him on the mount. For the secret of Christ was hidden in God now it is revealed. But he told us how Abraham, figure of God the Father, instructed his servant Eliezer of Damascus, figure of God the Holy Spirit, to seek a bride for Isaac his risen son, figure of God the Son as Man risen from the dead. The bride, Rebecca, is a figure of the Church, the bride of the risen Son. We use the expression "the risen son" because it is the key to a great truth. In Gen. 22 Abraham obeyed God, bound his son Isaac to the altar, and prepared to slay him. The explanation of Abraham's act is given us in Heb. 11:17-19. It was that God had promised him that his only son Isaac would have children and he knew that God could not lie. If God then told him to sacrifice Isaac he was confident that God would later resurrect him from the dead. His risen son Isaac, therefore, would beget children. God prevented Abraham from slaying his only begotten son, although He Himself gave up His only begotten Son for us all. Only after Abraham had received Isaac from the dead as a figure could Abraham's servant Eliezer seek a bride for the risen son. It is remarkable that Eliezer came from Damascus, the city to which Paul, the great Apostle of the Church, was traveling when Christ arrested him. So the Holy Spirit could not seek a bride for Christ until He too was a dead and risen Man.

There is another great thought in the call of the bride. This is that Abraham's command to his servant was that the bride must be "of his own kindred" other women, no matter how fair, were unsuitable Gen. 24:3,4. So we, the Spirit-born, are "of His own kindred" sharers of Christ's own life eternal life, which life is in the Son. "He who believes on the Son has eternal life" John 3:36. After Rebecca was found to be "of his own kindred" she mounted a camel and started on an unknown way to an unseen man, guided by Abraham's servant. So we go through this world on an uncharted pathway, guided by the Holy Spirit, to a Christ whom we have not yet seen, but love see 1 Peter 1:8. At the end of the journey Rebecca dwells in a tent as Isaac's wife, the object of his love, just as the Church does at the end Rev. 21:3.

It is beautiful to see, in this account, how God was visualizing the completion of His purposes in a future day the bride and the Tabernacle (tent) God dwelling in love with man and man with Him all founded on the death and resurrection of Christ.

#### The Great Thought of the Church—God Dwelling With Man and Man With God

We are now ready to summarize what we have learned from the four figures of the Church. Three of the figures, those conveyed to the Apostles, all have one common teaching union with Christ. In the figure of the body the Head and members are united in the Holy Temple the living stones are united to Christ the cornerstone and to one another in the bride the bridegroom and the bride are united. The body as a figure of the Church at the present time gives us union with a rejected Christ who is in heaven (Paul's line). The Holy Temple carried on to its ultimate in the glory gives us the answer to the rejection of the body rule with Christ (Peter's line). The bride gives us union in glory union in nearness and affection (John's line).

These three figures then, with their varying truths, stand as one highlighted against the Tabernacle. The three figures all speak of one thing union with Christ. The figure of the Tabernacle links up with the great thought of union with Christ, though different from it. The thought of the tabernacle is that God dwells with man and man with God. If we link all four figures together, then, this truth emerges that as the result of our union with Christ (the first three figures) God dwells with us and we with God (the Tabernacle the fourth figure). Such is the great thought of the Church which we can never repeat too frequently, because it is so little understood THAT AS A RESULT OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST GOD WILL DWELL WITH MAN AND MAN WITH HIM wondrous thought.

Note that this great thought of the Church does not emerge in time but in the future eternity. John saw it in vision. The rejection of the body is answered by rule in the Holy Temple. But that is time in both cases. In the eternal state we find only the Bride and the Tabernacle. Why should the figures of the Church lead up to this great thought only in eternity? The answer is that THE CHURCH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TIME IT BELONGS TO ETERNITY. It was destined in a past eternity to dwell with God and God with it in a future eternity.

Thus the figurative teaching, elaborately scattered throughout Scripture and brought together here in our deliberations, agrees with Ephesian doctrine. This is that AS A RESULT OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST GOD DWELLS WITH US 2:22 AND WE DWELL WITH HIM 1:4. The only reason God can dwell with us and we with Him is our union with Christ. This union is a holy union SO THAT GOD DWELLS WITH US IN HARMONY WITH HIS OWN NATURE WITHOUT ANY LOSS OF HIS GLORY.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.7 (1:10)

#### PAUL'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE REVEALED SECRET

I once had a visit from a spiritual Christian from New Zealand. During our conversation he remarked "there are no 'ifs' in Ephesians." Actually there are two 'ifs' in Ephesians here 3:2 and 4:21 but I think he must have known this too and was really commenting on the absolute, unqualified nature of Ephesian truth. "The letter kills but the Spirit gives life" 2 Cor. 3:6. What is remarkable is that the 'if' in 4:21 is in connection with learning Christ, the 'if' in 3:2 is in connection with hearing what had been given to His Apostle. There are Christians today who deny the Apostle's greatness in the Church and the authority of his words. Their password is 'only Paul said that.' Consequently they suffer from a governmental blindness. They simply are incapable of understanding the great truths of the (revealed) secret. This is the force of the Apostle's word "if indeed you have heard of the administration of the grace of God which has been given to me toward you." The

Apostle simply states the truth it is not boasting but humility God gave him this gift for the good of the Ephesians. Then he emphasizes this further by stating "that by revelation the (revealed) secret has been made known to me." Furthermore Paul was not alone in receiving the revelation for "it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (The prophets mentioned here are New Testament prophets, the same as in 2:20. This is clear from the first part of verse 5 "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men" 3:5). The story of Peter and Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles should be re-read not only to see how God made the secret of Christ known to him as one of His holy Apostles, but also how Peter resisted the revelation because he was a Jew and Cornelius a Gentile. However though Paul points out that the secret of Christ was made known to others, it is his part in it we are to consider here.

#### The Secret of Christ—What Is It?

The meaning of this expression is given to us in Col. 1:27 Christ in the Gentiles the hope of glory a hope completely unknown to the prophets. It is spelled out in the sixth verse "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." The Gentiles? The very thought was stunning to the Jew. Fellow-heirs of the Kingdom of God the inheritance with them? Search as he might through the Old Testament Scriptures he could find no such thought as this. As for the inheritance, he confined it to the promised land in his thinking. An inheritance consisting of the universe itself was incomprehensible to him. As for the Church "the same body" united to its Head in heaven, a rejected Messiah where was that? He was looking for a triumphant Messiah on earth, not a rejected one in heaven. And to think that Christ should be no more a purely Jewish Messiah! As for God's promise in Christ by the gospel, all he knew about was the promise of life on earth "this do and you shall live" Luke 10:28. But here is a different promise "and this is the promise that He has promised us eternal life" 1 John 2:25. And eternal life in the soul brings with it the promise of the incorruptible body in which, as we have previously pointed out, we receive the inheritance.

Could the Jew not have read Isa. 53 you say, and seen in that how Messiah must suffer first and be glorified after? Well, Peter tells us that the prophets inquired diligently into these matters (as the angels also desired to do) only to be told that they concerned us, not themselves 1 Peter 1:10-12. When the Ethiopian eunuch went to Jerusalem to inquire, he found no help in its famed rabbinical schools Acts 8:34 so God sent Philip to him to open his eyes.

The thought of the Church containing Gentiles "the secret of Christ" could never be understood by man until it was divinely revealed, for it was hidden in God 3:9 not even hidden in the Scriptures. God conceived the thought of the Church in a past eternity and destined it for a future eternity. Thus although the Church, as a practical matter has to be gathered out in time by the preaching of the gospel, in the mind of God it belongs solely to eternity. Time is related to Israel the Church to eternity. This statement can be proved by quoting two Scriptures which give us our respective origins. For Israel Christ says "come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" Matt. 25:34. On the other hand we are chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world" 1:4. The kingdom is the climax of God's ways in the earth the Church of His purposes. The Church will always be closer to His heart because of its purchase price

#### The Two Ministries of the Apostle Paul

In his Colossian letter Paul throws light on the passage we are about to consider. He tells us there of his two ministries. He was a minister of the gospel Col. 1:23 and a minister of the Church Col. 1:25. As a minister of the gospel Paul's commission was primarily to the Gentile world 3:8 but the gospel itself has no boundaries Col. 1:23. As a minister of the Church Paul was responsible to complete the Word of God Col 1:25\*1 and in our Chapter to enlighten all with the knowledge of the administrative government of the revealed secret in his hands.

To bring these comments into perspective, what Paul is talking about is his personal role in the world and Church of New Testament times. The other apostles and prophets had their role this is Paul's. What we are about to consider then is historical and can best be understood by re-reading that portion of the Acts of the Apostles which records the Apostle's life and ministry.

#### Paul Preaches the Unsearchable Riches of Christ Among the Gentiles

Paul had a divine commission as a minister of the gospel which was never laid on other servants of the Lord with such force. He dared not ignore it "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" 1 Cor. 9:16. Still he anticipates objections to him personally because of his former role as a persecutor of the Church. So he frankly admits his past history, taking the ground that he is less than the least of all saints because of it. But this in no way disqualified him from being a minister of the gospel, for the gift of the grace of God was given to him. So much for the objections. On the positive side we find the working of divine power in Paul. The foundations of the prison were shaken when he brought the gospel into the jail at Philippi Acts 16:16.

But perhaps you think why does Paul use such an expression as "the unsearchable riches of Christ" to describe his gospel preaching. Why doesn't he stress the fundamentals of the gospel instead the ruin of man forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ and so on. We depend upon it he did. But the gospel Paul preached took in the widest possible range of things not only the fundamentals but such themes as the second coming of Christ and the revealed secret too. Unsearchable riches indeed! The gospel is like a rainbow. We might compare the red in the rainbow to the fundamentals of the gospel but what fools we would be to ignore the other colors. Paul never did. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" he told the Ephesian elders Acts 20:27. He commended them to God and the Word of His grace, which was able to build them up and give them an inheritance. He had faithfully preached the Kingdom of God among them. Note the recurrence, in this address to the elders, of the leading truths found in the Ephesian letter the divine counsels, the inheritance, the Kingdom of God. Clearly the gospel starts in the world but continues on in the Church as our understanding of all it contains is expanded. We progress to the other colors of the rainbow, learning more daily of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Such is the range of the gospel the full gospel Paul preached.

#### Paul's Administration of the Revealed Secret in the Early Church

Now we come to the administration (or government) of the revealed secret which Paul was to make all see that is, all created intelligences in heaven and on earth not men only but also angels the "principalities and powers" of verse 10. And what they would see was the mind of God in the union of Jew and Gentile in the mystical body of Christ, the Church. This would be opposed by the Jew who wanted to maintain his

exclusive religious privileges Abraham, Moses, the law, the Temple, the inspired Scriptures. God, however, instituted a governmental administration of His revealed secret through His Apostle Paul to enforce His will. Thus we have the stage, the actors, and the audience. The play was staged in New Testament times, for this is the history of the early Church. And the play script is the Acts of the Apostles. Paul was the Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God 1:1. In three missions he administered that will in the world of his day, displaying the government of the revealed secret.

Paul's first mission. This met violent Jewish opposition to the revealed secret the union of Jew and Gentile in one body, the Church. At Antioch in Pisidia the Jews contradicted and blasphemed. Paul had to tell them that he was turning to the Gentiles because they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. It was hatred of the revealed secret which made the Jews stone Paul at Lystra. But Paul returns to Antioch, the missionary center, with his first mission accomplished.

Paul's second mission Paul made it clear that although he was administering the revealed secret he was doing so under divine direction. When God overruled his preaching plans Paul obeyed and patiently waited for the Lord's mind. In a night vision he was told to go to Macedonia. This shows us the beauty of Paul's administration of the revealed secret. Although he doesn't understand why he is forbidden to go to Asia and Bithynia, he obeys and waits for marching orders, so to speak. The door into Europe is opened and with it great gospel blessing. Out of weakness a few women praying at the river side Acts 16:13 came strength the foundations of the prison were shaken Acts 16:26. But this minister of the gospel also preached the revealed secret that God intended to bless the Gentiles equally with the Jews. He explained the common inheritance of all believers in the coming reign of Christ. Having listened to such sermons in the synagogues at Thessalonica, the Jews accused him before the rulers of the city of proclaiming Jesus as King. Clearly envy of God's purposes to bless the Gentiles was behind their "forbidding us to speak to the nations that they might be saved" 1 Thess. 2:14-16. But all was grace to the Gentiles. Before the Areopagus at Athens Paul summarized the history of the Gentiles as Stephen had once summarized the history of the Jews before the Sanhedrin. It began with forgetfulness of God and ended with the unknown God. But why shouldn't God, who is rich in mercy, call them back to Himself? When the Jews opposed him at Corinth Paul told them "your blood be upon your head I am pure; from henceforth I will go to the nations." Undeterred, they turned to violence, dragging Paul before Gallio's judgment seat. Paul finally left Corinth, visited Ephesus and Jerusalem and concluded his second mission at Antioch once more.

Paul's third mission Paul now received the fruit of the harvest fields of Europe. Because he obeyed the Holy Spirit previously (he did not preach in Asia when the Holy Spirit told him not to) God now gives him Asia, the capital city of which was Ephesus, as the crown jewel of his work. When his testimony in the synagogue at Ephesus was rejected, he separates the disciples from the synagogue. By this act he publicly "makes all see the administration of the (revealed) secret" 3:9. For now believing Jews and Gentiles meet together on the ground of their union into one mystical body of which Christ is the Head in heaven and they the members on earth. Out of the Church flows healing power to the world. "God wrought no ordinary miracles by the hands of Paul" Acts 19:11. It is important to see the reason for this. Christ performed great miracles to relieve man when He was personally on the earth. But now He is represented on the earth by His body, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit the same power by which He performed His miracles. Then just as Christ overthrew Satan's power when He was on earth, now the devil is attacked at the seat of his power, relieving man of his oppression, so that the Ephesians burn their occult books. Satan reacts by stirring up a riot at Ephesus, although the people thought they were championing the waning fortunes of their goddess. But the power of God prevails.

Paul departs for Jerusalem in spite of warnings. The elders of the Church at Jerusalem accuse him of teaching the Jews abroad apostasy from Moses. The Jews from Asia (the seat of his teaching ministry) see him in the Temple and he is beaten in the outer court. The soldiers of Rome rescue him. Then he addresses the Jews in his defense. They listen to him until he speaks of the revealed secret, at which point their anger becomes uncontrollable Acts 22:21, 22. It was the revealed secret they hated the will of God to bless Gentiles also. To protect him from the frenzy of the Jewish mob the Roman soldiers escort him to the safety of a nearby prison. While this incident is under review in a meeting convened by the Roman military, the Jewish High Priest unlawfully commands Paul to be struck in the mouth. More than forty Jews conspire to assassinate him. He publicly testifies before high public dignitaries but ends in Rome as a prisoner. Here he calls together the leading Jews and gives them a parting testimony. Here too he writes the prison letters Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon.

Such then was Paul's administration of the revealed secret an administration now past, but enshrined in immaculate detail on the inspired pages of Holy Scripture.

### The Two Administrations

The observant reader will by now have noticed that two administrations or systems of government have been presented for our consideration in the doctrinal part of Ephesians the Divine administration of 1:10 and the Pauline administration of 3:9. The Divine administration is presented first for it is a revelation of the thoughts and purposes of God; the Pauline administration is presented last, but comes first in point of time. We have already considered both these administrations in this book, but the question arises what can we learn from them.

The first lesson is that, under Paul's administration, the early Church expressed the mind and purpose of God that the body of Christ should be an undivided unity on earth subject to its Head in heaven. All created intelligences could observe that unbroken organic unity. Angels could look down and see the members of the body on earth 3:9 and learn the all-various wisdom of God from it; man could look up and see the Head in heaven, as Stephen did Acts 7:55. This is what Paul meant when he wrote "and to make all see what is the administration of the (revealed) secret" 3:9. True, the seeds of division existed there were schools of opinion at Corinth 1 Cor. 11:18 trouble makers like Diotrophes who threw people out of the Church 3 John: 10 infiltrators with evil teachings Jude 4. But the spiritual energy of the Apostles, who never forgot that Christ was the Head of the Church, held everything together.

After the departure of the Apostles from the Church the Headship of Christ was soon forgotten and the passage of time brought in division and breakup. No wonder that miracles ceased. The expression of the unity of the body of Christ before the world ceased. How then could power flow out to the world when the members of Christ's one body denied their unity to their Head and to one another? Today if I were in the City of Bombay and asked a Christian in that city to direct me to the Church of the living God, the body of Christ, where could he send me? Alas neither men, nor principalities and powers can see such a thing today. But God can. Looking down on Bombay He can identify each one of Christ's members in that city, regardless of how scattered they now are. All will be gathered together to meet Christ on the cloud

2 Thess. 2:1 at His coming. Then the unity which was originally seen by all on earth in apostolic times will be seen by all in heaven. And that unity will never be broken.

This brings to mind a story of my youth. As a young boy my father took me to the deathbed of an old believer. He had been an engineer in his day and had built many great bridges. But he was also a man who deeply loved our Lord Jesus Christ. I vividly remember how his mind wandered to the bridges he thought he was erecting once more over great rivers. "Quite a rig" he would, repeat. But father brought him back to divine things and the response showed that the new man never dies. He seemed to think he was in heaven and exclaimed in great satisfaction of spirit "Oh the oneness of that ONE BODY oh the unity of it." Soon we too shall see that unity in glory a unity never to be broken throughout eternal ages a unity of God. Hallelujah! May that day be hastened, Lord Jesus. Come, precious Savior, and take us to Thyself. Amen and amen.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.4 (1:15-23)

#### PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER THAT THE EPHESIANS MAY UNDERSTAND WHAT HE HAS JUST TAUGHT THEM

Paul temporarily ceases his teaching to tell the Ephesians he has heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, their love to all the saints that is, faith in their invisible Head, love to His visible members. He is constantly thankful for this and mentions them in his prayers. Spiritual as they were they still needed his prayers, for the teaching in his letter was too deep for them. Isn't it too deep for most Christians today? And there is good reason for this, for Paul has been revealing the thoughts and purposes of God from a past eternity. So he prays unceasingly for them that they might receive a special gift from God to understand what he has written to them. And what is this gift? Why it is "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him." The God of our Lord Jesus Christ to whom he prayed is also the Father of glory that is, the source, the originator of glory. He has found all His glory in Christ in Manhood the One who said "I have glorified Thee on the earth" John 17:4. The glory of the Father must be known not partially but fully. The gift of the spirit of wisdom and revelation would bring the Ephesians into the full knowledge of the Father of glory. He would have them know their privileges, the inheritance flowing out of them, and the power which brought them into them.

This is the first of two apostolic prayers in the Ephesian letter. The thoughts are so rich that they flood the soul like the rays of the rising sun, cheering us. If the lark soaring in the heavens bursts into song as the morning breaks, should not we with an infinitely greater prospect before us?

And so in this prayer the prayer for conscious knowledge the apostle prays that the Ephesians might be enlightened "in the eyes of your heart." A strange expression that "the eyes of your heart" too literal a rendering for some translators who prefer "the eyes of your understanding" or something similar. But God is wiser than man. The eye is the inlet to discernment the heart, not the mind, the way in which the knowledge of God is imparted. We learn God not wholly through the mind as in the human learning process, but also and primarily from affections occupied with Christ where He now is. That is what is meant by "the eyes of your heart."

#### The Apostle Prays That We Might Know the Hope of Our Calling

In simple language the hope of our calling here\*1 means the complete accomplishment of the purposes of God as made known to us in the first three blessings. This ranges from its origin in a past eternity to the present time and on to a future eternity which makes us heavenly men predestinated to sonship. The hope of our calling viewed as a present thing is the conscious realization of the dignity of our relationship to God our Father in choice and sonship. It goes on to a future eternity when all shall see the fruit of the divine counsels to make us one with Christ, and partakers of the divine nature. For in that heavenly glory, at ease in the presence of our Father, and beholding the glory of His Son, we shall share divine thoughts and affections.

#### The Apostle Prays That We Might Know That We Will Be Displayed Before the World in Glorified Bodies

The Apostle's next petition is that we might know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints that is that when the kingdom comes we will be publicly displayed before the world in radiant, glorified bodies. These are known as spiritual bodies in Scripture, which also calls our present bodies "natural bodies" 1 Cor. 15:44. Since an understanding of the natural body and its environment helps us to understand the spiritual body by way of contrast, we will consider both here.

The natural body. Our natural bodies belong to the Adam creation a passing flesh and blood condition. When man sinned God pronounced the judgment of death on his body but said nothing about his soul Gen 3:19. Born but to die, man also experiences in his body the effects of the fall in this world. Internally he suffers from hunger, thirst, disease, bodily weakness, the need for sleep; externally he suffers from the divided state of the world into which he is born. The Adam race is divided into male and female, into nations, religions, political systems, languages, wealth and poverty, literacy and ignorance, and so on. In every way, internally and externally then, man experiences the results of his departure from God in his body until finally he dies, and that body is sown in the earth in corruption, dishonor, and weakness 1 Cor. 15:42, 43. Still the question arises "if a man die shall he live again?" Job 14:14. Job, a Gentile, answers it this way "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold and not another though my reins be consumed within me" Job 19:25-7. Martha, a Jew, met that Redeemer of whom Job spoke. She too believed in resurrection, but only in a general way. Jesus told her that His own would be resurrected if dead and would never die if alive (that is at His second coming, although He did not reveal that truth to Martha) John 11:24-26. That is why He is called the Savior of the body Eph. 5:23.

Peter tells us that our present body is only a tent 2 Peter 1:13, 14; Paul that our future glorified body is the house we await expectantly. For "in these" (our natural bodies) "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" 2 Cor. 5:2. Our present bodies are completely inconsistent with the dignity of sonship to which we are predestined and unsuitable for our future reign with Christ

over the universe. So Paul tells us that we cannot enter into our inheritance in the kingdom of God in our natural flesh and blood bodies 1 Cor. 15:50. These will be resurrected from the dust if we have fallen asleep in Jesus or changed in a moment if we are alive when Jesus comes.

The spiritual body. While a great deal of the doctrine of the spiritual body is found in 1 Cor. 15, the teaching permeates the New Testament. We must, therefore, bring it together from the passages which refer to it, if we are to understand the subject. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body" 1 Cor. 15:44 is a plain statement that each body is separate and distinct. The spiritual body is incorruptible (negative) and characterized by power and glory (positive) 1 Cor. 15:42, 43 just the opposite of the natural body.

It was the Lord Himself who introduced the subject of the spiritual body when answering the Sadducees. To mock the doctrine of the resurrection they invented a story about a woman whose seven husbands died successively following which she also died. Who should have her in the resurrection this was their challenge. The Lord met this by pointing out that in the resurrection they neither married nor were given in marriage but are as the angels of God Mark 12:24,25 also Luke 20:35,36. The great mark of the Adam creation was the division of the race into male and female Gen. 1:27. But this was due to the need to continue life when the race itself was subject to death. How could such a division as male and female be perpetuated in a deathless scene the glory of God.\*2 The Lord clearly told us that it won't be. While the woman is forbidden to teach in the Church now 1 Tim. 2:12 it is also true that "there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" Gal. 3:28. So "let the woman learn" 1 Tim. 2:11 is in view of the eternal glory. Those who were women on earth will freely exercise their priesthood in the glory when the feeble state of the Adam body has yielded to the incorruptible, spiritual body. He has "made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" Rev. 1:6.

We now leave the subject of what the spiritual body is not that is, it is not male and female to what it is. Scripture makes it clear that our body is to be like the Lord's own glorious body Phil. 3:21. We will look at some of the Scriptures which tell us about the Lord's glorious body as a guide to what our own spiritual bodies will be like. First there is that familiar scene in John 20. The doors are shut but Jesus comes and stands in the midst. The ability to pass through matter, then, is a characteristic of the spiritual body. But this is so unnatural to our thinking that the disciples in the last chapter of Luke are terrified, and afraid at the Lord's appearance. They thought they had seen a spirit. To set their minds at rest the Lord invited them to gaze at His hands and feet and handle Him something they assuredly did as we know from the opening verse of the first epistle of John. He has a body of flesh and bone now, not flesh and blood, for the blood has been shed. Still, it is a man's body a spiritual body but not a spirit. As final conclusive proof He eats a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb, which no spirit can do. And it was as a Man He ascended to heaven. We could not ascend to heaven in our natural bodies, the life principle of which is breath Gen. 2:7. But we can and will in our spiritual bodies. Because the life principle of the spiritual body is spirit, space means nothing to it. We will be able to ascend from earth to meet the Lord in the clouds 1 Thess. 4:17 and descend from heaven to earth as well Rev. 21:10. Such bodies will be needed in our role of administrators of the universe with Christ, the Last Adam, the life giving spirit, the heavenly Man. Another scene which is full of instruction on this subject is the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, James and John up into this high mountain "and was transfigured before them and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as the light" Matt. 17:2. Now we are told that "as we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" 1 Cor. 15:49. Here is a conferred glory "when we shall shine in light divine, in glory never fading." Yes, our bodies will be effulgent with light, clothed with light, as Christ was on the holy mount. This is the promise to the overcomer in Sardis Rev. 3:4.

Then too the language barriers erected at the Tower of Babel will be gone. We will all speak one heavenly language, communicated to us instantaneously, no doubt, like Adam following his creation. Gone too will be all national and racial distinctions. No wonder we sing a new song in heaven "Thou wast slain and hast bought us for God with Thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and hast made us kings and priests to our God and we shall reign over the earth" Rev. 5:9. Finally mental powers commensurate with glorified bodies, suited to the Spirit born, the blood redeemed, are conferred on us. As the body is radiant so is the mind transcendent. We get an intimation of this on the Mount of Transfiguration Matt. 17:1-9. We will know saints who have been with the Lord thousands of years and they will know us, just as those on the holy mount knew one another. These are "the powers of the world to come" Heb. 6:5 powers too which will enable vast throngs to see the Lord at the same time. In our natural bodies how difficult it is for even a few thousand people to see one man. True, television allows crowds to see one person, but even so it is a feeble thing compared to the powers we will receive which will allow untold millions to see Christ.

So our bodies will be in every way suited to that sonship to which we are predestinated to that share of Christ's universal rule which the will of God has purposed for us. Time means nothing to such bodies, nor space, nor matter, and they will be effulgent with Christ's conferred glory.

The Apostle Prays That We Might Know the Greatness of God's Power Demonstrated in Christ's Resurrection and Ascension and Also That This Power Is Operative Toward Us

The reader should now consult the chart we have prepared to help us understand this part of the prayer. This chart makes it clear that God Himself permeates the prayer. Notice the seven references to "His" which are organized structurally into four central or "core" references with a single theme, and three other references with different themes. Of the three other references two precede the core references and one follows. This system of internal division ranges from v.18 of Chapter 1 to v.23.

We will first look at the four core references. Very clearly they are all about God's power. Now our natural inclination is to think of God's power in terms of natural phenomena awesome displays in nature such as exploding stars, sunspots, earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, and so on. The Old Testament certainly speaks of God's power that way. But in the New Testament the power of God is viewed in an entirely different way the raising of the

The Seven References to "His" in 1:18-23  
so that you should know what is the hope of  
HIS calling and what the riches of the glory of  
HIS inheritance in the saints and what

the surpassing greatness of  
HIS power toward us who believe according to the  
working of the might of  
HIS strength which He wrought in Christ when  
He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at  
HIS right hand in the heavenlies... and has put all things under  
HIS feet and gave Him to be head over all things  
to the Church which is  
HIS body.

Man Christ Jesus from among the dead and seating Him on God's throne. A Man on God's throne in the glory a risen Man this is new creation power and glory.

And this is the power which is brought before our souls as Paul prays "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of His strength which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him down at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" 1:21. Divine power, then, is looked at in two ways here resurrection and ascension. God has first of all raised a Man from the dead and secondly exalted that Man to His right hand (in Scripture always the figure of the place of power). In this prayer Christ is looked at as Man subject to the "Father of glory" and exalted by Him to the highest pinnacle of glory. "And has put all things under His feet" a figure derived from Oriental monarchs doing this literally to their subjugated enemies. But, you say, Christ has not subjugated His enemies yet. True, but possession of power and use of it are two different things. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" said the risen Lord Matt. 28:18 indicating not the use of that power as yet but its universality. So Paul writes "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor" Heb. 2:8, 9. This Scripture explains the division of the seven references to "His" in 1:18-23. God's power toward Christ (and so "toward us who believe") is the subject of the four core references. The three remaining references are split so as to surround the four core references to God's power toward Christ as the planets surround the sun.

The three split references give us what is and what is to be. What is speaks of Christ's corporate relationship to the Church. He is now in God's presence exercising His Headship over the Church from that exalted position. But we have not as yet seen our Head He is in heaven and we are on earth. This is the teaching of verses 22-23. What is to be is the subject of verse 18 when we are in glory with the Lord. At present this is a hope, but a hope fortified with the assurance that the same mighty power God used toward Christ He will yet use toward us. That mighty power is resurrection and ascension "and hath raised us up together" (the power of resurrection for we were dead in trespasses and sins) 2:1 "and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" 2:6 (as Christ ascended to glory so will we). In 2:6 of course this is viewed as complete "in Christ" here it is rather a hope, awaiting the exercise of divine power to bring us into the Father's presence in the glory and the enjoyment of our inheritance.

And so the one thing which separates us from the future glory is the exercise of divine power to bring us into it. The way God eventually uses His power is to bring the world into a series of sweeping divine judgments unparalleled catastrophes, the shadows of which are beginning to fall upon the world as I write. They are foretold in the Book of Revelation. They commence with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in the sixth chapter and continue on in ever increasing severity until none are left to challenge Christ's rightful claim to "all things" the universe and all created intelligences in it for "all things" were given into His hands by His Father see John 13:3.

The Introduction of Corporate Truth-Christ and the Church

Ephesians, although clearly the epistle of the Church, commences with the individual, his blessings, his future inheritance, his possession of the Holy Spirit as seal and pledge, followed by an apostolic prayer that we may understand these things in our hearts' affections. It is toward the close of this prayer that Paul introduces us to corporate truth the truth of the Church as the body of Christ. The reason for this is that in prayer we are in the presence of the Lord and it was in the presence of the Lord that Paul learned the truth that Christ is the Head of His body the Church. He was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians when Christ appeared to him. He recounts the incident to Agrippa "I could not see for the glory of that light." "Saul, Saul," the heavenly voice called out, "why are you persecuting Me?" At that moment he learned that Christ and His people are one. Christ is the Head of His body the Church. In persecuting those poor Christians he was persecuting Christ for they were the members of His body. The Lord did not ask Paul why he was persecuting His people. No. While that would have been true it would not have shown him the enormity of his crime. "Why are you persecuting Me?" told him that while the Head of the body was speaking to him from heaven he had been persecuting the members on earth. The unity of Christ's body the Church meant that he was persecuting the Christ of God. No wonder he could not eat or drink for three days after that.

The central truth in the Ephesian letter is the counsels of God concerning Christ and the Church, which is His body. Christ is the object of the counsels of God, in whom the power of God is displayed and God's glory centered and we are united to Him. Indeed we were chosen in Him before the world's foundation to be members of His body. The body is the complement of the Head, and in this way its fullness. We are the body of Christ, the Man who divinely fills the whole universe the meaning of filling all in all. This truth was communicated to Paul with a light "above the brightness of the sun" blessed foreshadowing of the day when Christ, with His body the Church, will fill the whole universe with the light of His glory for He is Head "over all things" to the Church.

Summary of the First Apostolic Prayer

In the first apostolic prayer Paul retraces before God the truth which He caused him to reveal to us from 1:3-14. He agonizes before God that we might understand in our affections the objects God has set before us in the greatest revelation of His thoughts toward us. These divide into three our relationship to the Father (choice in Christ, son-ship, acceptance) the inheritance (Christ's and ours) and the Holy Spirit (the

power of our new life, the pledge of our glorified bodies). Paul touches on these themes in his prayer without precisely repeating them in detail. It is more a revelation of what is in Paul's heart for us that we may understand the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory of the things he has unfolded.

The Headship of Christ to the Church is a new thought. Yet it follows logically. Christ has ascended to heaven. So He must exercise His Headship of the Church from heaven. But the members who constitute His body are on earth. They are "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." "The fullness of Him" means that they are the complement of Christ the Man who fills the universe "all in all." This is how God views us.

An intriguing question is where does the first prayer end? There is no 'Amen' to tell us, as in the second prayer. Does it end at Chapter 1 or does it end at 2:10? Or is it left this way to trail on to infinity, so to speak, since it is concerned with our understanding of eternal things, of which there can be no ending? We can ponder such thoughts "for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God" 1 Cor. 2:10. He is also the power of prayer. This first apostolic prayer in Ephesians is preceded by a reference to "the Holy Spirit of promise" 1:4. Ephesians opens and closes 6:18 with prayer in the Spirit. Prayer in the flesh is vanity. Prayer must be in the Spirit to be effectual.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.3 (1:9-11)

PAUL MEETS EVERY OBJECTION MAN MIGHT MAKE TO THE EXPRESSED WILL OF GOD After Paul's letter was read and discussed at Ephesus we may be reasonably certain that the tenor of his doctrine would soon be understood and opposed in the Jewish community resident there. The ties of nature between Christian Jews and those who remained in the synagogue after Paul and his followers left it for the school of Tyrannus these links would remain. Relatives would discuss the implications of Paul's teaching, and it would soon spread. For the Jews would never concede divine blessings such as Paul wrote of, poured out on Gentiles. Paul anticipated these objections through the Holy Spirit of course and demonstrated that all our blessings are according to that is in harmony with what God is in Himself. There are several harmonies in the first chapter.

Our blessings are first shown to be consistent with the will of God Paul commences by telling the Ephesians, not only that they are blessed with every blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, but also that this is according as God chose us in Christ that is, in harmony with that choice before the world's foundation. Since the Jews' blessings were earthly, how could they accuse God of unrighteousness in blessing the Gentiles when God willed to do so before the world's foundation? God's counsels to bless the Ephesians and other Gentiles who are in Christ vastly precede the existence of the Jew or even the world he loved. There is nothing in what God has done, then, which is in any way incongruous with what He is. Indeed all is in harmony with God's holy nature. He sees us holy and blameless in His presence in love. Then once more Paul points out God's sovereignty in a past eternity. Not content only to choose us in Christ He next predestinates us to sonship. This further blessing adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself that is to the relationship of sons to the Father, is in harmony with "the good pleasure of His will." God is not answerable to man in the exercise of His will. This is a divine principle "that Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged" Rom. 3:4.

Our blessings shown to be consistent with the grace of God Paul next anticipates another objection. The Jew cannot argue with God's sovereign will but surely he will object to those blessed by it, due to their evil conduct. "Why Paul" we can hear a Jew saying "you yourself admitted that these Ephesians were controlled by the devil in your own letter 2:1 and you proved it yourself when you were in their city. Didn't they cry out for nearly two hours 'great is Artemis of the Ephesians?' Didn't they worship the image which fell down from Jupiter? And while they were doing such things we kept the law, worshipped God in the Temple, and read the Holy Scriptures. Finally you admitted that God has blessed us in 2:12 of your letter yet you say they are taken into favor in the Beloved One."

To counter such practical objections Paul tells us that we have redemption "through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." Paul is fond of the word "riches" as descriptive of God and His attributes. He uses the word here to highlight our poverty toward God to make it clear that we needed a God rich in grace able to dispense it abundantly. It is a signal that God is proceeding on a new principle toward man not law but grace. Yet He does not compromise His righteousness in extending the golden scepter to us, for we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. In the future day, when we will be displayed in glory, He will show "the exceeding riches of His grace" 2:7. The difference between these two expressions is one of time only.

Our blessings shown to be consistent with the purpose and counsels of God concerning the glory of His Son With every objection swept away and grace overflowing to us in all wisdom and intelligence, God has made known to us "the mystery of His will ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PLEASURE WHICH HE PURPOSED IN HIMSELF for the administration of the fullness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in Him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKS ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL verse 8. Wisdom and intelligence characterize God's counsels about His Son. The mystery of His will is the future universal rule of Christ and the Church not Christ alone, nor the Church alone, but Christ and the Church together. The mystery of His will is to end the present separation of the heavens and the earth, and unite them under the administration of Christ v.10 and the Church "we also" v.11. When this takes place we will have received the inheritance. The mystery is purposed "according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself"; the inheritance is purpose and counsel "according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will."

Our blessings shown to be sure because based upon the power of God manifested in the resurrection and ascension of Christ At the end of the eleventh verse Paul speaks of the counsel of God's own will. Surely the divine counsels are fully revealed at this point. The Spirit then comes in as the seal and pledge that God has saved our souls now and will save our bodies later, upon which we shall receive our inheritance. All will be to the praise of His glory. The question is how will this take place? The answer is found in the nineteenth verse of the first apostolic prayer. Our bodies will be changed and the kingdom introduced by the exercise of divine power. The measure of this divine power is the resurrection and ascension of Christ. This is the inlet to the teaching of the second chapter, where we are seen as dead 2:5. The same power which raised Christ from among the dead raises us. It goes further just as Christ ascended so do we. The divine power is manifested in resurrection and ascension 2:6. And so all is "according to the working of His mighty power."

## God's Sovereign Grace

Now that the reasonings and disputings of the human mind have been anticipated and disposed of, let us turn back to verses 7 and 8 which form a fitting conclusion to the subject we have been considering in this chapter. In verses 7 and 8 Paul tells us that we have redemption through the blood of Christ and that our sins are forgiven. Paul makes it clear that in exerting His will to bless us God has not sacrificed His righteousness, for the blood of Christ has been shed. Again the critic might point out that though the angels never sinned and are as much God's sons as we, yet God is giving the inheritance to us not to the angels see Heb. 2:5.. True, but we have learned God's heart in a way the angels never can\*1 and the price of making us sons is the precious blood of Christ. Perfect righteousness indeed and an outpouring of grace without parallel in fact "all wisdom and intelligence." For we will never forget, throughout all eternity, that everything we are and possess is founded on the death and blood shedding of God's beloved Son. This knowledge will keep us close to His heart forever, because it will temper our future greatness with humility. "God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble" 1 Peter 5:5. And so all is "according to the riches of His grace."

An unknown author once wrote these lines at the end of his life to give expression to God's ways with him:

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.2 (1:10-14)

## DIVINE COUNSELS IN A PAST ETERNITY OUR INHERITANCE—THE RULE OF THE UNIVERSE WITH CHRIST

The last four blessings introduce a new series of things revolving around "the inheritance." First we are introduced to the sweeping thought that Christ in Manhood will head up a government of the entire universe ("all things...in heaven...and on earth"). Secondly because of our union with Christ we will share in this divine administration. Thus does Paul unfold one of the richest truths in the Bible and gives us the great key to the intelligent understanding of Scripture. Our shared rule with Christ will be in glorified bodies. While we wait for these bodies we are given the Holy Spirit of promise. He is presented in two ways as the seal (the spring, energy and liberty of eternal life in the soul) and as the earnest (the pledge that our bodies, which are now purchased, will eventually be redeemed that is, changed into bodies like Christ's own glorious body). Once we receive our glorified bodies the exceeding greatness of God's power will be exerted to give us the kingdom (this is the subject of the Book of Revelation).

Here is a quotable quote from J.B. Stoney, which shows how he lived in the good of the inheritance awaiting believers "I do not go about the world as one deprived of the earth, but as one waiting for my time and turn to have and enjoy it. I am more than an heir-apparent because I have the earnest, and therefore a sensible participation of the property I shall enter on by and by."\*1

## The Inheritance—Christ's and Ours

God has never forgotten the way man treated the rightful Heir in this world. His own people the Jews understood well enough that He was the lawful Heir to the inheritance even if they misjudged the vastness of the inheritance, confining it in their thoughts to Israel. They said "this is the Heir; come let us kill Him, and the inheritance will be ours" Mark 12:7. They were wrong in thinking they could obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of God by evil deeds. They rejected Him as Heir twice first by crucifying Him on earth, although the title above His cross proclaimed Him their King secondly by rejecting Him in heaven after His resurrection and ascension Acts 7:51-60. As for the Gentiles, nation has lifted up sword against nation ever since, seeking world dominion the Gentile idea of the inheritance. Only recently have they been more audacious, exalting themselves to the heavens in defiance of Psa. 115:16, landing on the moon and exploring the planets. One wonders if the seed of space travel wasn't planted in the minds of the Gentiles by Satan, who understands only too well the unrestricted scope of the inheritance. For the inheritance consists of the entire created universe. Scripture has no word for the universe it always uses the expression "the heavens and the earth" instead see Gen. 1:1. In this way these two separate spheres of creation can be both combined and separated in our minds depending on what God would teach us. Here the two spheres which were separated by sin are brought together under Christ. Because we are now sons God is willing to share His deepest secret with us the secret of His will for who would hide a 'secret from his son? This mystery (secret) of His will is in two parts, the first of which we will consider now. It is God's answer to man's humiliation of His Son. He is determined to reverse man's judgment on Christ. "What shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honor" Esther 6:6. The answer is found in v. 10. Christ's kingdom will last one thousand years,\*2 during which time the devil will be chained see Rev. 20. This is the period of time envisaged in the expression "the administration of the fullness of times." But the sway of Christ is not confined to the earth during that period "both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Jacob's ladder is a figure of the closeness of heaven and earth in the coming kingdom. Joseph ruling over Egypt is a figure of Christ's earthly glory. Pharaoh said to Joseph "only in the throne will I be greater than you" Gen. 41:40. All must bow the knee to Christ. The character of the fourth blessing then, is that we see the final triumph of our Lord and Savior, the principles for which we stood while identified with Him in His rejection, and the public overthrow of evil by good.

The fifth blessing is that we share in Christ's inheritance. We have pointed out that the secret of God's will is in two parts. The first part is that the inheritance belongs to Christ; the second part is that we share it with Him "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." There will be a divine government in the millennial kingdom with Christ in Manhood heading it and the Church sharing it with Him. It is the will of God that the glory of the exalted Man on His throne who fills the heavens shall fill the earth also. Christ's administration will be universal in range heaven and earth something unknown to the prophets\*3 The Apostle tells us that we shall judge angels 1 Cor. 6:3. And there will be rewards in the kingdom, based on faithfulness in service here. Laodicea was unfaithful and gets the minimum reward in the kingdom to sit with Christ on His throne which Eph. 1:10, 11 guarantees to every believer. The good servant receives authority over ten cities Luke 19:12-27 an important position of administration in line with his faithful administration of divine things on earth while the King was rejected. He will be an official of standing in the kingdom.

We are blessed because God is our Father and we are His sons. "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" Rom. 8:32. So God our Father gives us a son's inheritance an inheritance such as a rich father

would give his sons. Stupendous as this thought is, it must be kept in focus. The inheritance is dwarfed by the first three blessings since they reveal the innermost thoughts of God. Throughout eternity what we are in Christ, our place before the Father, and our relationship to Him as His sons, what Christ is to us, and our acceptance before our God and Father these are the things which will make our joy overflow in a way that our universal sway with Christ will not. For after all we only inherit because we are predestinated to sonship (predestination in Scripture is always to a state or condition not a choice of persons as frequently misunderstood). Here we are predestinated to both sonship and an inheritance. It is because we are predestinated to sonship that we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His will. This expression "the counsel of His own will" terminates the revelation of the divine counsels which began in verse 4. Thereafter two additional blessings follow the seal and earnest of the Spirit necessary as the assurance that God's purposes toward His sons and heirs will be carried out.

The sixth blessing belongs first of all to the Jew "who first trusted in Christ" followed by the Gentiles who also trusted in Him after they heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. Combining both Jew and Gentile then, all men who hear and believe the gospel are sealed by "that Holy Spirit of promise." He is called the Holy Spirit of promise because of the Lord's words "behold I send the promise of My Father upon you but stay in the City until you have been clothed with power from on high" Luke 24:49. These words were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when believing Jews were sealed with the Holy Spirit see Acts 1:4; 2:33. Later believing Gentiles were sealed. The Holy Spirit Himself is the seal, for He dwells within us. Until the blood was shed to cleanse us from our sins the Spirit could not seal us. He sealed Christ who never sinned. Now He seals us as a witness that our sins are put away. We have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" verse 7. Secondly we have the inner consciousness that this is so. The indwelling Spirit is the springing well of John 4:14, springing up into everlasting life. The story of Paul, Silas and the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 illustrates how men sealed by the Spirit manifest this truth in their lives when everything seems about to crush them.

The seventh blessing the Spirit as the earnest or pledge pertains to our bodies as the seal pertains to our souls. While we have the present salvation of our souls we have only the promised salvation of our bodies which suffer disease and death like others. This distinction is clearly maintained in our chapter. The redemption mentioned in verse 7 pertains to the soul "the forgiveness of sins"; the redemption in verse 14 pertains to our bodies "the purchased possession." The precious blood of Christ was the purchase price.

All that barred the way to the Ephesians obtaining the inheritance was their present bodies. These had once been controlled by Satan 2:1-3 but now were sealed by the Holy Spirit. What a paradox to have eternal life in the soul and yet corruptible bodies in which we suffer pain, anguish, exhaustion, thirst, hunger, and eventually death. We can never claim our inheritance in such bodies "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption...for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality" 1 Cor. 15:50, 53. "For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now and not only that but even we ourselves who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves awaiting adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" Rom. 8:22, 23. The redemption of the body the raising or changing it into a body of power and glory like the body of the Lord Himself, does not take place until the second coming of Christ. We cannot possess our inheritance, nor can the groaning of creation cease, until that event. In the meantime the Spirit is the pledge of our future likeness to Christ in glory 2 Cor. 5:1-5.

It is beautiful to see that all the mentions of praise in Ephesians are in the first chapter "to the praise of the glory of His grace" 1:6; "to the praise of His glory" 1:12 and 1:14. It is even more beautiful to note that it is the revelation of the mind of God given us in these verses which is the basis of all praise. This praise, then, flows naturally into the apostle's first prayer "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." The first of two apostolic prayers follows. We will, however, defer consideration of it until we have first examined the way in which the Apostle takes up any challenges man might make to the revealed mind of God, and disposes of them. This is the subject of our next chapter.

Heavenly Things, Chapter 2.1 (1:4-14)

#### DIVINE COUNSELS IN A PAST ETERNITY—OUR CHOICE, SONSHIP AND ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST

Imagine man blessing God! Paul does, in verse 3, but at once turns to our God and Father as the source of our blessings. Yes, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." This verse begins our spiritual blessings in a heavenly setting, and the means of sharing them. As already stated these blessings are individual. They range from verses 3-14 where they terminate, only to flow into an Apostolic prayer that we may understand them. We are about to consider seven of the Christian's blessings as given to us in Eph. 1.

The first three blessings. The source blessings which flow from the counsels of God We call the first three blessings "source blessings" because they flow from God's thoughts toward us the thoughts of God in the counsels of a past eternity. We get the principle in Jer. 29:11 "for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." This explains why each specific blessing can be traced to an appropriate part of the composite title "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" in verse 3. To illustrate the first blessing is that THE GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in verse 4 to be holy etc., for holiness is an attribute of God; the second blessing is that THE FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ predestinated us to sonship in verse 5 (sonship expresses relationship in affection the Father and His adopted sons); the third blessing is that it is OUR LORD JESUS Christ the beloved One of verse 6 in whom we have been taken into favor by our God and Father. We will now examine these blessings in detail.

The Seven Blessings of the Individual Christian  
The three source blessings  
those which flow  
from the thoughts of God toward us

“according as He has chosen us in Him before the world's foundation that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love" 1:4

“having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself" 1:5

“to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He has taken us into favor in the Beloved" 1:6

Four announcements that we are to rule the universe with Christ enjoying a complete salvation of both body and soul

“For the administration of the fullness of times to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him" 1:10

“In whom we have also obtained an inheritance" 1:11

“In whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" 1:14

“Who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory" 1:14

The first of all our spiritual blessings is that God chose us in Christ in a past eternity before even the world was founded. Therefore we are not of the world, just as the Lord taught John 17:14 but a heavenly people who are to pass through the world unspotted James 1:27. We are a race of heavenly men because our origin was heavenly so too is our destiny. Now mark why God chose us. He was sufficient to Himself except for one thing an object for His affections. This is because His nature is love and love must have an object must have company. But because His nature is also light those who are in His presence must be holy (this speaks of character) "and without blame" (conduct) and 'in love" (His nature). The question of our sins is ignored here because we are viewed as "in Christ." It is implied that we will have Christ's nature, otherwise how could we be in fact the way God sees us holy, without blame, and "in love." We are in Christ, we possess His nature and we will enjoy God eternally as He will enjoy us.

The second blessing is sonship "the adoption of sons\*1 by Jesus Christ to Himself." This applies to both Jew and Gentile. The Greeks, who represent the Gentiles in Scripture language, used the same word 'Abba' for father as the Hebrews. Hence Paul tells us that we have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry 'Abba Father' see Rom. 8:15. However in this past eternity there was neither Jew nor Gentile since the Adam race had not been created or the world founded on which they should appear. God had other sons then the angels and they shouted with joy when the world was founded Job 38:4-7. But the holy angels are never mentioned directly in Ephesians, and our sonship is different from theirs for it is "by Jesus Christ" whose Name speaks of the salvation we needed, whereas they never sinned. They are sons only by right of creation, as men are generally Luke 3:38. Basically the angels are servants.

The third blessing is that we are accepted in the Beloved One our Lord Jesus Christ. In a past distant eternal age the Son was ever accepted by the Father He was the Son of the Father's love. Then when He became Man a new motive arose for the Father's love "therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" John 10:17. Our acceptance with the Father rests with our identification with His work laying down His life on the cross. That is why the Apostle says "for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ" 2 Cor. 2:15. Truly a cloudless favor rests upon us now and forevermore. God has put us in a position of grace and favor to which we should respond by praising Him. "The praise of the glory of His grace" here refers to the grace of God in choosing us and making us His sons. It is an expression of relationship. We didn't merit it—it was pure grace hence praise is called for. Later on we will meet the expression "to the praise of His glory" v.12, 14. This is related to the future the coming glory when we have our inheritance as the expression we have been considering is related to the past. Between the past and the future Christ came in, the Man in whom God found all His glory "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

By the preaching of the gospel God has caused to be saved in time those on whom He has set His love in a past eternity "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time" 2 Tim. 1:9. Here the wisdom of God shines out: Because we were sinners and needed salvation, humility of spirit should characterize believers. On the other hand because God has called us with a holy calling we should be conscious of the dignity of our position as sons before the Father. Thus does God establish a beautiful balance which excludes pride or self glory.

Heavenly Things, Part 2 (1:1-2)

#### FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH -AN OUTLINE OF THE EPHESIAN LETTER

Our heading tells us that Ephesians is in some ways the converse of Hebrews. The Hebrews Part 1 of our book were exhorted to run the race from earth to heaven. In Ephesians Part 2 of our book we are viewed as seated in heavenly places in Christ at the beginning, but standing on earth wearing the full armor of God at the end. However these are generalizations. Since God gives us His richest thoughts at the beginning, we must examine the opening of Ephesians carefully.

The letter to the Ephesians is one of the two generic or "parent" epistles of the Apostle Paul the other being Romans. By "parent" we do not mean the chronological order in which the Pauline letters were written, for such a statement would be incorrect. What we mean is that these two letters stand by themselves, like twin pillars, as exponents of fundamental truth, not having their origin, like so many of Paul's letters, in the need to correct error in doctrine or practice in the primitive Church. As an inlet to the study of Ephesians, then, a few brief words

contrasting this letter with Romans might be helpful.

#### Ephesians and Romans—Some Contrasts

As a created intelligence man has a unique place in the universe. In the order of creation the angels, who are heavenly beings, were given a home in the heavens; man who is an earthly being, a home on earth. But in redemption and at the cross itself, man was provided with a home both on earth John 19:26-27 and in heaven Luke 23:43. God had this in mind when Moses, under divine inspiration, penned the Genesis record of creation. This opens with the creation of the heavens and the earth and ends with the creation of man. For man was destined to fill both spheres, although Moses could not know this when he wrote his inspired account. It remained for Paul to complete the Word of God, the secret hidden from ages and generations, but now made manifest to us see Col. 1:25, 26. In Romans Paul takes up man on earth in Ephesians the heavenly man. Romans is the justified man on earth Ephesians the heavenly man chosen in Christ before there was a world. Romans considers the question of man's responsibility to God; Ephesians introduces us to the counsels of God in eternity before there was a responsible man. In Romans man and his world occupy center stage in Ephesians they largely disappear so God's thoughts and interests can dominate everything.

In Scripture man's relationship to God is expressed two ways man's responsibility to God, which is Romans, and the purpose of God for man which is Ephesians. Christianity properly begins when the questions raised in Romans are closed to God's satisfaction. In Romans man is alive in sin, in Ephesians dead toward God and needing a new creation. From this viewpoint justification, the great question in Romans, is never considered, for God does not justify His new creation "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature old things are passed away behold all things are become new" 2 Cor. 5:17. Because of these global considerations concerning man's relationship to God it is appropriate that neither of the two parent epistles is addressed to a Church. That would have reduced to too narrow a scope the subjects under consideration. The Apostle, instead, teaches his great foundation truths to "all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints" and "to the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." The characteristic truth in each epistle met the need of the Christians at Rome and Ephesus respectively. The believers in Rome did not have direct apostolic teaching like those in Ephesus so the foundation truths of the gospel are the subject of the letter to the Romans. Ephesus, however, was a teaching center of the Apostle the crown of his ministry and the believers there were ready to receive the highest truth. So in his letter to the Ephesians Paul unfolds the mind of God in an unique way from the mountain tops, so to speak. He is not concerned with how the will of God brings us to heavenly places in Christ as he opens his letter. Indeed he omits all mention of the second coming of Christ in the Ephesian letter. He covers that subject adequately in his other epistles. Here Paul's grand subject is not the detail of how we will ultimately arrive in heavenly places but the will of God which has decreed that this is our destiny. More than anything else Ephesians is the epistle of the will of God.\*1

#### The Opening of the Ephesian Letter—1:1, 2

The Ephesian letter opens with "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" in contrast to Romans "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle." In Romans Paul stresses his service, for the gospel needs servants to preach it; in Ephesians he stresses his Apostleship by the will of God, for in this letter he is a heavenly man sent to the Gentiles by the will of God. Paul, (after Christ) is the pattern heavenly man, as we learn from his defense before Agrippa. At that time he quoted the Lord's own words to define the scope of his apostleship "delivering you from the people (that is from God's people, the Jews) "and from the Gentiles, unto whom NOW I SEND YOU." Acts 26:17. Since the world's population is made up of Jews and Gentiles, if a man is delivered from both he cannot be a man of this world. He is still a man, but a man after a new order a heavenly man. For the present, though, this heavenly man is not practically to reside in heaven. It is the home of his heart, the place from which he has received his commission to preach. But that commission, which Christ gave him, concerns the Gentiles only. This is the will of God for him. Paul, then, is an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. He strikes the characteristic note in his letter at the beginning for the overriding thought in the Ephesian letter is always the will of God. Then the first verse closes with a reference to his readers "the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." To these he gives a salutary message of grace and peace "from God our Father and (from) the Lord Jesus Christ." God was made known to us as our Father by the Lord Jesus Christ when He gave Mary Magdalene this message after His resurrection "go to My brethren and say unto them I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" John 20:17.

To summarize, we have been introduced to Paul, who is to unfold the counsels of God, men who receive blessing as a result of them, a message of grace to such from a God known to them as Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the center of the divine counsels. Ephesians is a divine communication of the union of God and Man in Christ. Christ was the Man of God's counsels in a past and distant eternity and we are in Him in the Man in whom God's purposes centered in past eternal ages. Our union with this Man is the inlet to the fullness of blessing which belongs to the Church. The subject of the Church is not yet introduced although this is the epistle of the Church. This is because the Holy Spirit would first bring each of us as individuals into peace rest and happiness in the knowledge of God's thoughts towards us. Only then does He proceed to the collective thing the Church.

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