

Ephesians 1:1

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

The letters that the Apostle Paul wrote are arranged much like a letter that would be written by most people today. They begin with who is writing and by what authority they are writing. Next, they tell us whom the letter is addressing. Subsequently you have the body of the letter. Finally, you have the close of the letter.

Paul is the one that wrote the letter to the Church at Rome. It is important that we know who wrote the letter for by knowing the person who wrote the letter we can relate to his background and experience. The name, Paul, was his Roman name and meant "small." His Hebrew name was Saul, which meant "great." At first, he was known as Saul and was considered great in the eyes of the Jews religious leaders. However, after God struck him down on the road to Damascus, he become known as Paul and he thus became "small" in his own eyes. Similarly, we should not seek greatness for ourselves, but be content to be small in order that we might magnify our great God.

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word, "apostle," means chosen and sent of God. Based on Paul's Damascus road experience, we know that it was Christ who chose Paul and not Paul who chose Christ. We also read in that experience that Christ had a labor for Paul and sent him to that labor: The Lord told Ananias concerning Paul, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles, but in Paul's words, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Paul, also, called himself "the apostle of the Gentiles."

Again, we reiterate, Paul did not seek to be an apostle, but God chose him to be an apostle, thus his apostleship was by the "will of God." This is true of all the true God-called gospel ministry. They do not seek to be preachers of the gospel, but God calls them to be preachers of the gospel.

Paul addresses this epistle to the "saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." All of Paul's epistles are addressed to Spirit-born children of God. He does not address any of his epistles to someone who is not born of the Spirit of God. The word, "saint," comes from the Greek word, "hagios," meaning holy or set apart. The saints are set apart by God's election of a people before the foundation of the world. In addition, they are set apart by the new or Spiritual birth. Thus, a saint is a born-again child of God.

Now Paul did not address this epistle to those who "have faith in Christ Jesus," but to the "faithful in Christ Jesus." While it is true that the faithful do have faith in Christ Jesus, yet the thought here is the position of the faithful. The faithful are in Christ Jesus. Thus, Paul is not trying to get them in Christ Jesus for they are already in Christ Jesus.

While this epistle is not addressed to us, it is for us. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Thus, while not all scripture is addressed to us, all scripture is for us.

Ephesians 1:2

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

There are two great themes in the epistles of Paul: grace and peace. In the opening of every epistle, Paul makes a statement similar to the one above. Further, in the closing of every epistle, Paul mentions once again the grace of God. Thus, it can be said that Paul opens and closes every epistle with the mention of God's grace.

Grace means the unmerited favor of God bestowed upon undeserving creatures. It is by the grace of God that God works the following things for us and in us:

1. Salvation from sin (2 Tim. 1:8 "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 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 world began.")

2. The Spiritual birth (Eph. 2:1 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"

3. Our belief (Acts 18:27 "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:")

4. Obedience to the faith (Rom 1:5 "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.")

5. Justification (Rom 3:24 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:")

6. Eternal life (Rom 5:21 "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.")

7. God's election of a people (Rom 11:5 "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.")

8. Spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;")

9. Gospel minister (Rom. 15:15 "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.")

10. Spiritual fruits and characteristics (2 Cor. 8:6 "Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. 7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.")

11. The ability to preach (Eph 3:8 "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;")

12. Prayer and help in time of need (Heb 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.")

Similarly, peace is another great theme in the scriptures and comes to us from God. Some examples of peace that is brought to us from God are as follows:

1. Peace from turmoil even in the elements ((Mark 4:39 "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."))

2. Peace in a troubled heart (John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.")

3. Peace with God (Rom 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:")

4. Peace from conflict in the church (1 Cor 14:33 "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.")

5. Peace in worship between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14 "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.")

6. Peace with God (Eph. 2:16 "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.")

7. Peace in a heart condemned by sin (Eph 2:17 "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.")

It is important that we remember the source of this grace and peace. It is from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus to God be all praise and glory.

Ephesians 1:3

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

The first "blessed" in the above verse is translated from the Greek word, "eulogetos," and means adorable or praise-worthy. The second "blessed" in the above comes from the Greek word, "eulogeo," and means prospered. The verse literally means "worthy of praise is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who had prospered us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

The construction of this sentence leads us to a remarkable conclusion. The key to our understanding is found in the phrase, "in Christ." The phrase, "in Christ," is

positional. It tells us that all spiritual blessings are positioned "in Christ." To illustrate the importance of this lesson, we use a similar type phrase, "in the house." If I tell you all the furniture is in the house, then you know that none of the furniture is outside the house. All of the furniture is in the house so none of the furniture can be outside of the house.

Likewise, if I were to tell you that all the money in the world is in the bank, you would know that there is no money outside the bank. If I then told you that all the money in the bank is yours if you go in the bank and claim it. However, there is a one cent entry fee into the bank. Could you go in the bank and claim the money? The answer is no, for all the money is in the bank and you would not have a cent to pay an entry fee for every last cent is in the bank.

Based on this principle, we are told that all spiritual blessings are in heavenly places in Christ. If all spiritual blessings are in Christ (and they are), then can you get in Christ through the entry fee of a spiritual blessing? In other words, if it takes faith to get in Christ and faith is a spiritual blessing, then can you be outside of Christ and get in Christ? The answer is obviously no. If it takes prayer to get in Christ and prayer is a spiritual blessing can you get in Christ? Again, the answer is no. If it takes godly living to get in Christ and godly living is a spiritual blessing can you get in Christ. Once again, the answer is no. If it takes hearing the gospel to get in Christ and the gospel is a spiritual blessing can you get in Christ? The answer still is no.

The fact that all spiritual blessings are in Christ means that you must already be in Christ in order to receive spiritual blessings. There are no spiritual blessings outside of Christ. Furthermore, no one outside of Christ can receive a spiritual blessing. Only those that are already in Christ can receive a spiritual blessing.

In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, the phrase "in Christ" or a similar phrase is mentioned repeatedly. This phrase teaches us of many of the spiritual blessings that are in Christ.

Finally, our verse above teaches us from whence all of our spiritual blessings come: from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual blessings do not come from any other source.

Ephesians 1:4

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

The above is a great statement of God's grace. It tells us of an election that took place before the foundation of the world. It also tells us who did the electing. It also tells us what the purpose God had for doing the electing. This verse teaches us about the "doctrine of election by the grace of God."

Please note that we were not just chosen, but that we were chosen "in him." Since all spiritual blessings are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We see how that we came to be in Christ Jesus. We are in Christ Jesus because God chose us in Christ Jesus. It is truly that simple.

This verse tells us that God did the choosing. Man did not do the choosing. You did not do the choosing. God did the choosing. God had to be the only one doing the

choosing, because the choosing took place before the foundation of the world. Since no man existed, except in the mind and purpose of God, before the foundation of the world, then man could not have a say in who was chosen.

Some have suggested that God looked down through time and saw all the multiplied race of Adam and based his selection on what man did in his life or based his selection on who believed and accepted Christ during his lifetime. While this is a popular belief, yet it is absent any scriptural basis. Further, we do see that God looked down from heaven but Psalms 14 and Psalms 53 tell us what God saw: Ps. 14:2 "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." What God saw when he looked down from heaven upon the children of men was that there was none that sought God and there was none that understood, and there was none that did good. What they did was go aside and they were all filthy and had become filthy together.

Romans chapter 9 tells us that God's selection of a people was not based on either good or evil: Rom. 9:11 "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Thus God's election of a people was not based on any works whatsoever.

Romans chapter 11 tells us that election is totally by the grace of God alone: Rom. 11:5 "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

God is a God of purpose. He elected a people and placed in them in Christ Jesus for a purpose. The purpose of God's election is that those chosen "should be holy and without blame before him in love." The final end result of God's election of a people to be his is that they will be holy and without blame before him in love. Now there are things that God did to bring this final end result to pass. Those things that God does to bring about the elect being holy and without blame before him in love are set forth in the form of a covenant. We refer to this as the covenant of redemption. Rom. 8:29, 30 plainly declare the covenant of redemption: 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." These same covenant principles are set forth for us in Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, which we will cover as we study those chapters.

We also note, that the same ones that God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, were predestinated to the adoption of children (v. 5), made accepted in Christ (v. 6), redeemed by the blood of Christ and forgiven of their sins (v. 7), and predestinated unto an inheritance in Christ (v.11).

Ephesians 1:5, 6

Rom. 1:5 "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

The scriptures tell us that we (the elect) have been predestinated unto three things:

1. Unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.
2. Rom. 8:29 "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
3. Eph. 1:11 "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The word, "predestinate," means to determine the final destiny beforehand. God is the only one who can predestinate anything. Further, the scriptures only speak of God's predestinating a people and not of predestinating things. The idea that God predestinated everything that comes to pass is foreign to the scriptures. God determined and fixed the final destiny of God's people before the foundation of the world. This final destiny of his people is for them to be conformed to the image of his Son; to be adopted into the family of God; and to obtain an eternal inheritance.

To adopt a child is to take the child legally out of one family and place them in another family. Those that God chose before the foundation of the world are born of the Spirit. Adoption does not apply to the spirit or soul of the elect. They are born spiritually into the family of God. Adoption pertains to the bodies of the elect. We are naturally the descendants of Adam and are naturally a part of the family of Adam.

In order for our natural bodies to be adopted into the family of God by Jesus Christ, there are at least three things that had to take place. The first step in adoption is the choosing of the child. In adoption, the child does not choose the parents, but the parents choose the child. The child has no say in who will adopt him. In like manner, it is with God. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. As those that God chose, we had no say in this choosing.

The second requirement in adoption is that the legal work must be accomplished and the debts paid. The legal work was accomplished in the covenant of redemption and the debts were paid by the blood of Jesus paying the price for our sins.

The third requirement is that the child must be brought home. From the perspective of the children who are being adopted by God, this is yet future. We are waiting for the adoption: Rom. 8:23 "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." We have the promise of God of the resurrection of our bodies and that we will go home to glory at that time. This will complete the adoption process to which God has predestinated us.

"Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." So many people today concern themselves about whether they have accepted the Lord or not. Yet, this was not the overriding issue. The overriding issue was whether God had accepted us. In our natural state, we were not acceptable as we were guilty of sins. The wrath of God rested upon us and we were not in an acceptable state before God. Something had to be done to us in order for us to be acceptable unto God. God had to make us acceptable unto himself. We could do nothing to make us acceptable unto God. As sinners, we had no ability to redeem ourselves from sin. Only Christ could make us acceptable unto God. It

was "in the beloved" that we were made acceptable. This thought carries us back to the fact that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Furthermore, it was because that we were in Christ and were redeemed by the blood of Christ that we were made acceptable unto God. Through the redemptive work of Christ, we were cleansed of our sins: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

"To the praise of the glory of his grace." God's covenant work in choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinating us unto the adoption of children and making us acceptable in Christ is to the praise of the glory of his grace. If we had a hand in bringing about any of the above then it would also be to the praise of the glory of our works. Yet, it is only to the praise of the glory of God's grace and not to the praise of the glory of our works. God's choice of a people, his predestinating them to the adoption of children, and his making them acceptable unto God is solely and totally by the grace of God.

Ephesians 1:7-10

Eph. 1:7 "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

In the above passage, we find the phrases, "in whom," "in himself," "in one," "in Christ," and "in him." Surely, the passage is teaching us that the things accomplished in this passage were brought about by covenant design. It all goes back to the fact that "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are in Christ." Further, the benefits are to those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Redemption through the blood of Christ is a great theme of both the Old Testament types and shadows and of the New Testament. It would be extremely hard for someone to read the bible and not realize that it is teaching that redemption from sin comes from the blood of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We read, "without the shedding of blood is no redemption." Redemption from sin required the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness of sin is an accounting term. For something to be forgiven someone, it required someone else make the payment. Jesus Christ made the payment to God to satisfy God's wrathful judgment of the sins of the elect. Because Jesus paid the price, we, the elect, are forgiven of our sins.

Redemption is by the blood of Christ alone. Redemption is an accomplished fact. It is not something that will happen in the future, it is already accomplished. "We have redemption." We won't get redemption in the future, because we already have redemption. There is nothing left to pay. The debt has been paid in full. There will be no future debt as Christ paid it all.

Grace is once again emphasized. Our redemption is according to the riches of God's grace. You cannot have God's grace and our works together and it still be grace. Since grace is unmerited, our works are excluded. If our works had anything to do with our redemption, then there would be some praise due to us. Yet it is all of God's grace and all the praise belongs to God.

"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:" In the grace of God, God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. God's wisdom is manifest in his covenant work. He has made known to us the wisdom of God through the preaching of the gospel. It took God's wisdom to bring about our redemption. Man could not have brought about his redemption. He had not either the ability or the wisdom to bring about his redemption. Furthermore, God has made known unto us the mystery of his will. God's "will" is his covenant work. God made the covenant of redemption before the foundation of the world. Yet he kept this knowledge secret from man until it pleased him to make it known. After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God began to open the understanding of the hearts of his apostles and the gospel ministry that they might preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ and salvation from sin by the grace of God.

Not only was it God's good pleasure to redeem his people from their sins, but it was also God's good pleasure to reveal this unto us. God purposed to redeem his people from their sins before the foundation of the world. God also purposed to make this known unto his people at his appointed time.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." God is sovereign. He does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand or say unto him, "What doest thou." It pleased God to send Christ into the world at God's appointed time. Furthermore, it pleased God to gather together in one all things in Christ. All of the covenant promises were in Christ, all the prophecies are fulfilled in Christ and all God's people are in Christ and were in Christ when he was conceived, born, lived, died, and arose. This included the souls and spirits of the elect that were already in heaven, and the bodies, souls, and spirits of all the elect who are still, or were still on earth. Both the things and the elect were gathered together in Christ in the fulfillment of his covenant work.

Ephesians 1:11, 12

Eph. 1:11 "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

The inheritance is already ours. We are not yet in possession of it, but we have already obtained it. We obtained it because we are in Christ. Sometimes children are given an inheritance but they have to wait until they reach a certain age until they come into full possession of the inheritance. Sometimes they are given an earnest of their inheritance. The same can be said of the elect children of God. We have an inheritance based on the covenant of redemption and what God has done for us. Yet we will not

come into full possession of that inheritance until the resurrection. Until the resurrection, however, we are given the earnest of our inheritance (see verse 14).

Among the three things that God has predestinated the elect unto is an inheritance. We have this inheritance through the predestination of God. God has fixed the final destiny of the elect to include an eternal inheritance.

This eternal inheritance is by the covenant promise of God and not by the works of the law: Gal. 3:17 "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." We do not work to earn this inheritance, but we have it because God promised it to us before the foundation of the world.

We have this inheritance, also, because of the atoning blood of Christ: Heb 9:15 "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

1 Peter 1:3 tells us of the nature of this eternal inheritance: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This inheritance is an incorruptible inheritance. We currently dwell in corrupt bodies which will continue to corrupt until death. In the resurrection, we shall be raised incorruptible. Our bodies are defiled by sin, but after our change in the resurrection, we will no longer be defiled with sin and further cannot be defiled with sin. The life, that we now live, fades away. We get old and then we die and even the memory of our lives by others fades until no one remembers us except God. In the resurrection, there will be no aging, no dying, and no fading away. This eternal inheritance is reserved in heaven for us. Our names are written in the Lambs book of life. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. By covenant arrangement we will one day stand before God and receive the full possession of our eternal inheritance.

In Romans chapter 8 we are told of the extent of our eternal inheritance: Rom. 8:16 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Being a joint-heir with Christ means that everything that Christ possesses everyone of us also possesses.

"According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The counsel of God's will is set forth for us in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." It was God who first trusted in Christ. This trust in Christ was that Christ would fulfill the covenant work in the covenant of redemption. God was confident that Christ would fulfill this work. Our obtaining this eternal inheritance is to the praise of God's glory. It has to be God's glory, because is the one who is responsible for us having this inheritance and we did nothing to earn this inheritance.

Ephesians 1:13, 14

Eph. 1:13 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Verse 12 had expressed to us the fact that God had trusted in Christ to fulfill the covenant of redemption. It says that God first trusted in Christ. Now we see the trust of the children of God in the covenant work of Jesus Christ. This trust in Christ to fulfill the covenant of redemption came after we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation.

There are two belief systems as to what the gospel is. One belief system calls adherence to a set of rules or commandments to get born again, or to be saved from sin, or to get eternal life the gospel. The other belief system says salvation from sin, being born again, and getting eternal life is by the grace of God alone and comes through Jesus Christ fulfilling the covenant of redemption.

Paul had this to say about the two belief systems in Galatians chapter 1: Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Paul called the gospel of the grace of Christ the true gospel. He called the other belief system a perverted other gospel and those that preach it accursed.

The true gospel gives all the praise unto God for our eternal salvation from sin and the new or spiritual birth. The other perverted gospel shares credit between God and man for eternal salvation from sin and for the new birth.

When God's children hear the true gospel of the grace of Christ and believe it, they trust in Christ that he fulfills the covenant of redemption. In this covenant work, he saves them from their sin, caused them to be born of the Spirit and ultimately raises them from the corruption of their mortal bodies by changing their mortal bodies into sinless immortal bodies.

When God's children believe the true gospel of the grace of Christ, they are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise. This sealing is not the new or spiritual birth, for they are already born of the Spirit when they hear and believe the gospel. This sealing is like the king's ring that is used to authenticate a document. The Holy Spirit impresses upon our heart and mind when we believe the true gospel of Jesus Christ that we are a part of God's covenant children and that all the promises of God found in that covenant are made to us. Ultimately, we will be in full possession of that eternal inheritance that awaits us in the morning of the resurrection. Now, we have the assurance of that inheritance by covenant promise and through belief in that promise, we have the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Christ has already purchased us and will come to take us home in the resurrection.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Eph. 1:15 "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Paul describes to us a prayer that he had for the saints at Ephesus. Notice when Paul began to pray for the brethren at Ephesus. He began praying for them after that he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of their love unto all the saints. The faith and love of the saints at Ephesus were two evidences of the fact that they had been born of the Spirit of God. While we do not know nor are we required to seek to know who has or has not been born of the Spirit of God, we do feel a desire to pray for them especially after we have seen evidences of their spiritual birth. The things of which Paul prayed for the saints at Ephesus require that they be born of the Spirit of God in order for them to receive those things.

"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." After Paul heard of their faith and love he told them that he ceased not to give thanks for them. Paul was given thanks to God for them. Certainly, this is appropriate that we give thanks to God for the born again children of God and their faith and love to the saints. It is God who chose them before the foundation of the world to be his children. Further, it is God who quickened them into spiritual life. In addition, it is God who leads them by his Spirit to an understanding of the doctrines of grace and to a desire to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth. Moreover, it is God that gives them a desire to serve him by manifesting the love in their hearts to the saints of God. Thus we also should cease not to give thanks to God for the saints we come in contact with and to make mention of them in our 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:" The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ comes from the Father of glory. We can receive this spirit of wisdom and revelation from no other source. True wisdom comes from God. James tells us that we should pray for that wisdom and that God will give it to us: James 1:5 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." While we should pray that God will give us wisdom, we should also pray that God will give each of his children wisdom and a revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

The reason you understand the doctrine of the grace of Christ is because God revealed unto you. The reason others of God's children do not understand the doctrine of the grace of Christ is because it has not yet been revealed unto them. Our prayers should be like that of Paul in Romans chapter 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling," It is through the work of the Spirit of God and through the preaching of the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ that the eyes of our understanding are enlightened. We should pray that God would enlighten the eyes of understanding of his people that they may know the hope of his calling. There is a reason that God has called you to spiritual life or to the spiritual birth. Once a person has been born of the Spirit we know that the scriptures teach that they were embraced in the covenant of redemption. The end result of that covenant of redemption is the glorification of the elect in the resurrection of the dead so that they are conformed to the image of Christ. The glorification of our vile bodies is the hope of God's calling. Through the knowledge of the truth of salvation by grace through the covenant work of God we come to know (understand) the hope of our calling. We should be in continual prayer that God's children may know the hope of their calling.

"And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," All that God does in the covenant of redemption is to his name's praise, honor, and glory. All the work of that covenant is God's work. All the results are because of God's work and none is the result of man's work. God's inheritance in the saints abounds to the riches of his glory. Our justification is to his glory. Our spiritual calling is to his glory. Our resurrection is to his glory. Our knowledge of his covenant work is also to his glory for he has revealed these precious truths unto us. We should pray that God's children would have their eyes enlightened to know what God has done for them so that they may give all the praise, honor, and glory unto God.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." In the next part of this verse we see how that we came to believe, but now we see that it was Paul's prayer and desire that God's people would come to understand the exceeding greatness of God's power toward them. This power is manifest in the new or spiritual birth. We were born of the Spirit when we were dead in trespasses and sins and totally unable or desirous to be born of the Spirit. Further, we were justified by the blood of Christ when we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and the very enemies of God. Finally, we will be glorified in the resurrection when our vile bodies that lay in the dust are changed and given life and glorified into the very image of Christ. Certainly all of this is brought about by the exceeding greatness of God's power.

"According to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Our belief is a result of the working of God's might power. Paul compares the mighty power of God that enabled us to believe with the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead. It does not take any less of God's power to raise us up to spiritual

live than it took to raise Christ from the dead. Without the power of the Spirit of God we could not believe the gospel of the grace of Christ. Our ability to believe the gospel is because of the exceeding greatness of God's power. Man cannot generate this ability to believe through his efforts. It takes God to quicken us into spiritual life before we can believe.

"And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." When God raised Christ from the dead he positioned him in the very highest of positions. He is far above all principalities, powers, might, and dominions. He is above every name that is named. He sets and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Furthermore, he is over all things to the church. The church is complete in him and has every thing that it needs to properly and orderly and completely function. In addition, the church is the body of Christ who is the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Praise be to God for his wonderful works to the children of men.

Ephesians 2:1-3

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

The above passage of scripture tells us first what God did to us and then it tells what our condition was before he did it to us. What God did to us is quicken us. The word, "quicken," means to give life. From the context, we know that it was not talking about giving us natural life. Before this quickening took place, we had natural life. We were walking, living, and fulfilling. Thus, we had natural life. The quickening was not to give us natural life which we already had, but to give us spiritual life which we did not have until we were quickened.

Before we were quickened, we were dead in trespasses and sins. For something to be dead does not mean that it had life beforehand. Rocks are dead, but they did not have life beforehand. The word, "dead," means absence of life. There are many things on the earth that are dead that never had life, yet they are absent of life, therefore, they are dead. Being dead in trespasses and sins refers us back to the covenant that God made with Adam whereby he told Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he died in trespasses and sins. His natural life did not cease for over nine hundred years, yet he died immediately in trespasses and sins.

Rom. 3:9-19 describes man's state of being dead in trespasses and sins: Rom. 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

Rom. 5:12 tells us that the sentence of death passed to all of human kind based on what Adam had done in the Garden of Eden: 12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

David affirmed this and stated that he was a sinner from conception: Ps. 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our natural state of being dead in trespasses and sins began at conception. In this state, we had no ability to fear God, to seek after God, to understand the things of the Spirit of God, to do good, to become righteous, or to know the way of peace, or to cease from sin. We were dead to the things of the Spirit of God.

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." When we were dead in trespasses and sins and before we were quickened into spiritual life we walked according to the course of this world. The following verses of scripture speak of the nature of this world system in which we dwell:

1. James 4:4 "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

2. 1 John 2:15 "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. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

By following after the course of this world, we were the enemies of God and showing that the love of the Father was not in us at the time. Furthermore, the carnal lust we were following after was not of the Father but was after the world.

"According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." When we were dead in trespasses and sins and before we were quickened into spiritual life, we had a spirit working in us. The spirit working in us was the same spirit that is currently working in the children of disobedience (non-elect). The spirit working in us before we were quickened into spiritual life was the prince of the power of the air. The prince of the power of the air is Satan. He is the prince of all unclean spirits, thus, the prince of the power of the air.

So far we have noted that before we were quickened into spiritual life we were following the course of the world as the enemies of God and that the spirit of Satan was the spirit working in us.

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "Among whom" means that we were living and acting in the

same way as those who are the children of disobedience. Before being born of the Spirit we were no different in our actions than those who are not of the elect and will never be born of the Spirit.

The word, "conversation," comes from the Greek word, "anastrepho," meaning behavior. In other words, this was our behavior before we were quickened into spiritual life. We were living and fulfilling the fleshly lust. This was our manner of living. We sought out to satisfy our fleshly lusts and the lust of the mind. Our every action was based on satisfying the fleshly lust and the lust of the mind. Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

Furthermore, our nature was identical to the nature of the children of wrath. The nature of the children of wrath is only evil continually and for which the wrath of God abides on them forever.

Seeing that we were by nature the children of wrath, and that we were walking as the very enemies of God, and that we were being motivated by the spirit of Satan, and that we were living to satisfy our evil fleshly lusts, then why did God quicken us? It certainly was not based on any good in us or good done by us or any desire or will that we possessed towards God. The answer is found in God's covenant grace. We quickened us by his grace and that according to the covenant of redemption.

Ephesians 2:4-7

Eph. 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

The phrase, "But God," is set in contrast to the state or condition we were in prior to being born of the Spirit of God. When we were dead in trespasses and sins we walked as the enemies of God, had the spirit of Satan working in us, lived our lives to satisfy the lust of the flesh and of the mind and had no desire or ability to seek after God. Yet, in contrast to this God manifest his great mercy, love, and grace towards us. We certainly were in no way deserving of God's mercy, love, and grace.

"Who is rich in mercy." There is a difference between mercy and grace. Mercy speaks of our judicial state. We deserved the wrathful judgment of God because of sin. Yet God was merciful and we did not receive his wrathful judgment upon us even though we deserved it. Thus, in mercy we do not receive something that we deserve. By the grace of God, we receive eternal life and forgiveness of sins. We do not deserve eternal life or forgiveness of sins, yet we do receive them. Grace is when we receive something from God that we do not deserve. For us to receive eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and the spiritual birth, God had to be rich in mercy. We could not have been the recipients of eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and the spiritual birth, unless God was rich in mercy. It took a whole lot of mercy for God to deliver us from what our sins deserved. It is only by the richness of God's mercy that we are delivered from the wrath of God's judgment against our sins through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

"For his great love wherewith he loved us." God's love is indeed great. There was not anything about us that was worthy of God's love. We were living our lives as the enemies of God. We were following the spirit of Satan. We were fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind through continual sinful actions. Furthermore, we read in Rom. 5:1-10 we read where we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God and yet God loved us and Christ died for us. This certainly is a great love wherewith he loved us. He loved us even when we were unlovable, except by a covenant making and keeping God. Praise be to God for his great love.

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" The word, "together," indicates a unity of time and position. Since we are all born of the Spirit at God's appointed time and not born of the Spirit at the same time, then the quickening together has to refer to the covenant work of Christ. In the covenant of redemption, we are all **called** or quickened of God: Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." By using the phrase, "quickened together with Christ," Paul is showing that this quickening is by and according to the covenant work of God.

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The raising up together and making sit together are also a part of the covenant work of Christ. We are raised up together in the resurrection and we are made to sit together in the finished work of justification from sin by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. This phraseology refers us back to the covenant of redemption and Christ's work according to the covenant of redemption. In his covenant work he calls us into spiritual life, he justifies us by his blood, and he glorifies us in the resurrection.

"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." We are living in these ages to come. We are living in this gospel age where the gospel declares what Christ had done for us through the exceeding riches of his grace and by his great kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. May all the praise, honor, and glory be given to God and not to man.

Ephesians 2:8-10

Eph. 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

There is a theological controversy over what the phrase "and that not of yourselves" applies to. Does it apply to the grace, or does it apply to the saving, or does it apply to the faith?

Grace is defined as the unmerited favor of God bestowed on undeserving creatures. By its very definition grace is not of yourself.

The salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration or the new birth. As we have already seen, the quickening to spiritual life is by the grace of God.

Since the salvation under consideration is through faith, then is it the creature's faith or is it the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit? It cannot be the creature's faith because we are described as being dead in trespasses and sins before we are born of the Spirit. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit. We must be born of the Spirit before we can exercise faith. That leaves the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to carry forth the provision of the covenant of redemption through calling the elect to spiritual life. Our conclusion is that the grace, the salvation, and the faith is the gift of God and is not of ourselves.

In addition, our salvation through the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to cause us to be born of the Spirit is not brought about by our works. If we could do anything to cause the new birth then we would have room to boast. But we are told that we have nothing to boast of because our works have nothing to do with our being quickened into spiritual life.

"We are his workmanship." The works that cause us to be born of the Spirit is the works of the Spirit. We are the spiritual workmanship of God. It is God who has created us and formed us as it has pleased Him.

"Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." God is the only Creator. He created the natural universe in six days and every thing that is in it. Then he rested on the seventh day as the work of natural creation was finished. There hasn't been anything else in nature that has been created since that first week. Rev 4:11 "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." As we said natural creation was finished in the first six days. Yet spiritual creation continues until all the elect are created spiritually in Christ Jesus unto good works.

Man did not help with natural creation and man does not help with spiritual creation. Creation is the work of the Creator alone. Our works are excluded from the work of creation.

God is a God of purpose. What he does, he purposes to do and we can rest assured that God has a purpose in all that he does. The purpose of God in spiritual creation is that we are created in Christ Jesus "unto good works." He has created us for the purpose that we do the good works he has appointed for us to do. This is our purpose also as the created workmanship of God. We should consider ourselves to be here to perform the good works God has purposed for us to do.

"Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God ordained or appointed the good works for us to do. Our walk was not ordained, but the good works were appointed for us and we should walk in them. We have much joy when we walk in the good works that God has appointed for us to walk in. It is pleasing to God for us to walk in those good works.

The scriptures are given so that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works: 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We are created for the purpose of doing the good works. Doing these good works give glory to God: Mat. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." May the Lord help us to do the good works to which we were created and to which the scriptures thoroughly furnish us.

Ephesians 2:11, 12

Eph. 2:11 "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and tells them to remember where they came from and then he tells them where they are now as a result of the covenant work of Jesus Christ and the New Testament worship. At the time that Paul wrote this letter, the Gentile brethren had just come to a knowledge of the truth and were brought into the true worship of God.

During the Old Testament economy there were two manners of attempted worship of God. There was the Israelites worshipping under the law covenant given to them by God at Mount Sinai. Then there was the Gentiles worshipping idols. A good example of this ignorant worship of idols by the Gentiles is illustrated for us in Acts 17:22 "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Next, we will compare the two forms of attempted worship. First, the Israelites had the ordinance of circumcision which identified them with the covenant God made with the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai. The Gentiles were not identified with the law covenant and it had not been made with them.

The Israelites had Christ associated with them in many ways. They had the Old Testament promises of a coming Messiah and of his redemptive work and of his establishing an everlasting kingdom. Next, they had the types and shadows of the Old Testament ordinances of which all the sacrifices and ordinances pointed to Christ. Again, they had the tabernacle and the priesthood, which were also types of Christ. They had the rock which followed them in the wilderness which we are also told was a type of Christ. The Old Testament scriptures themselves were a continual testimony of Christ. They had the pre-incarnate appearances of Christ such as the man with the sword drawn appearing

to Joshua and declaring that as captain of the Lord's host am I now come. In contrast, the Gentiles had not Christ in any of these ways.

The Israelites were citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. They had the promises that God would be with them and lead them and fight their battles and deliver them, if they kept his covenant. The Gentiles had none of those promises. They had not covenant of worship and service with God at that time.

The Israelites had the covenants of promise, both the promises made to Abraham, and confirmed with Isaac and Jacob, and the promises made to them with the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. They also had the promises of timely deliverances and of inheriting the land of Canaan. Later they had the promise of the coming King and that he would be the seed of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, and the seed of David. The Gentiles had none of these covenant promises.

Since hope is based on the promises of God, the Israelites had hope of deliverance and blessings based on the covenant promises of a coming Christ. The Gentiles had no reason to hope because God had not publicly made this promise to them. Thus, the Gentiles had no hope.

God went with the Israelites in delivering them out of the land of Egypt and across the Red Sea and destroying the Egyptian army that marched after them. God also provided for the needs of the children of Israel in the wilderness and later delivered them into the land of promise (Canaan). He destroyed their enemies and was with the armies of Israel in all the battles to take the land of Canaan. Many times God delivered the nation of Israel from their enemies. He went before them in the wilderness in a pillar of fire by night and in a cloud by day. The Gentiles were without God in this manner during the Old Testament economy.

As Gentiles, this may not mean as much to us today as it did to the Gentiles during the time that Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, yet it is good for us to know from whence we come in order that we may better appreciate what we have today. Today we are identified with the New Testament worship, we have the New Testament promises, we have the hope based on those promises, we have Christ with us, and God manifest in our presence. We are fellow citizens with the saints and the household of faith. We have the true worship of God and no longer have to worship the idols of our own mind. Thanks be to God for his amazing grace.

Ephesians 2:13-15

Eph. 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

This passage is set in contrast to what the Gentiles had before the coming of Christ and his death, burial, and resurrection. We noted the position of the Gentiles in verses 11 and 12 in the Old Testament days. The blood of Christ did more than just redeem us from our sins.

During the Old Testament economy, the Gentiles were far off from the true worship and service of God. The Israelites had been given the proper manner in which to worship and serve God in the form of the law of commandments contained in ordinances. This law of commandments contained in ordinances was a middle wall of partition or separation between the attempted worship of the Gentiles and the worship of the Israelites. So long as the law of commandments contained in ordinances stood the Israelites and the Gentiles were separated from each other in their attempts to worship God. It was the cause of the enmity between the Israelites and the Gentiles.

The Lord said, "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled." The Lord came to fulfill the law and the prophets and he kept the law perfectly as no man had ever done before. When he went to the cross and died for the sins of his people he had perfectly kept every provision and testimony of the law, fulfilling it perfectly. Once the law of commandments contained in ordinances was perfectly fulfilled there was no longer a need for the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Thus, Christ fulfilled the law and put it away in his atoning sacrifice. He abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

Not only had the Lord come to fulfill the law, but also to establish and usher in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This he did and it is recorded for us in the gospels. True worship now is found in the New Testament and it is open to God's people both among the Israelites and the Gentiles. There is no longer a middle wall of partition between the two groups of people. We are at peace with one another as far as true worship of God is concerned. Both Jews and Gentiles can worship God in Spirit and in truth if they follow the New Testament instructions.

"For to make in himself of twain one new man." Even in the Old Testament economy God had a people both among the Israelites and the Gentiles though this was largely unknown. Christ said in John 10:16 "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." God had two folds. He had one fold among the Israelites and he had one fold among the Gentiles. With the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, those two folds became one fold.

Ephesians 2:16-18

Eph. 2:16 "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

The general theme of verses 13 through 18 is peace. Verses 13 through 15 set forth that peace between the Israelites and the Gentiles was accomplished at the cross when Christ having fulfilled the law to a jot and a tittle, then abolished it and established a new form of worship under the covenant of grace. Under this form of worship both Israelites and Gentiles can worship God in Spirit and in truth. Thus, the Israelites and the Gentiles are no longer at enmity with one another but are at peace with respect to the true worship of God.

Verse 16 above teaches us that both Israelites and Gentiles had been at enmity with God because of sins. However, by the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross, this enmity between God's elect and God was reconciled. Now there is judicial peace between God and his elect among both the Israelites and the Gentiles.

Verse 17 deals with the conflict and condemnation that the elect have in their hearts and minds because of their sins. Isaiah chapter 40:1, 2 describes the utility of the gospel to bring peace to the hearts of God's elect people: Is. 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Judicially we were already at peace with God through the atoning blood of Christ. However, we did not have this knowledge of what God had done for us until we heard the gospel preached. The gospel brings knowledge of salvation by the grace of God. It tells us that the warfare is accomplished and that iniquity has been pardoned. It tells us that we are no longer condemned before God because of sin. This knowledge of salvation brings peace to our hearts and minds.

Verse 18 deals with having peace in our daily lives amidst the conflicts and trials of life. By having access by the Spirit through the atoning sacrifice of Christ unto the Father, we can take our cares, conflicts, and trials unto God and have the assurance that he cares for us and that he will either deliver us or give us the understanding and wisdom to be able to deal with our problems, trials, and conflicts. This gives us inner peace amidst the conflict of a world full of turmoil.

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable love and for his grace towards us through the atoning sacrifice of Christ at the cross.

Ephesians 2:19-23

Eph. 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The Gentiles had, before this, been strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of Israel. They had no citizenship with those covenant people under the law covenant given to them by God at the hands of Moses. Now believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are fellow citizens, whether Jew or Gentile, with the saints and the household of God. To be a citizen means that you are rightfully identified as having legal right and part in the government, provisions, and responsibilities of some kingdom. The Kingdom of which we are fellow citizens is the Kingdom of God. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we have the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizens of that Kingdom.

Being a part of a household indicates that we are members of that family. We are members of the household of God. We are children of God and brothers and sisters to one another.

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." A good foundation is essential to having a good house. Jesus said in Matt. 16:18 "And I say also

unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The rock Jesus built the church upon is himself. He built the church upon three great principles of himself.

He built the church upon who he is. He is the Son of God. He is the eternal Word. He is the creator of the universe and all things therein. He is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and all wise.

Second, he built the church upon what he has and is and will do. He has saved his people from their sins by his atoning sacrifice. He is calling the elect into Spiritual life. He will raise all the elect from the dead in the morning of the resurrection.

Third, he builds his church upon his words. His words and the application of his words were given to us at the hands of the apostles and prophets. With his words that he has given to us at the hands of the apostles and prophets we know the nature of our God, the great actions of our God and we know how we are to worship and serve the Lord in Spirit and in truth. Further, we know the government, workings, order, offices, purposes, and utility of the New Testament Church. Others scriptures also show us that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets:

1. 1 Cor. 3:10 "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

2. Rev 21:14 "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The New Testament scriptures were given to us at the hands of the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets gave the examples of doctrine, discipleship, church order, and government unto us. Everything that we do in the Lord's church today is established for us in the scriptures that were handed down to us through the apostles and prophets. Truly, the New Testament Church is built on this foundation.

"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." In the foundation of most important structures is a stone with an inscription, known as the chief corner stone. The name of the person to whom honor and glory is to be given for the building of that structure is inscribed in the chief corner stone. In the Church, all honor and praise and glory is to be given to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, his name is inscribed in the chief corner stone. The church is not a literal physical building, but the Lord's name is in the hearts and minds of his people in the church.

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." The temple is the place where God is worshipped. The church is the holy temple today:

1. 1 Cor 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

2. 1 Cor 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

3. 2 Cor 6:16 "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Notice in the above verses how the plural pronoun "ye" is tied to the singular noun "body" or "temple." That indicates that the body consists of a multiple number of people. The body of the church is the temple of the Lord.

The church consists of several members. Each member has their own gifts, their own work given to them of the Lord, and their own talents given to them of the Lord. The amazing thing to behold is how that members with different gifts, works, and talents can all function together in unity and in love as a growing temple of the Lord. This takes place because the Lord through the Holy Spirit fitly frames the members together and causes each to grow in his service unto the Lord.

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Not only are we fitly framed together for the purpose of worshipping God and in growing in service unto God, but we also have God making his abode with us. When we gather together to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth and have come with prayerful hearts we find that the Holy Spirit makes it known to our hearts that He is present with us. The Lord said that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thanks be to God that he abides with us!

Ephesians 3:1-5

Eph. 3:1 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;"

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." There was a cause for which Paul was preaching the gospel and writing the things that he was inspired of the Spirit to write. The cause was that the Gentiles would hear and believe the gospel of the grace of Christ and press into the Kingdom of God and worship and serve Him in Spirit and in truth.

Four times Paul refers to himself as being the prisoner of the Lord in addition to the one above:

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

2. 2 Tim 1:8 "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God"

3. Phile 1:1 "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer"

4. Phile 1:9 "Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Men imprisoned Paul several times because he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, in the above, he does not speak of being the prisoner of men, but the prisoner

of the Lord. A prisoner is not free, but his movements are restricted and his actions are according to that which the warden allows him or commands him. He is required to do what the warden tells him to do. Paul considered himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ and thus Christ was his warden. A prisoner is by nature a servant. Paul considered his actions to be under the direction of Jesus Christ. He did not feel himself to be free to serve the flesh. He considered himself to be the love prisoner of Jesus. Likewise, we should consider ourselves to be the love prisoners of Jesus Christ. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price. We are no longer the slaves of that awful slave master of sin. Christ paid the price to redeem us from sin. Thus, we are the lawful servants of Jesus Christ. We are not free. We should not consider ourselves to be free to serve the flesh, but rather we should consider ourselves to be under the direction of our Lord and Master and to do his bidding.

In most cases, a servant has a master who he obeys by serving others. So it is with our Warden or Master. We serve Him by being the servant of his people. Paul said that he was the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles. His service to the Lord was performed by serving the Gentiles. Today, our service to the Lord is performed by serving his people.

Jesus spoke of this in the 25th chapter of Matthew: Matt. 25:34 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Therefore, when we serve the Lord's brethren this is the same as doing it unto the Lord. Our service, however, must be under the direction of the Lord.

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:" The Lord told Ananias, after he had struck Paul down on the road to Damascus, what Paul's general service would be: Acts 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

The Lord first used Peter to carry the gospel to the household of the Gentile Cornelius. Then he used Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles: Rom. 11:13 "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:" The word, "dispensation," comes from a Greek word meaning "stewardship." Paul had been given a stewardship of his Master to make known the grace of God unto the Gentiles. In writing the book of Ephesians as well as most of his other writings he was carrying out this stewardship. He, of course, carried out this stewardship under the direction of the Lord by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" Paul received the gospel of the grace of Christ by direct revelation from the Lord. We do not do this today. We have an understanding of the grace of Christ because we have heard someone preach it or teach it or we have read the writings of others to understand it. Paul did not even go up to the apostles who were before him: Gal. 1:11 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel

which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."

Paul thought it needful that the brethren at Ephesus as well as us today know that he received the gospel of the grace of Christ by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. This is not something he made up or that he heard from someone else. It came directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ to the ears of the Apostle Paul.

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" The grace of Christ is taught in the Old Testament, yet the sons of men never grasped the teaching of it until it pleased God to open their hearts to understand it. This he did when he sent forth the apostles and prophets after his resurrection. We are indeed blessed to live today where we can have an understanding of God's amazing grace. Thanks be to our God for giving us the gospel of the grace of Christ.

Ephesians 3:6

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

There are several prophecies of the bringing in of the Gentiles in the Old Testament and yet it was hidden from the understanding of men until it pleased God to reveal it unto them. Some of the Old Testament prophecies of the bringing in of the Gentiles are as follows:

1. Isa 11:10 "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."
2. Isa 42:1 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."
3. Isa 42:6 "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;"
4. Isa 49:6 "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."
5. Isa 49:22 "Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders."

6. Isa 54:3 "For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."
7. Isa 60:3 "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."
8. Isa 60:5 "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."
9. Isa 60:11 "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought."
10. Isa 60:16 "Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."
11. Isa 61:6 "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves."
12. Isa 61:9 "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed."
13. Isa 62:2 "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name."
14. Isa 66:12 "For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees."
15. Isa 66:19 "And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles."
16. Jer 16:19 "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit."
17. Mal 1:11 "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."

Ephesians 3:7-11

Eph. 3:7 "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all

things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." It is God that makes someone a gospel minister. God calls them to that work. God gives them the gifts necessary for them to perform that work. True ministers of the gospel do not apply to become ministers of the gospel. Most of them did not desire to become ministers of the gospel before God called them to that work. Paul was on the road to Damascus desiring to destroy the very mention of the name of Jesus Christ. He had no desire to become a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet the Lord struck him down and told him what he should do. Immediately after being baptized, Paul began to preach that Jesus is the Christ. It took the working of the Holy Spirit to call Paul to preach the gospel and it took the working of the Holy Spirit to give Paul the gifts and talents to preach the gospel. It also takes the working of the Holy Spirit to enable someone to preach the gospel.

Paul spoke of his ability to preach in 1 Cor. 2:4 "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Thus, it was the Spirit and the power of the Spirit that enabled Paul to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit worked within Paul to enable him to preach the gospel, to direct his labors, and to show him what he was to preach.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Humility is a necessary ingredient for anyone who is to preach the gospel. When we are lifted up in pride we are unable to preach the gospel. Paul truly felt himself to be less than the least of all saints. It was by his humility that he became such an effective preacher. God resists the proud but gives grace unto the humble. At one time the disciples were arguing who would be the greatest among the apostles and the Lord rebuked them: Matt. 18:1 "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Paul also recognized that his preaching was by the grace of God and that without God's grace he could not preach. Thus, we see that God gave grace to Paul who felt himself to be less than the least of all saints that Paul might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Those who have been born of the Spirit of God and have seen that by God's grace they have been redeemed from their sins, and that it was by God's grace that they are quickened into Spirit life, and that by God's grace they will live in the glory world, know somewhat of the riches of Christ. Yet we only know in part. The riches of Christ cannot be searched out to their fullness. They are unsearchable.

The Holy Spirit directed Paul to preach to His people among the Gentiles, that they might come to know somewhat of the riches of Christ. The gospel gives us knowledge of the riches of Christ.

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

The "all men" refers to God's people both among the Jews and among the Gentiles. Paul was sent that God's people both among the Jews and among the Gentiles might see what is the fellowship of the mystery. A mystery is something that is hid from some, but revealed to others. At one time, the grace of Christ was hidden from all, but when it pleased God and at his appointed time, he began to reveal the grace of Christ during this New Testament age. He also began to reveal that he also had a people among the Gentiles.

In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a fellowship of the mystery of the grace of Christ. The church consists of people who understand the grace of Christ. In many orders of people, they do not understand the grace of Christ in eternal salvation from sin. They think that they have to do something to be saved from their sins, and to be born again, and get eternal life. They are not a part of the fellowship of the mystery. Only those who are a part of the Lord's true church and understand that salvation is by grace alone are a part of this fellowship. This mystery of the grace of Christ is revealed to some and hidden from others.

Christ, not only created all things in nature, but he also is the Creator of spiritual life. It is because of that spiritual creation when we are born of the Spirit that we are enabled to understand the mystery of the grace of Christ.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Earlier in the book of Ephesians we were told that "all spiritual blessings are in heavenly places in Christ." Since the heavenly places as well as all spiritual blessings are in Christ we conclude that the principalities and powers in heavenly places are speaking of things that pertain to the church and its members. The principalities and powers in heavenly places are in the church. A principality is a place where a King reigns. The plural principalities denote plural places where a King or kings reign. Rev. 1:5, 6 is very revealing about who the kings are: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The ones who are kings and priests are the some ones that Christ loved and washed from their sins in his own blood.

As kings, we are to reign over our own lives. Further, our reign is to be according to the rule of our King. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. We are to follow his rule in reigning over our own lives.

One of the purposes of Paul's preaching the gospel was that the church might know the manifold wisdom of God. This manifold wisdom of God is made known through the eternal covenant of redemption. Salvation from sin, quickening into spiritual life, and glorification of the elect could have come by no other means than the covenant of redemption. Man could not have come up with any way to redeem himself from sin or to cause himself to be born of the Spirit or to resurrect his own body. Only by the manifold wisdom of God are these things done.

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" In the covenant of redemption God had an eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord. The covenant of redemption is set forth for us in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the

firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is Christ who does the calling, justifying, and glorifying. This is according to what we read in Is. 46:9 "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." Christ is the man who executes the counsel of God.

This eternal purpose was made before the world began and it will stand throughout eternity. It is just as sure to come to pass as Jesus is the Son of God.

Ephesians 3:12, 13

Eph. 3:12 "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

In Christ, we do have boldness. Our boldness is not in ourselves, but it is in the knowledge of what Christ has done for us and what we will yet do for us and what he is now doing for us. Also, our boldness comes through the fact that we know we have no power of our own but that our power and talents come from God and that he will be with us and deliver us.

In Christ, we also have access unto the Father through the intercessory work of Christ. We rejoice in knowing that he redeemed us and that he quickened us into spiritual life. But he also stand at the right hand of the throne of God and ever makes intercession for us. Having access unto the Father is an amazing thing. This is direct access to the very God of heaven. We have a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Both our boldness and our access is with confidence. We have confidence that what God has promised, God will also perform. This confidence in God is by the faith of him (Jesus Christ). This is not the "faith in him" but the "faith of him." In other words, it is not our faith, but the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ wherein our confidence comes. This is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ to perform his covenant work. Christ was faithful to the covenant of redemption to call us to spiritual life, to redeem us from our sins by his sacrificial atonement on the cross, and to raise and change our vile bodies into the bodies fashioned and conformed to the image of Christ.

"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Paul suffered many things for the cause of Christ and for the benefit of God's elect people. Some might have been tempted to think that it was not worth it to suffer for the cause of Christ and thus faint from the discipleship of Christ. Paul said that he desired that they faint not at his tribulations for them. As he pointed out, his tribulations was for their glory. The word, glory, sometimes means boasting, but other times means honor. Paul's suffering was for the honor of God's people. We have great honor that has been bestowed on us. We are honored by God to be his people, even though we do not in

any way deserve to be his people. We are honored by God to have an inheritance in the glory world, even though we do not deserve to be in the glory world. We are honored by God to be his representative witnesses of his grace here in this life, even though we are in no way deserving of this honor. In these and many other ways we are honored by God despite the fact that we do not deserve it. God honored us to have the true gospel of Jesus Christ and this through the sufferings of God's ministers in times past.

Ephesians 3:14-19

Eph. 3:14 "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 16-20, Paul related a prayer that he had for the saints at Ephesus and for the faithful in Christ Jesus. Once again, Paul relates a prayer he has for the saints of God. Paul begins by relating the humility that we must possess in order to approach unto our God in prayer. He said that he bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are not willing to humble ourselves before God, we should not expect our prayers to be heard by our God. Further, there was a cause for which Paul prayed for the saints of God. The cause Paul was referring to was that the saints may hear and understand the eternal purpose that God had in Christ Jesus our Lord. Also, that they may have an earnest desire to humble themselves, repent, worship, and serve the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

Moreover, he relates to us that the whole family of God in heaven and earth bears the name of God. We are his children and thus a part of his family. As his children, we can be assured that he cares for us and that he hears us. In the United States, the custom is that children bear the name of their father. In the Kingdom of God, we bear the name of our God. This identifies us to Him and Him to us.

Next, Paul points out to us the things he is praying for on behalf of the saints of God. First, he prayed, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." The inner man we have because He has caused us to be born of the Spirit. In the inner man, we cannot sin. In the inner man, we desire the things of God. Our desire to worship God and to serve God comes through the inner man. If we are to be bold and courageous in our service to God it will have to come through the inner man. It is in the inner man that we need the strength and boldness to stand against the wiles of the devil and to boldly proclaim the grace of our God. We are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. This strengthening comes from the might of God by the Holy Spirit. For this strengthening we need to pray for one another.

Second, Paul prayed, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." While Christ is omnipresent, that is, he is everywhere present at all times and no where absent, yet we do not always feel that presence of Christ in our hearts. This indwelling presence

of Christ in our hearts comes through the exercise of that faith that God gave us in the new birth. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit. Until someone is born of the Spirit, they cannot have faith. It is a great blessing to each of us to have the heart-felt presence of Christ. For this we should pray for one another that Christ would dwell in each of our hearts continually.

Third, Paul prayed, "that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." For a plant the root is the chief venue for the uptake of nutrients to the plant. Paul prayed that have our root in the love of God. Additionally, the ground is the foundation for our lives. That being the case, then the foundation for our lives is to be the love of God. Paul's prayer continues with the request that we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God. To comprehend means to seize, possess, or to take eagerly. Certainly, it is a most noble undertaking to seize upon, possess, or take eagerly the fullness of the love of God in our lives. The more that we know and exercise ourselves in the teachings of God word, the more that we comprehend of the love of God in our lives.

Fourth, Paul prayed, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." There are some things that we cannot fully know, yet we want to know as much as we can. The love of Christ is one of those things. We want to know and experience the love of Christ, yet the love of Christ passeth knowledge. We cannot know all of the love of Christ. It is too vast for us to be able to know it all. Yet we should desire to know as much of the love of Christ as we can while we live in this time world.

Fifth, Paul prayed, "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." How much better each of our lives would be if we were continually filled with the fullness of God's love. This is a most worthy thing to pray for. May God help us to pray for one another that we may be filled with the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:20, 21

Eph. 3:20 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

For all that we pray for that is in harmony with the teaching of God's word and according to the will of God, we can be assured that God is able to do it and also he is able to do exceedingly abundantly above whatever we ask or for whatever we may think. God's power is not limited to our requests or to our thoughts. His love and power extends far beyond our imagination and desire.

While we cannot comprehend the vastness of God's power and love, yet this same mighty power is also directed personally to within each of us. This power was manifest in the new or spiritual birth. It is also manifest in our understanding of spiritual things and in the workings of the inner man during our walk of discipleship.

Paul concludes that all glory belongs to God in the church throughout all ages, world without end. This glory is by Jesus Christ. He redeemed us. He quickened us. He sent forth the gifts of the gospel ministry. He gave us his words. He gave us the spiritual gifts in the church. He fitly framed us together to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord.

He fills us with his love and unites us in his love and spirit. He directs our steps, gives us our instructions, helps us in our labors, and delivers us from our enemies. He gives us strength to fight the good fight of faith. May we give him the praise due unto his great and holy name! Amen.

Ephesians 4:1-3

Eph. 4:1 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Eight times the words, "unity or one," appears in verses one through six of this chapter. This sets the tone for the entire chapter. The theme of the chapter is the unity of the church.

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord..." Again, Paul refers to himself as the prisoner of the Lord. This calls our attention to the fact that we too should think of ourselves as the Lord's prisoners. We are not our own and our service does not belong to ourselves. We are to serve at the Lord's direction and according to his rules and direction. We are his prisoners.

"Beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." The word, "vocation," literally means calling. We are to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. The members of the church at Ephesus received two callings. All of God's children are called to spiritual life in the New Birth. This calling is by the Spirit of God and not by man. Further, for God's children in the church there is the gospel call to repentance and service. The gospel minister under the leadership of the Spirit of God makes this call. A child of God called to the service of God should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called. To "walk worthy" refers to the type of life that we live. Our lives should be lived in harmony with that high calling we have received.

To walk in disobedience to the commandments of God would not be befitting the benefits that we have received of God's grace. Further, to attempt to worship God in a way that is not according to the word of God, would not properly honor the God that has redeemed us. Our manner of living should be consistent with the eternal life that God has bestowed upon us and be in harmony with the teaching of God's word. When we do this then we are walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love..." Paul begins to give us the characteristics we need if we are to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. "Lowliness" literally means humility of mind. "Meekness" means humility of action. Humility of action without humility of mind is just "role acting" and is truly hypocrisy. True humility begins with how we view ourselves. If we view ourselves as being somebody or we view ourselves as being more worthy than others, then we are full of pride and not of humility. Further, if we have a view of ourselves that we are going to reign or having a position over others, then this view springs from pride of mind and not of humility.

There was a time when the disciples disputed among themselves who would be chief and the Lord reproved them: Matt. 18:1 "At the same time came the disciples unto

Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The disciples attitudes at that time were prideful and they needed to be converted to lowliness and meekness.

Now, let us consider how Paul viewed himself. Paul was first called "Saul." The name, "Saul," means a mighty one. At the time that Paul was called Saul, he viewed himself as a mighty one who was going to stamp out the Christian religion. When the Lord struck Saul down on the road to Damascus, Paul's life was changed. Further, there came a change in the attitude of Saul and how he viewed himself. Notice the following three examples of how Paul now viewed himself:

1. Eph. 3:8 "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"
2. 1 Cor. 15:9 "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
3. 1 Tim. 1:15 "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Paul viewed himself as being less than the least of all saints; the least of the apostles; and the chief of sinners. Someone may say, how can I view myself as the chief of sinners when I see the grossly sinful actions of others? It is true that when I see some gross sin committed by another that I may think "I have never done anything like that" and begin to think myself better than that individual. However, when we make such judgments we are making the judgment based on one or a very few sins. When I look at my life and realize that even a foolish thought is sinful, I see a very great multitude of sins that I have committed, much more than I have ever seen in the life of any others. The logical conclusion based on the evidence I have before me is that I am the chief of sinners. I know of no other individual who I can say that I have seen sin as many sins as I know that I have sinned.

When I view myself as the chief of sinners saved by the grace of God, this leads me to humility of mind, which in turn leads me to humility of action. When I forget about my sinful condition and begin to get exalted, then I am full of pride and do not have the proper attitude to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I have been called. The Lord is the greatest example of humility of mind and action: Phil 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

"With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love..." Sometimes the actions, habits, or ways of others can lead to the disunity of the church. While we are not to allow gross sins such as set forth in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 to leaven the church, yet there are many other things that sometimes crop up in the lives of God's people that we should be longsuffering and forbearing towards. Sometimes when pointed out in love and humility by a meek individual, individuals can be led to repent of their annoying habits, actions, and ways. The harmony and peace of the church is often dependent on the longsuffering and forbearance of the saints in love.

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." A church without peace cannot grow and prosper in the service and worship of the Lord. When a division exists in the church, there will be hard feelings and hurt feelings among the membership. To endeavor means to make a diligent strong effort. Unity is not automatic. The unity of the church is something that every member of the church must make a diligent strong effort towards.

However, we do not want unity at any cost, but rather we want unity based on the truth. Amos 3:3 reads, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Obviously, we cannot walk together unless we are agreed. For the kind of peace and unity that we need in the church, each member should be willing to work diligently towards achieving that unity through a diligent study of the scriptures and making a proper application of its teaching to our lives. Further, we need the leadership of the Spirit to accomplish this. Thus, we need both truth and Spirit if we are to accomplish this unity and peace that each local church needs.

Ephesians 4:4-6

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

There has been an ongoing debate over the above passage as to whether the "ones" apply to eternal things concerning the entire redeemed family of God or to timely things in the local church. While an application can be made based on the text alone that most of the "ones" can have application to the entire redeemed family of God, yet the context and the scriptures as a whole suggest that the application is to the local church. Further, the "one faith" is consistent with the local church and not with the entire redeemed family of God. We will show the unity of the "ones" in the local church.

"There is one body..." The term "body" is used frequently to signify the local church in the scriptures:

1. Rom 12:4 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

2. 1 Cor 12:12 "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body... 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another...27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

3. Eph. 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

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

5. Eph 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

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

7. Eph 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body...30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

8. Col 1:18 "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

9. Col 2:19 "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

10. Col 3:15 "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

The natural human body shows forth the marvelous design of our Creator. It consists of over 3 trillion cells and yet all of those cells in a healthy body work together in unity for the good of the body. The local church also consists of several members and when the body is functioning properly there is a wonderful harmony in the church that promotes spiritual growth, peace, and unity of action.

"And one Spirit..." The Holy Spirit is that one spirit in the local church that makes for peace and unity in the bond of love. There are many false and wicked spirits in the world that can cause disorder and confusion in the local church. We are told to "try the spirits." The Holy Spirit is also that Holy Comforter that the Lord promised the disciples that he would send. He guides us into all truth. He gives us all of our spiritual gifts. He leads us in the activities of the local church. He works in us to bring about a unity of action, and of love, and fellowship in the local church. He works in us to bring about spiritual growth in the church. Any other spirit will only cause disorder and confusion and ultimate destruction in the local church.

"Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling..." It is the leadership and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the gospel ministry that brings about the gospel call to repentance and service. The one hope of this gospel calling is that we might be the disciples of the Lord worshipping him in Spirit and in truth and serving him with our lives. Hope is based on the promise of God and this promise is set forth for us in Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This promise of the Holy Ghost, to those who responded to the gospel call, is that they might be added to the local church as the Lord's manifest disciples.

"One Lord..." The word, "Lord," indicates a master/servant relationship. In the Lord's church there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ. We, the members of the local church are all fellow servants. We are not to lord it over one another. The ministry is not to lord it over God's heritage. Sometimes elders and even deacons try to run the church and make all the decisions for the church. This should not be done, for we have only one

Lord and he has given us all the instructions we need to guide us in our duties and in the matters and government of the church. Further, through the one Spirit, he directs us in our activities of worship and of service. We need no other Lord, but simple need to obey the One Lord that we have.

"One faith..." The one faith is referring to "the faith that was once delivered to the saints." This faith is that system of doctrine, practice, and government that the One Lord has given to the New Testament Church and recorded for us in the New Testament. About twenty times in the New Testament we read the phrase, "the faith." The faith is not speaking of our individual faith, but rather "the faith that was once delivered to the saints." We are not to deviate from the faith in worship or in service. Adding to the faith or leaving off part of the faith, separates us from the true worship and service of God.

"One baptism..." There are at least eight different types of baptism taught in the scriptures. Yet the "one baptism" in our text is water baptism. We all enter into the New Testament Church here on earth through this one baptism, or water baptism. Water baptism shows forth the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is our public confession of wanting to be identified with the covenant work of our Savior. Water baptism is not sprinkling or pouring, but rather complete immersion of water. Water baptism is administered by the ordained gospel ministry of the true New Testament Church and by none other.

"...One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." There truly is only one God, even though there are three persons or offices in the Godhead. 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are **one**." We only worship one God and he is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. While there things about the Godhead that none of us fully understand, we know that they are not three Gods, but one God.

This one God is also Father of all. He is the creator of man and the Spiritual Father of all the elect. Even though all the elect are not members of the Lord's visible church on earth, yet all that are members have the same Father. While in nature most of us will have different natural fathers, yet we all have the same spiritual Father.

This Father is above all and as the Creator of all things has all authority over us. We should recognize and honor this authority and be obedient to this authority of our Father.

This Father is also through us all. The word, through, here comes from a Greek word meaning among. In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, God is among us and makes his presence felt among us.

This Father is also in us all. This truly is amazing, that the Creator of the universe who created and dwells over us as the Almighty also has condescended to dwell in our very hearts and minds. It truly testifies of the amazing love and grace that God has towards his people.

Ephesians 4:7-10

Eph. 4:7 "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also

descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We know that grace is the unmerited favor of God and that God's election of us to be his children was by grace. We also know that our salvation from sin was by grace and our spiritual birth was by grace. Also, our resurrection from the dead will also be by the grace of God. Yet, the grace in verse seven speaks to us of God's gift to us of spiritual gifts. According to the scriptures, all of God's children are given spiritual gifts:

1. Rom. 12:4 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

2. 1 Cor. 12:7 "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, **dividing to every man severally as he will.**"

It is by the grace of God that we have been given these spiritual gifts. These gifts are mentioned in this chapter dealing with the unity and peace of the church and the growth of the members of the church. These gifts are for promoting the unity and peace and growth of the church as well as for glorifying God. We should never think that we are worthy of having these spiritual gifts. Also, we should never be lifted up in pride because we have some spiritual gift that others about us may not have. It is all by the grace of God and we are unworthy creatures.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This is a quote from Psalms 68:18-20 "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death." When Jesus ascended up on high he not only had redeemed us from our sin and had conquered death, hell, and the grave, but he also "led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." The captivity he led captive where the captive prisoners of the covenant of redemption. The elect are bound up in the covenant of redemption and thus are the bond prisoners of that covenant. They were delivered from their enemies of sin, death, hell, the devil, and the grave. Further, they are led as the love captives of the covenant of redemption by the Spirit of God. First, they are led by the effectual working of the Spirit of God into being born of the Spirit of God. Second, they are led to fear and love God. Third, they will be led in the morning of the resurrection into heaven's glory world.

In addition, there is a leadership here in time by the Spirit of God into the gospel kingdom of God on earth. In order that we may worship and serve God in an acceptable way that is pleasing to God, He has given to us spiritual gifts.

"(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" This verse teaches us that the same Jesus who descended into the lower parts of the earth (womb of the virgin) in order to save his people from their sins and who ascended up far above all heavens to fulfill all things which pertain to our eternal salvation from sin, is the same Jesus who now reigns over us in the kingdom of heaven and who as our Lord and King gives us spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church and for his glory.

Ephesians 4:11-13

Eph. 4:11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

This passage of scripture deals specifically with the gifts of the gospel ministry. While, there are many other gifts in the church, God has given to us the preaching gifts for a specific purpose.

In the above scripture we see the four gifts of the gospel ministry. These four gifts are:

1. Apostles
2. Prophets
3. Evangelists
4. Pastors and Teachers.

It is the Lord who gave these gifts and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to call men to the work of those gifts.

There are similarities and differences in all four of these gifts.

The similarities in these four gifts include the fact that they are all called of God and send of God and preach the same gospel in power and demonstration of Spirit and all are laboring in the Kingdom of God and are working to the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. They all are attempting to feed God's people with the spiritual food of God's word. There truly are more similarities than differences between the four gifts.

The main difference between the four gifts of the gospel ministry is the extent of their work. First, the apostles had to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. They were given authority that the other gifts were not given in the establishment of church government and ordinances that were given them from the Lord. They like the apostles had a direct revelation of God's word to deliver unto the people. There were also signs, which were associated with the apostles that the other gifts of the gospel ministry did not have. They, like the prophets, and the evangelists went forth to various locations doing the work of evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

The prophets did not have to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, but they were given a revelation from God of His word to deliver to the people. They like, the evangelists went forth to various locations doing the work of evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

The evangelists did not have to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, nor were they given a revelation of God word to deliver to the people. They did go forth to various locations doing the work of the evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

The pastors and teachers did most of the work in the church of which the Holy Spirit made them overseers. Their work is primarily in that location until or if the Holy Spirit directs them to another location. They have the responsibility in that location to teach and preach to God's people to edify and build them up in the most holy faith that was once delivered to the saints. In this location, they also do the work of the evangelists, but do not generally go to various locations as the evangelists, prophets, and apostles did.

When the canon of scripture was completed, then there ceased to be the need for apostles and prophets and thus today we have the two gifts that remain of evangelist and pastor and teacher.

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" One of the things the gospel preachers were given for was for the "perfecting of the saints." Notice the gifts were not given for the making of saints, but rather God is the maker of saints and the gospel preached by the gospel ministers is to perfect that which God has already made.

The word, perfect, has more than one meaning. It can mean "without spot or blemish as in being perfect without flaw. Only God can make us perfect without flaw. This is not the work of the gospel ministry. Another meaning of the word, perfect, is to be mature. This is the meaning in the phrase, "perfecting of the saints." The gospel is preached to perfect or mature the saints.

In addition, the purpose of the scriptures we are told in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The scriptures are given to mature the "man of God" so that he will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The "man of God" is the born again child of God. The scriptures, when properly applied bring the child of God unto a perfection or maturity in worship and service towards God and his people.

We, as children of God, need maturing in several ways:

1. Matt. 19:21 "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." We need maturing in our love towards our neighbor and in our love towards God.

2. Luke 8:14 "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." We need maturing in our fruit bearing to the honor and glory of God.

3. 2 Cor. 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We need maturing in living Godly or holy lives before God.

4. Col. 4:12 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." We need maturing in our service towards God.

5. 1 Thes. 3:9 "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" Our faith needs maturing in our service towards God.

6. Rev. 3:1 "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." We need maturing in our works as the Lord's servants that we may do that which is right and pleasing in His sight.

7. Heb. 6:1 "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit." We need to mature beyond just a basic understanding of the fundamental principles and go on to a maturity in a godly and holy living before God and man.

The gospel teaches us and brings us to such perfection as stated above.

The second purpose that the Lord gave the gospel ministry is for the work of the ministry. That is the gospel ministry was given to instruct each member of the church in their individual ministry. Each member of the body of Christ has a ministry. While only a few of the church members are ever called to preach the gospel, yet every member of the congregation is given of the Lord, spiritual gifts and an individual ministry.

The gospel ministers are to teach the members about their gifts and how they are to perform their individual ministry.

The third purpose that the Lord gave the gospel ministry for is for the edifying of the body of Christ. Edify comes from the Greek word *oikodomeo* and means: *oikodome*, *oy-kod-om-ay'*; fem. (abstr.) of a comp. of G3624 and the base of G1430; architecture, i.e. (concr.) a structure; fig. confirmation:--building, edify (-ication, -ing). Literally, edify means to build up.

There are several verses that show us that the gospel edifies or builds up the individual members of the congregation in the faith:

1. 2 Cor 12:19 "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying."

2. Eph 4:29 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

3. 1 Tim 1:4 "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

4. Rom 15:2 "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

5. 1 Cor 14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

6. 2 Cor 10:8 "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:"

7. 2 Cor 13:10 "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

The gospel builds up the individual in the most holy faith and builds up their spiritual lives in the service of God. Yet, there is additional edification through the preaching of the gospel. This edification is the building up of the church as the body of Christ. The church consists of several individual members compacted together as the body of Christ. While the building up of each individual member is good for the church, yet the church itself is built up as a functioning body as well that includes the interaction and gifts of all the members working in harmony:

1. 1 Cor 14:5 "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

2. 1 Cor 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

3. 1 Cor 14:26 "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

4. Eph 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

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

6. Eph 4:29 KJV) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

The gospel promotes the building up of each of the members of the church in the most holy faith and at the same time promotes the unity and use of the gifts of the church and the actions of the church as a body that the body itself may be built up in its worship and service to God and its ministry to the Lord's people.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" We will need the gifts of the gospel ministry and their work until the Lord comes in the resurrection. No local church has perfect unity of the faith, nor do any of us have all the knowledge of the Son of God, nor are any of us without need of some spiritual growth or increase in service. When we are measured against the stature of the fullness of Christ, we all come up short and have further need to be taught and to grow.

Ephesians 4:14

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

When a person comes to the knowledge of salvation by grace through the covenant redemptive work of Jesus Christ, he is at time regardless of his natural age a child in understanding. We are not to remain children in understanding:

1. 1 Cor 13:11 "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

2. 1 Cor 14:20 "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

In nature, a child in his thoughts is easily led astray. They are no match for the cunning craftiness of an experienced adult. This is also true in the spiritual realm. That is why it is so important that we do not remain children in understanding of spiritual things. There are cunning men who lie in wait to deceive. Acts 20:29 "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Also, consider 2 Pet. 2:1 "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

Many today, because they are children in understanding, are carried away with every wind of doctrine (false teaching). When someone presents something new to him, he quickly is deceived into following that teaching. There are multitudes that go from one religious group to another and to another because they have no foundation in the truth.

When a strong wind catches a flimsy object, the wind will toss it to and fro. Those who do not grow in their understanding are like the flimsy object caught by a strong wind. They are constantly being tossed by false religious systems and made like merchandise at an auction.

One of the purposes that God gave the gospel ministry is that the children of God may grow in their understanding and have a strong foundation in the true worship and service of God in his true church.

Ephesians 4:15, 16

Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

To grow spiritually should be the goal of every born again child of God:

1. 1 Pet 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

2. 2 Pet 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

3. 2 Cor 9:10 "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;"

4. Col 2:19 "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

5. 1 Th 3:12 "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:"

6. 1 Th 4:10 "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;"

7. 2 Th 1:3 "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;"

8. Eph 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:"

Spiritual growth can come about in different ways, but one of the chief ways that promote spiritual growth is the preaching of the word. The gospel ministry is sent to "speak the truth in love." We, as members of the congregation, are to hear and believe the truth in love. The truth nourishes us and spiritually feeds us so as to promote spiritual growth.

Our own personal spiritual growth is certainly desirable, but the church is a body and the body is to grow also. That is all the members of the church growing spiritually will foster the growth of the entire body. "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." We see the work of the Holy Spirit guiding and leading the church to grow spiritually in the phrase, "fitly joined together." It is the Spirit that has given each of us the spiritual gifts that we possess. It is the Spirit that has called men to preach the gospel and sent them to their fields of labor. It is the Spirit that has prepared our hearts to hear those messages. It is the Spirit that has placed us in the church as it pleases Him. In the local church we are like a building that is fitly joined together by a master builder. That master builder is the Holy Spirit.

In the body of a growing being, growth takes place at the joints. The bone at the joint provides the substance that is compacted together to increase the size of the bone. The bone would be typical of each member of the congregation. When we grow spiritually and utilize the gifts that God has given us and increase in love one to another, then the whole church, as the body of Christ, is made to increase as well.

"According to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "Effectual" is a term that indicates that what God does will come to pass. My working may not come to pass. Thanks be to God that I do not have to depend on my own works, but rather am assured that God is working in me:

1. Phil. 2:13 "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

2. 1 Cor 12:6 "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

3. 1 Th 2:13 "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

We conclude that in this growth process that there are things that we do and there is also the leadership and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us and leads us to accomplish spiritual growth in our own lives and in the body of the church as a whole.

Ephesians 4:17-19

Eph. 4:17 "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

There is a tendency to want to try to categorize the above "other Gentiles" as being either disobedient children of God or as being non-elect aliens. I am convinced, however, that the purpose of the above statement is not to categorize the "other Gentiles" but to show to us the reasons for the wicked lifestyle of those who do not attempt to be the disciples of Christ.

We ask ourselves, "How do other Gentiles walk?" They walk "in the vanity of their mind." Thus, they live their lives according to the emptiness or depravity of their own natural minds. They go about trying to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. This is their chief goal in life. As a result their works are the works of the flesh: Gal. 5:19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Next, we ask ourselves, "Why do the other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds?" "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Their understanding of the life of God is darkened because of the ignorance that is in them. They are ignorant because of the blindness (hardness) of their heart. Both the unregenerate and the disobedient regenerate share a hard heart. The unregenerate have only a hard heart and care not for the things of God. The disobedient regenerate have turned their back on the service of God and thus have hardened their own hearts to the true worship and service of God. In either case because of the blindness (hardness) of their heart they are ignorant of the life of God and the blessings of discipleship.

They have given themselves over to a reprobate mind:

1. Rom 1:28 "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"

2. 2 Tim 3:8 "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."

3. Titus 1:16 "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The heart is the seat of emotions or feelings. These who are walking after a reprobate mind are past feeling for the things of God and have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. The world is full of lasciviousness, uncleanness and greediness. This is the general course of this world and most of the occupants of this world. However, this is not to be the walk of the disciple of the Lord. We will deal with this in our next passage of scripture.

Ephesians 4:20-24

Eph. 4:20 "But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Our walk is to be patterned after the greatest example of all: "But ye have not so learned Christ." What we have learned about Christ is to be the example for our walk. There are many examples that a person may take to pattern the way he lives his life: his father, his mother, his brother or sister, one of his teachers, etc. All of these examples may have some good things that we would do well to emulate. However, none of those examples are perfect, but we have a perfect example and that is Christ. His walk was perfect and a perfect example for us to pattern our walk of life after.

"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." There is a direct way that we have been taught by Jesus as he wrote his laws in our hearts and put them in our minds. As touching brother love, we have no need that any man teach us for we ourselves have been taught of God to love one another. Yet much of what we know has come through the preaching of the gospel and through the study of God's words. Even here we had to have the leadership of the Spirit that we might understand spiritually what we were being taught. As the scriptures teach us, "He shall guide you into all truth." So Jesus teaches us directly and he teaches us through the preached word, and he teaches us through the leadership of the Spirit in our readings and experiences.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." The old man and the former conversation or lifestyle is what we have if we do nothing. The old man and the former conversation must be put off. It takes an effort on our part to break the old habits and to change the manner of our lives. If we do nothing we will not change. We must make an effort to change. Of course we cannot do this by ourselves. We need the leadership and help of the Holy Spirit if we are going to make the necessary changes in our lives that we may lead a life that is pleasing and honoring to God. To this end we should be in constant prayer.

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If we did not have the spirit of the mind in the new man, we could not be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The new birth was necessary before action could occur. Now that we have been born of the Spirit, we should be renewed in the spirit of our mind. There is a scripture in the book of Proverbs: Prov. 23:7 "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." In order for our actions to be

changed, a change in our mind must first take place. In the spirit of our mind, we begin to make the change that will result in the change of our actions and manner of behavior.

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We possess the new man as a result of the spiritual birth. However, we must take action if we are to have our behavior after the new man. The new man must be put on if we are to walk uprightly. When we were born of God by spiritual creation, we possessed a nature that is created in righteousness and true holiness. We are to put on this nature in the activities of our life if we are to live godly lives to the praise, honor, and glory of God. Paul begins to describe what we are to do in order to put off the old man and put on the new man in the next several verses of scripture.

Ephesians 4:25-32

Eph. 4:25 "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In most of the above passage, we see something of the old man being put off and then something of the new man being put on. For instance, we are to put away lying. In its place we are to speak every man truth with his neighbor. As members of the body of Christ, we are to behave ourselves in a fashion befitting that membership. Another example of this is in verse 28 "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Stealing is to take something from someone else without their consent. In the place of stealing we are to work with our hands the thing which is good... Every one of us should do an honest days work for an honest days wages. But, our work should go behind just satisfying our own personal needs and the needs of our family. Our work should also be such that we labor so that we can also give to him that is in need. We are to work that we may give to someone that cannot provide for his or her own basic needs.

A third example of putting off and putting on something in its place is found in verse 29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." We are to put off corrupt, foul, and destructive speaking out of our mouths. In the place, we are to speak that which is good, that which edifies others, and that which ministers grace unto the hearers.

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger is a common emotion of the flesh. If anger is held within us or is acted out by us, then the consequences are that our wrath will bring us into a state of spiritual darkness in our

lives. While we can come out of this spiritual darkness, it is not a place that we want to dwell. That is why we need to put away anger once it arises within us.

"Neither give place to the devil." Giving place to the temptations of the devil will invariably cause to decline into a lifestyle of sin. We are to resist the devil and the scriptures tell us that he will flee from us.

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." We are eternally sealed by the Holy Spirit of God until the day of redemption or the resurrection. While we cannot break that seal, yet in our daily living we can grieve the holy Spirit of God by the way that we live. The following are examples of those who grieved the holy Spirit of God:

1. Gen 6:6 "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."
2. Psa 95:10 "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:"
3. Psa 78:40 "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!"
4. Mark 3:5 "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."
5. Heb 3:10 "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways."
6. Heb 3:17 "But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?"

In the above, we see that God was grieved for the wicked thoughts and actions of men; for the hardness of men's hearts; and for the unbelief of his people. When we dwell with continual wicked thoughts in our minds and hearts; and when we carry out sinful practices in our lives; and when we harden our hearts against the word of God; and when we abide with unbelief in our hearts of the word of God, then we are grieving the holy Spirit of God. May God help us not to grieve the holy Spirit of God.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." These are the type of things that grieve the Holy Spirit of God. In their place, we are to "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Ephesians 5:1, 2

Eph. 5:1 "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

Chapter 5 continues with the subject of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Paul encourages the disciples to be followers of God. Now we may ask ourselves how can we be followers of God? We have not seen God. How can we follow someone we have not seen? While we have not seen God, we have the description of Christ's life here on earth in the flesh. Christ is God manifest in the flesh:

1. 1 Tim 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

2. Col. 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

3. Col. 1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"

Philip spoke to the Lord in John 14:8 "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Thus Jesus is the manifestation of God in the flesh. What we know of God and the life and character of God we know because Jesus showed it to us and we have the record of this in the New Testament. Thus, Christ is the example of everything that is good and perfect. We are to follow the example of Christ. For example, if we want to know how we are to forgive, then we are to forgive as God forgave us for Christ's sake. If we want to know how we are to be kind, then we look at the example of Christ's kindness.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, **as dear children...**" The term, "dear children," means "well-beloved children." Now we know that God loves all the elect the same in connection with the covenant of redemption. However, those who are his disciples and members of the Lord's church are referred to as "dear children." They are well-beloved as followers of Him. As dear children we are to walk in love. "Walk" refers to the type of life that we live. We are to live our lives in love. Love should be the very theme of our lives. Whatsoever we do, we should do it out of a motivation of love.

Christ is again, our example in our walk of love. It is he who "loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." The love of Christ is both giving and sacrificial. First, he gave himself for us. John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Christ gave himself for us. What amazing love is manifest by Christ: Romans 5:7 "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Likewise, we are to give unselfishly and not based on the merit of the recipient.

Second, the love of Christ was sacrificial. Christ gave his very life for us. He suffered the agony of the death of the cross and God's wrathful vengeance against our sins. He did it because he loved us. Likewise, our love is to be sacrificial. We should not ask, "How much will it cost me if I do this?" We should be willing to lay down our lives for our friends and give up our own goods for the benefit of others.

Ephesians 5:3-7

Eph. 5:3 "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain

words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

There are things that many are guilty of before coming to the church kingdom of heaven that are to be put away (put off the old man). While we may have walked in these things in the past of our lives, yet, now as disciples of the Lord, they are not to be a part of our lives any longer.

Fornication comes from the Greek word, *porneia*, and includes harlotry, adultery, incest, and sexual intercourse before marriage. Fornication appears 36 times in the scriptures and is spoken against in all places it is found. The child of God in the church should avoid fornication.

Uncleanness comes from the Greek word, *akatharsia*, and means physical or moral impurity. This would include such things as homosexual activity, bestiality, and pornography.

Covetousness comes from the Greek word, *pleonexia*, and means fraud, extortion, and greed.

We are told that fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are not to be once named among us as becometh saints. Thus, we are not to dabble in it or just do it occasionally, but we are to put these things completely away from us. It is unbecoming of saints to be practicing these things.

Filthiness comes from the Greek word, *aischrotes*, and means obscenity. Thus we are forbidden to be obscene in action or speech as the disciples of the Lord.

Foolish talking comes from the Greek word, *morologia*, and means silly talk or buffoonery. According to Webster's Dictionary a buffoon is someone who plays the fool or clowns around. When we gather together to worship, it is not convenient (proper) to be clowning around. While we may tease our friends and family and clown around with them in a light hearted manner, yet when it comes to the worship and service of God these things are to be put away.

Jesting comes from the Greek word, *eutrapelia*, and means a word or deed designed to evoke laughter; to speak frivolously or jokingly. When it comes to the worship and service of God, jesting is not convenient (proper) and should be avoided.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The word, inheritance, comes from the Greek word, *kleronomia*, and means possession. A person who engages himself as a whoremonger, or unclean person, or covetous man has no possession in the kingdom of Christ and of God. We may have gotten our names on the church roll, yet we do not have any possession in the church kingdom on earth when we engage in such activities.

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. God is a God of wrath and he takes vengeance against such activities as described above. The world before the flood was destroyed because of such things; Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of such things; several times in the Old Testament we see God wrathful judgment against Israel because of such activities.

"Be not ye therefore partakers with them." 2 Cor. 6:17 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;

and I will receive you." Also, Rev. 18:4 "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." These are serious matters for the disciples of the Lord and we should put away these things from our lives.

Ephesians 5:8-13

Eph. 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." In the morning of time when God created light by saying, "Let there be light, and there was light." God made a distinction between light and darkness as he called the light, day; and the darkness he called night. Darkness is the absence of light. In John chapter 1 the light defined spiritual light for us: 4 "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. The life in Christ is eternal life and this life is equate to light.

We are children of light because we were born of the Spirit of God. When we were born of the Spirit, we came spiritually into possession of eternal life. John 1:9 "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." We have eternal life because we were "lighted" by the Lord. Being children of light with eternal life makes us possessors of spiritual life and capable of bearing the fruit of the Spirit. As children of light we now can manifest love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. We now have the love of God written in our hearts and minds and fear God. We can receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Before we were born of the Spirit we were only capable of doing the works of the flesh which are enumerated for us in Gal. 5:19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The thing about the enumerated works of the flesh is that they are all sinful. That is why Peter said of the unregenerate: 2 Pet. 2:14 "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." Before we were born of the Spirit of God, we were darkness and did the works of darkness. Now, however, we are children of light and should walk as children of light.

"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)" In contrast to the works of the flesh, the fruit of the Spirit bears no sin, but is altogether good, and altogether right, and altogether truth. When we put on the new man and walk after the Spirit then we do that which is pleasing in the sight of God and is a sweet-smelling savor in his sight.

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." When we walk as children of light following the leadership of the Spirit of God and according to the word of God, then we prove to ourselves what is acceptable unto the Lord.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Amos asks in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We have fellowship when two walk together. We are not to walk together with the unfruitful works of darkness nor with those who walk therein. If we commit fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, which are not convenient and such like, then we are having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Even if we do not do these things, yet if we continue to walk with those who do, then we are giving our consent to their actions that they are okay. Rather, we are to reprove these actions and those who commit those things among God's people.

"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." In the eyes of God, those things are so vile that to speak of them in detail brings shame. There are some things that are so vile that we are not to graphical speak of them. Notice that those things are done in secret. If they were not sinful, then why are they done in secret? They are done in secret because they are sinful.

"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." The Lord said in John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." The light of truth makes manifest and reproves the evil deeds of men.

As an addendum, we are not to form secret societies, or have part in secret societies, because as the scriptures teach, "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

Ephesians 5:14-20

Eph. 5:14 "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

Sometimes the Lord's people are asleep spiritually. This is not the same as being dead. A dead person cannot wake up or arise. A person must first have life before he can wake up and arise. These are born-again children of God. Sometimes people who are asleep resemble those that are dead. One of the characteristics of a sleeping person is that you do not see much activity. In a dead person, you see no activity. However, there is a big difference between a sleeping person and a dead person. A sleeping person can be aroused from his sleep. A dead person cannot be aroused.

The admonition is to awake from sleep and arise from the dead. We should awake from lethargy and we should become active in the worship and service of God. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We were ordained to perform the good works to the praise and glory of God.

If we look like the world and walk like the world, then who can distinguish us from those that are "dead in trespasses and sins?" Paul said in Rom. 13:12 "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." As children of the day we are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. We are to walk in the good works that God has ordained that we walk in. We are to worship God in Spirit and in truth and we are to serve him acceptably according to the word of God.

When we awake and arise, we have the blessed promise that "Christ will give thee light." We no longer must walk in the darkness of understanding of this world. Christ has provided every thing that we need for us. He gives us the light of his word, which is set forth in Ps. 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Furthermore, he has given us the light of the gospel:

1. 2 Cor 4:4 "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

2. 2 Tim 1:10 "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:"

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Circumspectly is translated from the Greek word, akribos, meaning diligent precision. Our manner of living is to be in a precise way. We are to live according to thus saith the Lord. The word of God is precise as to how that we should strive to live our lives. We need the knowledge of God's word that we may live our lives in this precise manner. Further, we are to be diligent in this walk. It is not just a sometime or convenient walk, but it is to be a continual diligent walk before the Lord. To not walk circumspectly is to walk as a fool. It is simply traveling through the wide gate and walking the broad way that leads to destruction. We will experience much destruction in our lives if we fail to walk circumspectly. The Lord compared those who heard his sayings and did them not to a fool: Matt. 7:26 "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

In contrast, if we walk circumspectly, then we are wise. The Lord compared those who heard his sayings and did them to a wise man: Matt. 7:24 "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." This is the same as entering the strait gate and walking the narrow way that leads to life.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." We are only upon this earth a short time. We do not know the day of our departure. There are scriptures that teach us to take advantage of the time that we have:

1. Eccl. 12:1 "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;"

2. 2 Cor 6:2 "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

3. James 4:13 "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." In some things we understand what the will of the Lord is because it is set forth for us in his word. Other things, we must rely upon the leadership of the Holy Spirit to show us what we should do. However, we are to do according to his will and not according to our will. May God help us to understand what he would have us to do.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Alcohol or wine is often referred to as "spirits." The effect of alcohol is to take you out of your mind and to release your inhibitions to do things that you would not otherwise do and you know to be wrong. The effect of being filled with the Spirit is to put you in your right mind and to give you courage to do that which is right. The effect of alcohol will eventually make you that you cannot speak without stammering or to walk without weaving. The effect of being filled with the Spirit is that you can worship and praise God in a perfect manner and you can walk in a way that is pleasing to God.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Singing good spiritual songs are a rich blessing from the Lord. However, our singing should be according to truth. In singing we are speaking to ourselves and at the same time praising the Lord. Our melody is to be made in our hearts and not on some musical instrument. A musical instrument cannot give praise unto God. Nevertheless, God is pleased when we praise him from the heart. Acapella (without musical accompaniment) singing is the New Testament pattern for singing in the church.

Our singing is to be addressed to the Lord and not to the congregation. We are not to sing in order to impress anyone, but rather we are to give praise unto the Lord, making a joyful noise unto the Lord.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" By the leadership of the Spirit we pray to the Father through our mediator Jesus Christ. It is by the authority or name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Our prayers ascend unto the Father because of the atoning blood of Christ and because of his intercession on our behalf. Further, every thing we have that is of any spiritual value came from God and we are to give thanks unto God and the Father for those things.

Ephesians 5:21-24

Eph. 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The word, submit, comes from the Greek word, *hupotasso*, meaning to rank under, be under obedience, or to subordinate. It is a military term reflecting rank. The lower ranks are to be submissive or obey the higher ranks. To submit yourselves one to another indicates that in our minds and actions we are to consider others as being of higher rank than we are and to be submissive or obedient to them. Thus, every member of the church is to consider all the other members to be of higher rank than he or she is and to be submissive or obedience to the other members. This reflects humility throughout the whole body of the church. Our inclination and desire for submission comes from the fear of God. Once we are born of the Spirit we begin to fear or reverentially respect God. This great respect for God brings about our respect for our fellow members of the body of Christ. Therefore, we are to respect them to the extent that we are willing to subordinate ourselves unto them.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." The principle of the wife ranking herself under the husband in authority is taught in several places in the scriptures:

1. Col. 3:18 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."
2. Tit. 2:4 "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."
3. 1 Pet. 3:1 "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."
4. 1 Pet. 3:5 "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."
5. 1 Cor. 14:34 "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
6. 1 Tim. 2:9 "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

In the home, this ranking of authority of wives under husbands does not reflect the relative worth or importance of either one. This is proven as the Lord submitted himself to his earthly mother and father: Luke 2:48 "And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy

father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, **and was subject unto them:** but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." No one should ever question the relative importance of Jesus to Joseph and Mary. Obviously, Jesus is far more important and worth far more than any mortal man. Yet Jesus was obedient to the authority structure that God established for the home. So likewise, we should recognize the authority structure God has established for the home.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." The husband is the head (authority over) of the wife. He is the head of the wife because God established it to be this way. He would have no right of authority, except God gave it to him. This authority structure is patterned after the Lord's authority over the church. The husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Our marriages are to reflect the relationship of Christ to the church. As we will see, the husband's love of the wife is to be patterned after Christ's love of the church. Likewise, the wife's submission to the husband is to be patterned after the church's submission to the Lord. What a wonderful pattern the Lord has given us for our families.

Furthermore, the above teaches us that as Christ is the saviour of the body, then the husband has a responsibility to support and protect the wife and children.

Ephesians 5:25-33

Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

God set forth the pattern for a husband's love for his wife is to mirror or follow the pattern of God's love for the church. Husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. The love of Christ for the church was a sacrificial love. He gave himself for the church. He gave himself for the church when he left the portals of glory and came into this world. He gave himself for the church when he lived upon the earth. He gave himself for the church when he died upon the cross to redeem his bride from her sins. He gave himself for the church from beginning to the end. Likewise, we husbands are not to live for ourselves, but we are to live sacrificial lives giving ourselves for our bride and subsequently for our children.

Too often, we see husbands who expect their wives to serve them and be obedient unto them, but are not willing to put their wives first in their lives. This is simply wrong. If we want our wives to be submissive to us, then we must set the example and give ourselves for our brides. According to the scriptures, we love God because he first loved us. Similarly, husbands are to set the example and initiate the love towards their wives by sacrificing themselves for their wives.

Christ, sanctified and cleansed the church with the washing of water by the word. There is a dual application in the above. The eternal aspect is that Christ sanctified (set apart) his bride before the foundation of the world in election; then he set her apart by dying for his elect upon the cross to set them apart from their sins; then he set them apart by quickening them into spiritual life. The timely aspect of this is that Christ sets the church apart through the preaching of the gospel calling the elect unto his gospel kingdom. Here the lives of his obedient children are set apart through obedience to the scriptures.

In the eternal aspect, there is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. This washing of the soul and giving of the spiritual nature sets the person apart from his condition of being dead in trespasses and sins and enables those regenerated to be able to seek after God. Regeneration is brought about by the voice of Christ speaking eternal life unto the elect.

In the timely aspect, there is a washing that takes place when God's obedient children obey the gospel call to repentance and deliver themselves from following after this world unto worshipping and serving the Lord in his kingdom. This call comes through the gospel ministry preaching the gospel.

Husbands are to encourage and help their wives and children to live godly lives by setting the example for them, talking with them about spiritual things and encouraging them to follow after spiritual things.

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." While the work of glorifying the church and presenting her without spot or wrinkle and making her holy and without blemish is a work only the Lord can do, yet we are to strive to present our wives in such a light that others may see their spiritual beauties and holy lives. We are to set the environment for them to live holy and godly lives. Again, our example and our speech should be such as to encourage them in this endeavor.

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." There are numerous things that we do for our bodies. We nourish our bodies. We nurture our bodies. We exercise our bodies to keep them healthy. We take medicines to overcome illness and to keep our bodies healthy. We clean our bodies and clothe them to make them presentable. We give our bodies rest. Much of our lives are given to attending to the needs and desires of our bodies. The above scripture teaches us that we should give just as much care and concern for our wives as we do for our bodies. This care and concern that we give for our bodies is done throughout the day, every day. Likewise, our care and concern for our wives is to be done throughout the day, every day.

"He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." As we give so much attention to the care and nourishing and taking care of our own flesh, this is evidence that we love our

ourselves. Likewise, loving our wives in the way that God has shown us is another form of loving ourselves. When we give the care, nourishment, nurture, exercise, etc. to our flesh, it responds by doing for us what we want it to do for us. When we love our wives in the way the Lord has taught us, our wives respond by showing us the love and respect that we expect from them. The Lord gave himself for the church, he nourishes her, and cherishes her and she responds by serving him and loving him.

Further, the Lord has brought the church into a union with him. The church is so closely united with the Lord that the members of the church are now considered to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. She is vitally a part of the Lord.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." The family unit is by design of the Lord. He designed a family to consist of husband, wife, and children. There comes a time when the children grow up and go out and form their own family.

God gave the marriage covenant in the Garden of Eden when Adam pronounced the above after God had given him Eve to be his wife: Gen. 2:23 "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The Lord confirmed this covenant was from God when he declared in Matt. 19:4 "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

In marriage, a man leaves the family in which he was raised and starts his own family. He marries his wife and cleaves unto her. Just as the relationship between the Lord and the church is a union that vitally joins them together so that she is now members of his body, and bone of his bone, so the husband and wife being joined together in marriage are vitally one also. This is a unit that is not to be broken. We are to strive to maintain this unit and the unity of the marriage relationship. When we marry we are no longer two separate individuals living two separate lives, but we have become a unit and our lives are intertwined until parted by death.

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." This beautiful mystery of the relationship between Christ and the church and the relationship between the husband and wife mirrors one another according to the design of God. In honor of the relationship between Christ and the church, every one of us husbands are to love our wife even as himself. Likewise, in honor of this relationship, the wife is to see that she reverences her husband.

Ephesians 6:1-3

Eph. 6:1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

To obey means to submit; rank under; be in obedience. As children, we are under the authority of our parents. We are to submit ourselves unto them and obey them in what they command us to do. Further, it is right for us to do this. Our parents gave us life. Without our parents, we would not have life. Our parents have the responsibility to raise us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Our parents have a natural love and affection for us because we are their children. Our parents provide for our needs, protect us from danger, and prepare us for living our lives in the future.

Honor means to value, to revere, to prize, and to respect. We give honor to our parents when we obey them and respect them and value them for what they do for us. Further, we give honor to our parents when we take care of them and their needs in their old age. In addition, we show our respect to them by talking respectfully to them and not arguing with them or speaking disrespectfully to them or degrading them before others.

"Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." When God gave the ten commandments to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai, the first table was about man's responsibility toward God. The second table was about man's responsibility toward men. In Exodus 20:12 God gave the first commandment with promise of good toward man if he kept the commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." This commandment was further elaborated in Deu. 5:16 "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." The promise was that the children of Israel by honoring their fathers and their mothers would prolong their stay upon the land that God gave them and that it would go well with them in that land. That was quite a promise.

"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." In this New Testament day we have the promise that if we honor our fathers and our mothers things will go well with us and our lives will be prolonged upon the earth. A special application of that to us in the church is that things will go well with us in the church and we will long enjoy the joys, rest, and comforts of the church.

Ephesians 6:4

Eph. 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This speaks of specific duties and responsibilities that fathers have toward their children. This combined with other verses gives us a picture of how we as fathers are to bring up our children:

1. Prov. 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

2. Ps. 127:4 "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

3. Col. 3:21 "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Twice fathers are warned not to provoke their children to wrath or anger. Children are provoked to wrath or anger when they are discouraged and think they can do nothing right or good. Sometimes in the father's constant criticism of his child, even though he means it for the child's good, yet he causes his child to be very discouraged and think he can do nothing right. The child reacts in anger or wrath caused by the father's provocation. We fathers should not only correct our children, but we should praise them for the things they do right or good. If we do this, in most cases, there will be a lot more praise than criticism as the children naturally want to please their parents.

God has set an example for us in giving praise for good and correction for wrong. Notice the following scriptures:

1. Is. 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

2. Rev. 2:1 "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In the first example, God promised good for good and chastisement for wrong. In the second example, God praised the good and rebuked the wrong with both a warning if the wrong was not repented of and a promised blessing if it was repented of.

Next, we are to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The word nurture comes from the Greek word, *paideia*, meaning tutoring, education, training, disciplinary correction or chastisement, and instruction. While there are a lot of things that we may nurture our children with, this verse is speaking of spiritual nurturing. It is the nurture of the Lord. Thus, we are to train, instruct, teach, tutor, educate, and disciplinary correct our children in how they are to live and conduct their lives according to thus saith the Lord and to understand the basic teachings of the bible. Now this may be done by teaching them the basic principles of truth by our actions and by word of mouth, and by having them to be exposed to the teaching and preaching of God-called ministers of the gospel, by encouraging them to read and study the scriptures, and by having family bible studies with them. In the Old Testament the people was told to speak of these things: Deu. 6:6 "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The word, admonition, comes from the Greek word, *nouthesia*, meaning calling attention to or mild rebuke or warning. We fathers are watchmen over our households. We are to see the dangers in the world and based on our experience and knowledge provide admonition to our children by calling attention to those dangers and mildly rebuke or warn them about the serious consequences of certain dangers or actions. Examples of this would be drug use, alcohol abuse, smoking tobacco, sexual sins, walking with the wrong crowd, stealing from others, etc.

Children are compared to arrows. An arrow is to be pointed in the direction it is to go and given impetus to go where we direct it. Likewise, we fathers should point our children in the direction we want them to go and then instruct them on how they should go and finally give them impetus in going in that direction. We give impetus by encouraging them and setting an example for them.

Next, we are to train up our children in the way they should go. Training is more than just telling. Training involves repetition. Our teaching should be repetitive and our example should be repetitive and our children should be encouraged in the proper way and required to repeat these steps over and over again until it becomes second nature to them.

Ephesians 6:5-8

Eph. 6:5 "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The principle of submission continues throughout the teaching on practical godliness. This principle was established for us in Eph. 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Submission and humility or meekness are great principles of truth for the disciple of the Lord. These principles of truth were set forth for us in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ:

1. John 13:12 "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

2. Lk. 22:25 "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."

3. Phil. 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made

himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

We are to follow the example of our Lord and Master and recognize that we are to be a servant and be obedient in all aspects of our life.

Almost all of us have natural masters according to the flesh. We may not be bond-slaves as others who have lived before us, yet we are most often hired servants to others. We serve others generally in order to provide for the needs of our family and of ourselves. We sell our service to them and we are to obey them in those things that they command us to do. Sometimes we may not particularly like those who are our masters (bosses, supervisors, leaders, employers, etc.) and we may not necessarily agree with the way that do things. Nevertheless, we are to serve them with fear and trembling. Our masters can do us much damage or they can be a great blessing unto us. Our very livelihood naturally is often in the hands of our employer. Thus, we should show them great respect and honor them with our works.

The word, singleness, is translated from the Greek word, haplotes, and means simplicity, generosity, sincerity, and bountifulness. We are to serve our masters with simplicity, with generosity, with sincerity and bountifully. We should serve our masters with the same attitude and purpose for which we would serve Christ. Thus, our service to our masters is to be patterned after our service to Christ.

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Sometimes servants will work hard when the boss is around, but will become lax and lazy when the boss is away. This is service with eyeservice. This is being a menpleaser. We are not to serve in this manner. Our service should be the same whether the boss is present or whether he is absent. We are to be diligent in all of our service toward our employer. We are to serve our masters with the same attitude and dedication that we would serve Christ and remembering that we are the servants of Christ and representing the Kingdom of Christ as we serve our masters. According to Romans 13:1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Therefore, we know that it is the will of God that we be subservient and obedient unto our masters on earth. We are to do the will of God from the heart. So our service to our masters should be a heart felt service.

"With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." The phrase, good will, is translated from the Greek word, eunoia, meaning kindness. Our service to our masters is to be done in kindness rather than grudgingly and is to be performed as though we were doing this service for our Lord and not to men.

"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." As hired servants we receive pay for the things that we do based on an afore-agreed upon rate. Yet, the real reward of our service comes from the Lord. Knowing that he is pleased with the way we serve is more important than having the approval of man. Having the Lord say unto our heart, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" should be reward enough for the disciple of Christ. We do not have to wait for the praise of men to be recognized for the service we have done, but be satisfied with the praise of God.

Ephesians 6:9

Eph. 6:9 "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

Col. 4:1 "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Frequently, among the disciples of the Lord are employers, supervisors, bosses, or leaders who have people who work for them. These masters also have a Master. God does not respect the natural master any more than he respects the natural servant. In this, God is no respecter of persons. In the world, a master is generally held in higher regard and favor than a servant. It is not so in the Kingdom of God. God is no respecter of persons.

A good example of a master who took good care of his servants is set forth in Matt. 8:5-10: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Just as the centurion understood that he had servants who served and obeyed him, he also was the servant of others. We, as masters, should reckon ourselves as being like the centurion. We have a greater Master in heaven. He takes note of how we treat our servants.

As a master, we should not threaten our servants. In the eyes of God, we are not better than they are. We should not abuse our authority. We should treat them as the beloved of the Lord.

Also, as a master, we should give unto our servants that which is just and equal. We should not shortchange them in their service, but give them what the service is worth. This is what is just. Further, we should give to each like wages for like service. This is what is meant by what is equal.

Ephesians 6:10-13

Eph. 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Our strength is not in our selves, but our strength is in the Lord. Paul wrote of his own personal experiences in 2 Cor. 12:7 "And lest I should be exalted above measure

through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Paul said that when he was weak then he was strong and that was when the power of Christ rested upon him. The converse is also true: when we are strong in ourselves or our perceived abilities, then are we truly weak to fight to the good fight of faith.

In this passage of scripture as well as others, Paul compares the disciple of Christ as being a soldier in a warfare. The warfare he is engaged in is not a natural warfare, but a spiritual warfare. A soldier has an armor in which he is to wear both for protection and for offensively engaging the enemy. A good soldier knows the value of his armor and would not consider going to battle without the armor. Further, he would not put on just a portion of the armor but would put on all the armor. Likewise, as soldiers of the army of God, we are to put on the whole armor that God has provided us.

In warfare, it is important to know who our enemy is and be able to recognize him and his devices. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." The devil is the general in the army we are to oppose. He is full of sly tricks (wiles). He is excellent at camouflage. He and his soldiers often appear to be something they are not:

1. 2 Cor. 11:13 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2. Matt. 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Next, he quotes scripture to try to deceive you: Matt. 4:5 "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." By comparing the scripture, the devil quoted with what is actually written in Ps. 91:11 "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," we find that the devil did the following three things:

1. He changed some words: "concerning thee" vs. "over thee."
2. He left out a portion of the verse: "to keep thee in all thy ways."
3. He added some words: "at any time."

Next, the devil calls in question the word of God: Gen. 3:1 "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He also

denies the word of God: Gen. 3:4 "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." Furthermore, he questions the motives of God: Gen. 3:5 "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The devil used enticement to entice God's people to sin: James 1:14 "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The desires of the flesh are categorized in 1 John for us: 1 John 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The devil used these three lusts to entice Eve to transgress in the Garden of Eden: Gen. 3:6 "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." The tree was good for food, thus, it appealed to the flesh. The tree was pleasant to the eyes, thus, it appealed to the eyes. Third, the tree was a tree to be desired to make one wise, thus, it appealed to the pride of life.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Our warfare is not a flesh and blood warfare. We do not take swords against our neighbor nor do we go off to foreign lands to war against others to strive for mastery over them.

Our warfare is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high place. Principalities can be defined as the dominion of princes. The principalities that we war against are the dominions of the prince of the power of the air. He has dominion over many things that the children of God often find themselves entangled within. The Greek word for powers means authorities. Obviously, the authorities we wrestle against are false authorities. The true authorities are ordained of God.

The rulers of the darkness of this world, refers to false devilish world or national rulers. There are and will always be the Herod's, the Hitler's, and the Stalin's of this world who will try to destroy that which is Godly.

It is important that we notice where we are engaged in this warfare. We are engaged in this warfare in high places. The high places in which this warfare is fought are not what the world would consider high places, but which the Lord teaches us are high places. There are three great high places where we fight in this warfare. The first is the high place of the mind. In the pre-flood world, the accusation against men was that "every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually. They had lost the battle for the mind. If we continue to feed our mind with evil things, we will also lose the battle in this high place. It will not matter then if we try to fight in the other high places because we have already lost the battle.

The second high place is the family. The Lord established the family in the Garden of Eden. The world and the devil are fighting against the family. We are to stand against the wiles of the devil and the spiritual wickedness in the family.

The third high place is the church. We are to stand against the wiles of the devil and spiritual wickedness in the church.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." "To withstand" teaches us that the devil, the flesh, and the world make an onslaught against us. Yet if we have the whole armor of God, we are prepared to withstand this onslaught against us in the mind, the family, and the church. Further, when we have withstood the onslaughts against us, we are to stand. To stand is not to just stand against something, but it also teaches us that we are to stand for something. We do not just stand against evil, but we also stand for the truth.

A portion of the armor will not be enough for us to withstand and to stand. We must have the whole armor. The devil and the world are good at fighting our weakest link. If we do not have the whole armor, then we have a weak link and the devil will find it. Let us put on the whole armor of God.

Ephesians 6:14

Eph. 6:14 "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;"

In this dissertation on the "whole armor of God," there are seven pieces of armor. (Seven is the bible number associated with completion). The first two are listed for us in verse 14: "loins girt about with truth;" and "breastplate of righteousness."

The loins are the strength of the body:

1. Prov 31:17 "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms."

2. Nahum 2:1 "He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily."

In ancient warfare, a girdle was placed about the loins so that the soldier would not be hindered by his uniform and it also acted as a binding for the sword:

1. 2 Sam 20:8 "When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out."

2. 2 Ki 1:8 "And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite."

However, the loins we are to protect are not our natural loins, but the loins of our mind: 1 Pet 1:13 "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Truth is the protection for the loins of our mind. We are to have our loins girt about with truth. The word, truth, appears 235 times in the scriptures in 222 verses. In John 17, the Lord tells us that the word of God is truth: John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Truly, our strength is found in the knowledge of God's word. We are to put the word of God into our mind in order for that truth to be the strength of our mind and life. Therefore, we should study, read, and meditate on the word of God in order that we may apply "thus saith the Lord," to the problems and trials of our life.

Next, we are to have on the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate protects the heart and vital chest area. The high priest wore as a part of his clothing a breastplate

of judgment. On the breastplate were twelve stones with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraven on the twelve stones. This represented that the high priest had the children of Israel upon his heart when he went into the holy place to make the atoning sacrifice. The eternal judgment of God that made us righteous should be in our heart to protect us from the arrows of Satan's lies. This judgment is set forth in 2 Cor. 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Further, our desire to live an upright life should be proceeding from our heart as well. Again, the heart we are to protect is not our natural heart, but the spiritual heart we have as a result of the new birth.

Ephesians 6:15

Eph. 6:15 "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"

The foot is that part of the human body that is used for walking or running or standing. A soldier in battle must have his feet properly shod. A soldier who is hindered from walking, running, or standing because of shoddy foot-wear is at a great disadvantage in battle. Since, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are to stand against the wiles of the devil, to walk by faith and not by sight, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, then we need the proper foot-wear for our feet.

The gospel of peace prepares us for standing against the wiles of the devil. It prepares us to walk by faith and not by sight. It also prepares us for running the race of discipleship. Thus, we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together: Heb. 10:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Preaching the gospel includes preaching the whole counsel of God: Acts 20:26 "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Also, the gospel ministry is to "preach the word."

The scriptures are a thorough furnisher unto all good works: 2 Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Therefore, taking heed to the gospel of peace provides the proper footwear for us to stand against the wiles of the devil, to walk by faith and not by sight, and to run with patience the race that is set before us.

Ephesians 6:16

Eph. 6:16 "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

We are told in 2 Cor 5:7 "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)" To walk indicates that we are to live our life and have our life's behavior based on a trust in God and in following his word.

Faith is described as a shield. As part of the soldier's armor a shield is used to protect the vital organs. It especially protects against arrows and swords. Back in the

time of the writing of the scriptures, the burning arrow (fiery dart) was a cause of many soldiers meeting their death. A shield of wood would not protect against the fire. The shield had to be made of stronger material in order to both deflect the arrow and to protect against the fire.

The tempter and enticer is Satan and he uses the fleshly lusts to attempt to get the child of God to sin: James 1:13 "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The lust of man is divided into three categories as set forth in 1 John 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

The Lord showed us how to use faith as a shield against the fiery darts of Satan when he was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. The first temptation and the Lord's response is set forth in Matt. 4:1-4: 4:1 "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Satan appealed to the lust of the flesh. The Lord replied with "it is written." Rather than using fleshly reason or rationale, which will always fail us, we should respond to the temptations of the flesh with the word of God.

In the second temptation of the Lord, the devil appealed to the pride of the flesh. This is set forth in Matt. 4:5-7: "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Just as he had done in the first temptation, the Lord responded with "it is written." Likewise, we should respond to the appeals of the devil to our fleshly pride with an "it is written."

In the third temptation of the Lord, the devil appealed to the lust of the eye. This is set forth in Matt. 4:8-10: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." We see the pattern the Lord gives us with "it is written." Additionally, when the devil is trying to entice us through the lust of the eyes, we need to be prepared to respond with "it is written."

How can we respond with "it is written" if we do not know what is written? This implies that we need to know the scriptures well enough that we can respond to the temptations of life with "it is written."

The Holy Spirit also informed us that we, by taking the shield of faith, can quench **all** the fiery darts of the wicked. Again, we see the word of God is a thorough furnisher.

In addition, we point out that Paul wrote "above all" we should take the shield of faith. While, the whole armor is important, the most important piece for us in this armor is the shield of faith.

Ephesians 6:17

Eph. 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

The fifth and sixth pieces of armor listed for us are the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

The helmet of the soldier is designed to protect the head of the soldier. The head houses the brain, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, and the nose of the body. Certainly, this is a vital area to be protected. The brain is the engine, governor, or control center of the body. A malfunctioning brain places the soldier at a great disadvantage.

The helmet of salvation protects the mind of the spiritual soldier. Many people are confused on the subject of salvation. If we do not rightly divide the subject of salvation in our mind, then we will end up very confused as to how that we are saved from sin and how we have possession of the new or spiritual man. It is important that we understand that the bible teaches that eternal salvation is all by the grace of God and that the bible also teaches a temporal or time salvation for the children of God as they walk in obedience to his word.

Many of God's people are confused on the subject of salvation today and many end of trying to do things for the wrong reason, and deeply worry that they haven't done enough to procure their eternal salvation, not knowing that eternal salvation is by the grace of God and has been obtained for them by Jesus Christ. Further, in their confusion they end up fighting against the truth and yielding themselves into bondage to the works systems of this religious world. They become enemies of the truth. In addition, they began to think the end justifies the means. This leads to adding to God's word and leaving off portions of God's word. This confusion often renders them to be poorly equipped to fight the good fight of faith.

The sword of the Spirit is the first offensive weapon listed in the whole armor of God. With the word of God, the disciples were accused of turning the world upside down. Many people have been converted to the truth with this sword of the Spirit. Through the preaching and teaching of God's word, many of God's children have been brought to repentance from many sinful practices and false belief systems and subsequently experienced a closer walk and fellowship with God and with his obedient children.

The influence of God's obedient children brought about by this sword of the Spirit has also been a great influence in the world about them. With the greatly declining influence of knowledge about and obedience to the word of God, iniquity is fastly increasing in this nation. It will ultimately lead to much destruction to the Lord's people in this nation and possible destruction of the nation itself.

Ephesians 6:18-20

Eph. 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

The seventh and final piece of armor listed for us is prayer. Prayer is both an offensive and defensive weapon in our arsenal. For instance, the Lord prayed for Peter, when Satan desired to sift him as wheat: Luke 22:31 "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." First, the Lord prayed for Peter for protection against the ravages of Satan. This is a defensive stand. Second, the Lord prayed that when Peter was converted, that he would strengthen his brethren. This is an offensive stand.

Prayer consists of several things. It consists of worship, of making supplication for others and for ourselves, of watching for the well-being and protection of others, of making request for the furtherance of the kingdom of God and the gospel ministry, of giving thanks for the things that God has blessed us with, and of honoring and glorifying God.

We are to pray in the Spirit. We are to pray unto the Father. We are to pray in the name or the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We are to "pray always." This does not mean that we are to pray 60 seconds of every minute, 60 minutes of every hour, 24 hours of every day, and seven days of every week. We cannot do this. However, we are to pray consistently and regularly and we are to persevere in prayer. That is we are not to stop praying for a period of time.

Prayers are to be made for ourselves, for the saints, and for the gospel ministry. We are to make supplications (requests) for the saints, and to request their good in prayer. Further, we are to pray for the gospel ministry that they may have the liberty to preach the word of God and that God will give them utterance (that which he would have them say) and that God will open doors of utterance (to whom he would have them speak).

In addition, we are to pray that God will give his ministry boldness to speak the word in power and demonstration of Spirit and to speak it clearly with understanding that the ones to whom they preach may know what is being preached.

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds." An ambassador is one who represents the good things of his country to others. The gospel ministry are ambassadors of God to God's scattered people. They are telling them the good things and good news of God and his kingdom. For this, we ought to pray that God will enable them to speak boldly and to make known the mysteries of the gospel.

Ephesians 6:21-24

Eph. 6:21 "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

Nothing was to be done in secret. Paul did not hide his affairs from the knowledge of the brethren. He sent Tychicus to the Ephesians, that they might know his affairs, and make known all things unto them. In doing so, he would also comfort the hearts of the hearers through the preaching of the gospel.

Paul closed with mention of the great subjects of peace, love, and faith. He acknowledged that these things came through God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Additionally, he closed with the mention of God's grace. Paul opened and closed his epistles with the mention of God's grace. He surrounded his writings with the mention of God's grace. Grace is the grand subject of what he wrote.