

MR. D'S NOTES ON EPHESIANS



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Ephesians

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK:

Most authors hold Ephesians as the best and most illustrative book written by Paul. It sets the stage for his other writings. It is the best of his writings in its content relating to the work of Christ and the church that was the outgrowth of Christ's work.

Deffinbaugh calls it the "Rolls Royce of the epistles and further states "" F. F. Bruce, noted New Testament scholar, calls Ephesians "the quintessence of Paulinism." C. H. Dodd called Ephesians "the crown of Paulinism.""

AUTHOR: Paul is named as the author in verse one. This was not questioned until the liberal men of yesteryear decided against Pauline authorship, but most others over the centuries have accepted his authorship without question.

PLACE OF WRITING: Paul seems to have been in prison in Rome at the time of writing. Many believe that Colossians was also written at the same time due to their similarities. If you aren't aware of the similarities take a few minutes and read through both books quickly and it will become quite evident.

RECIPIENTS: The "saints which are at Ephesus" is the commonly accepted position, though some have suggested that it was a letter specifically to Laodicea that was copied several times and the city changed to fit those that would receive it.

I have included a lengthy quote at the end of this file from Barnes listing some of the pros and cons of the line of thinking. Even if it is true, the letter was to Ephesus, whether there were other letters or not, nor does it change the fact that the text is Scripture.

Deffinbaugh tells us that there are only three older manuscripts that omit the phrase "at Ephesus" while all others contain the phrase. The fact that these are the oldest of those we have indicate to some scholars that they would be the more correct, however many disagree with this logic.

He goes on to suggest that this isn't the first letter to the Ephesians, that in 3.1-3 Paul mentions a previous letter to the Ephesians. The problem is that if this is not to the Ephesians, neither is the previous one (actually verse four should be included).

Herrick mentions of the missing words "First, while many manuscripts and early versions have the words "in Ephesus" ... they do not appear in some very important and early manuscripts; Sinaiticus (a), Vaticanus (B), p46 and 424c do not contain "in Ephesus." Second, that they were most likely not there in the original is further confirmed when we realize that several of the Fathers did not have them in their copies either. Origen (ca.185-254) did not have them and Basil (ca. 330-79) said they were lacking in the earliest manuscripts known to him. Marcion (ca. 140), the heretic, referred to Ephesians as the letter sent "to the Laodiceans" which probably indicates that he did not have the words in his copy either."

LOCATION: Ephesus was a city where Paul had probably spent more of his time than any other

place. In the book of Acts we find that he was there a couple of years at least. His time in Ephesus is recorded in Acts eighteen and nineteen. It is logical that he would have come to know many people there both lost and saved.

He would have also, most likely, have grown to love some of the believers there after spending so much time with them.

It also is logical to deduce that the believers at Ephesus were better trained in the things of the Lord having had the apostle with them for an extended period of time. It might be deduced that the people in their lost state were so decadent that he needed to spend a lot of time there teaching so that he could bring them out of their paganism.

The city was the center for worship of the goddess Diana; thus, paganism would have had a strong hold on many of the citizens. In fact this book seems to be a call to them to remember their base beginnings and to glory in the grace that God had shed upon them when He called them unto their salvation.

This may be why Paul spent so much time there. He always went to the population centers so that he could establish a church that could reach the many people coming to town to trade. He knew this to be one of the largest idol centers and would have wanted a strong church present to confront the evil of Diana.

Barnes describes the city thusly: " Ephesus was a celebrated city of Ionia in Asia Minor, and was about 40 miles south of Smyrna, and near the mouth of the river Cayster. The river, though inferior in beauty to the Meander, which flows south of it, waters a fertile vale of the ancient Ionia. Ionia was the most beautiful and fertile part of Asia Minor; was settled almost wholly by Greek colonies; and embosomed Pergamos, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus."

Barnes quotes another "The climate of Ionia is represented as remarkably mild, and the air as pure and sweet, and this region became early celebrated for everything that constitutes softness and effeminacy in life. Its people were distinguished for amiableness and refinement of manners; and also for luxury, for music and dancing, and for the seductive arts that lead to vicious indulgence. Numerous festivals occupied them at home, or attracted them to neighbouring cities, where the men appeared in magnificent habits, and the women in all the elegance of female ornament, and with all the desire of pleasure.-- Anachar."

The city had little of importance other than the temple so decayed with time into nothingness. Other cities that relied on trade survived much longer.

Barnes quotes others concerning the temple. "That for which the city was most celebrated was the temple of Diana. This temple was 425 feet in length, and 220 in breadth. It was encompassed by 127 pillars, each 60 feet in height, which were presented by as many kings. Some of those pillars, it is said, are yet to be seen in the mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople, having been

removed there when the church of St. Sophia was erected. These, however, were the pillars that constituted a part of the temple after it had been burned and was repaired, though it is probable that the same pillars were retained in the second temple which had constituted the glory of the first. All the provinces of Asia Minor contributed to the erection of this splendid temple, and two hundred years were consumed in building it. This temple was set on fire by a man named Herostratus, who, when put to the torture, confessed that his only motive was to immortalize his name. The general assembly of the states of Ionia passed a decree to devote his name to oblivion; but the fact of the decree has only served to perpetuate it. Cicer. De Nat. Deor. 2, 27. Plutarch. Life of Alex. Comp. Anachar. vi. 189. The whole of the edifice was consumed, except the four walls and some of the columns. It was, however, rebuilt, with the same magnificence as before, and was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. It is now in utter ruin. After the temple had been repeatedly pillaged by the barbarians, Justinian removed the columns to adorn the church of St. Sophia at Constantinople. The place where it stood can now be identified certainly, if at all, only by the marshy spot on which it was erected, and by the prodigious arches raised above as a foundation. The vaults formed by them compose a sort of labyrinth, and the water is knee-deep beneath. There is not an apartment entire; but thick walls, shafts of columns, and fragments of every kind, are scattered around in confusion. Ency. Geog. ii. 273, 274."

The city does not exist today, other than a small village by the name of Ayasaluk which is near the original site.

The church at Ephesus is not mentioned until Revelation when John is told to address a letter to them in Rev. 2:1-7. The letter mentions that they had left their first love. The apostle Paul seems to drive home the doctrine of that first love - Christ - so if John recorded that they had left that love, there must have been some strong draw from other resources to separate them from following God closely.

It does mention in Revelation that they still hate evil, which would most likely indicate the idolatry that still surrounded them. This would indicate that the draw was not idolatry but some other worldly matter. Most suggest that it was a rich and opulent city, so general worldliness may be the culprit.

Barnes tells us that John went to Ephesus and spent a large amount of time there as well. Paul had Timothy there for a time also. There must have been some strong needs at this church for such high powered men of God. Barnes bases his comments of John on tradition, which is not inspired but it comes from historical "church" information so may well be true.

Gill says of the city, "The city of Ephesus is, by Pliny {a}, called the other light of Asia; Miletus was one, and Ephesus the other: it was the metropolis of the lesser Asia, and one of the twelve cities of Ionia, and the first and chief of them: it is said to be built by the Amazons {b}: it was famous for the magnificent temple of Diana; and the inhabitants of it were very much given to superstition and idolatry, and even to devilish arts, Acts 19:19. It abounded with orators and philosophers, and men of great wisdom and learning {c}; and was formerly a very rich, trading,

flourishing city, but now a village, and a poor desolate place; it retains the name of Efeso, though the Turks call it Aia Salik."

Easton mentions that the temple of Diana also had a theater where the typical fighting between men and animals went on. The arena could seat fifty thousand people for these festivities. Not only a seat of idolatry but also a seat of inhumanity - what a place for a strong church. Paul certainly knew where to plant churches!

PURPOSE: The purpose seems to emphasize the mystery of, as well as the unity of the church with a little love mixed in. Constable suggests that Paul saw the beginnings of what the Apostle John had revealed to him by Christ, that they were leaving their first love.

Gill sees a little more purpose in the work. "The occasion of it was the foresight the apostle had of false teachers that would spring up in this church, after his death, and spread their pernicious

doctrines, and draw away disciples after them, and do great mischief in the church; wherefore the design of this epistle is to establish the saints in the doctrines of the Gospel, that so they might not be carried away with the errors of the wicked: the subject matter of it is most excellent; it treats of the most sublime doctrines of grace, of divine predestination, and eternal election, of redemption by Christ, and of peace and pardon by his blood, of conversion by the power of efficacious grace, and of salvation by the free grace of God, in opposition to works: it also very largely treats of the nature and usefulness of the Gospel ministry, and of gifts qualifying for it, and of the several duties of religion incumbent on Christians; and the method which is used is exceeding apt and beautiful, for the apostle first begins with the doctrines of the Gospel, which he distinctly handles and explains, and then proceeds to enforce the duties belonging to men, both as men and Christians."

Herrick suggests the following relating to the purpose of the book. "Though the specific purpose of the book is difficult to nail down precisely, certain theological and ethical themes play an important role. Some include: (1) the trinitarian and gracious nature of salvation (1:3-14; 2:1-10); prayer for spiritual understanding, power, and transformation (1:15-23; 3:14-21), the nature of the church as the unification of Jew and Gentile in one "new man" (2:11-22); positional and practical unity in the church (4:1-6); the purpose for spiritual gifts (4:7-16), personal and corporate holiness (4:17-5:14); the husband-wife relationship (5:22-33) and the spiritual warfare the church must engage in as it opposes Satan and his demons (6:10-18). The central organizing theological idea in Ephesians is that through Christ's atoning work God has mightily brought about the church-a new humanity, i.e., the unification of Jew and Gentile in one new man-for the praise of his glory and as a testimony to the principalities and powers of His multi-colored wisdom."

KEY PHRASE: "In Christ" and "In Him"

Deffinbaugh suggests some special characteristics of the book. One of the characteristics is that it is the "waterloo of biblical commentators" and explains it thusly. "Ephesians is one of those books which, like the God of whom it speaks, is beyond the grasp of the finite minds of men."

It crosses my mind that if God sent the Bible as His message to man, that it is understandable to man. Yes, there are some deep thoughts and doctrines contained within, but I don't believe for a moment that God would send us a message we can't grasp.

I won't dwell on his other characteristics. They seem to me to be more for sermonizing than useful in this work.

I believe that Stedman knew the importance of this letter. I would like to quote a section from one of his sermons. After challenging his congregation to read the epistle every week as they studied through the Word, he says this. "Let me share with you the experience of another person in this respect. This is from the introduction to a book by Dr. John McKay, for many years the president of Princeton University: I can never forget that the reading of this Pauline letter when I was a boy in my teens exercised a more decisive influence upon my thought and imagination than was ever wrought upon me before or since by the perusal of any piece of literature. The romance of the part played by Jesus Christ in making my personal salvation possible, and in mediating God's cosmic plan, so set my spirit aflame that I laid aside, in all ecstasy of delight, Dumas' Count of Monte Cristo which I happened to be reading at the time. That was my encounter with the Cosmic Christ. The Christ who was, and is, became the passion of my life. I have to admit without shame or reserve that as a result of that encounter I have been unable to think of my own life or the life of mankind or the life of the cosmos apart from Jesus Christ. He came to me and challenged me in the writings of St. Paul. I responded. The years that have followed have been but a footnote to that encounter. So I would suggest that, if you feel the need for change in your own life and for deepening your relationship with our Lord, you would do well to expose yourself in a very personal way to these teachings from the letter to the Ephesians."

I trust that you will find this study of use in your life. I have always been partial to the book especially the truths relating to the church and its purpose and ministry found in chapter four. So much of this passage has not been found to be useful to the church over the centuries. Rather the church has seen fit to set up its own ideas of "government" and personally, I believe this has limited the work and outreach of the church as a whole.

Barnes on the recipients of the book:

"(1.) The testimony of Marcion, a heretic of the second century, who affirms that it was sent to the church in Laodicea, and that instead of the reading (Eph 1:1) "in Ephesus," in the copy which he had it was, "in Laodicea." But the opinion of Marcion is now regarded as of little weight. It is

admitted that he was in the habit of altering the Greek text to suit his own views.

"EPHESIANS - Chapter 1 - Verse 2

"Continuation of Notes for Verse 1. Note 2 Verse at end of this note.

"(2.) The principal objection to the opinion that it was written to the church at Ephesus, is found in certain internal marks, and particularly in the want of any allusion to the fact that Paul had ever been there, or to anything that particularly related to the church there. This difficulty comprises several particulars:

"(a.) Paul spent nearly three years in Ephesus, and was engaged there in deeply interest transactions and occurrences. He had founded the church, ordained its elders, taught them the doctrines which they held, and had at last been persecuted there and driven away. If the epistle was written to them, it is remarkable that there is in the epistle no allusion to any one of these facts or circumstances. This is the more remarkable, as it was his usual custom to allude to the events which had occurred in the churches which he had founded, (see the epistles to the Corinthians and Philippians,) and as on two other occasions at least he makes direct allusion to these transactions at Ephesus. See Ac 20:18-35 1Co 15:32.

"(b.) In the other epistles which Paul wrote, it was his custom to salute a large number of persons by name; but in this epistle there is no salutation of any kind. There is a general invocation of "peace to the brethren," (Eph 6:23,) but no mention of an individual by name. There is not even an allusion to the "elders" whom, with so much affection, he had addressed at Miletus, (Ac 20,) and to whom he had given so solemn a charge. This is the more remarkable, as in this place he had spent three years in preaching the gospel, and must have been acquainted with all the leading members in the church. To the church at Rome, which he had never visited when he wrote his epistle to the Romans, he sends a large number of salutations, (Ro 16;) to the church at Ephesus, where he had spent a longer time than in any other place, he sends none.

"(3.) The name of Timothy does not occur in the epistle. This is remarkable, because Paul had left him there with a special charge, (1Ti 1:3,) and if he was still there, it is singular that no allusion is made to him, and no salutation sent to him. If he had left Ephesus, and had gone to Rome to meet Paul as he requested, (2Ti 4:9,) it is remarkable that Paul did not join his name with his own in sending the epistle to the church, or at least allude to the fact that he had arrived. This is the more remarkable, because in the epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the name of Timothy is joined with that of Paul at the commencement of the epistle.

"(d.) Paul speaks of the persons to whom this epistle was sent, as if he had not been with them, or

at least in a manner which is hardly conceivable on the supposition that he had been the founder of the church. Thus, in Eph 1:15,16, he says, "Wherefore also after I heard of your faith in Christ Jesus," etc. But this circumstance is not conclusive. Paul may have been told of the continuance of their faith, and of their growing love and zeal, and he may have alluded to that in this passage.

"(e.) Another circumstance on which some reliance has been placed, is the statement in Eph 3:1,2, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to youward," etc. It is argued (see Michaelis) that this is not language which would have been employed by one who had founded the church, and with whom they were all acquainted. He would not have spoken in a manner implying any doubt whether they had ever heard of him and his labours in the ministry on account of the Gentiles. Such are the considerations relied on to show that the epistle could not have been written to the Ephesians.

"On the other hand, there is proof of a very strong character that it was written to them. That proof is the following:--

"1. The common reading in Eph 1:1, "To the saints which are in Ephesus." It is true, as we have seen, that this reading has been called in question. Mill says that it is omitted by Basil, (Lib. 2. *Adversus Eunomium*,) as he says, "on the testimony of the fathers and of ancient copies." Griesbach marks it with the sign om., denoting that it was omitted by some, but that in his judgment it is to be retained. It is found in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic in Walton's Polyglott. Rosenmuller remarks that "most of the ancient codices, and all the ancient versions, retain the word." To my mind this fact is conclusive. The testimony of Marcion is admitted to be of almost no authority; and as to the testimony of Basil, it is only one against the testimony of all the ancients, and is at best negative in its character. See the passage from Basil, quoted in Hug's Introduction.

"2. A slight circumstance may be adverted to as throwing light incidentally on this question. This epistle was sent by Tychicus, Eph 6:21. The epistle to the Colossians was also sent from Rome by the same messenger, Col 4:7. Now there is a strong improbability in the opinion held by Michaelis, Koppe, and others, that this was a circular letter, sent to the churches at large, or that different copies were prepared, and the name Ephesus inserted in one, and Laodicea in another, etc. The improbability is this, that the apostle would at the same time send such a circular letter to several of the churches, and a special letter to the church at Colosse. What claim had that church to special notice? What pre-eminence had it over the church at Ephesus? And why should he send them a letter bearing so strong a resemblance to that addressed to the other churches, when the same letter would have suited the church at Colosse as well as the one which was actually sent to them; for there is a nearer resemblance between these two epistles than any other two portions of the Bible. Besides, in 2Ti 4:12, Paul says that he had sent "Tychicus to Ephesus;" and what is more natural than that, at that time, he sent this epistle by him?

"3. There is the utter want of evidence from Mss. or versions, that this epistle was sent to

Laodicea, or to any other church, except Ephesus. Not a Ms. has been found having the name Laodicea in Eph 1:1; and not one which omits the words "in Ephesus." If it had been sent to another church, or if it had been a circular letter addressed to no particular church, it is scarcely credible that this could have occurred.

"These considerations make it plain to me that this epistle was addressed, as it purports to have been, to the church in Ephesus. I confess myself wholly unable, however, to explain the remarkable circumstances that Paul does not refer to his former residence there; that he alludes to none of his troubles or his triumphs; that he makes no mention of the "elders," and salutes no one by name; and that throughout he addresses them as if they were to him personally unknown. In this respect it is unlike all the other epistles which he ever wrote, and all which we should have expected from a man in such circumstances. May it not be accounted for from this very fact, that an attempt to specify individuals where so many were known, would protract the epistle to an unreasonable length? There is, indeed, one supposition suggested by Dr. Macknight, which may possibly explain to some extent the remarkable circumstances above referred to. It is that a direction may have been given by Paul to Tychicus, by whom he sent the letter, to send a copy of it to the Laodiceans, with an order to them to communicate it to the Colossians. In such a case every thing local would be designedly omitted, and the epistle would be of as general a character as possible. This is, however, mere conjecture, and does not remove the whole of the difficulty.

"The rest of the material for this note is continued in note for Eph 1:2 due to space limitations for note."

Section one: 1.1-14

We are about to be given a grand tour of theology by the apostle Paul. We will see some of the great things that God has done for us. Ray Stedman introduced these things as follows in one of his sermons. "Obviously, all of this, as we saw last week, comes to us in one great package "in Christ." If you are not a Christian, you cannot possibly claim these benefits. They are not yours; they don't belong to you. You cannot buy them, you cannot discover them, and you cannot sign up for a course about them in a university. You can't send away ten dollars in the mail and get a pamphlet that will lead you to them. There is no way you can appropriate them unless you are in Christ. But if you are "in Christ" there is nothing to keep you from having all of them, every moment of every day. That is why it is so important that we discover what they are."

Let's begin our tour.

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:

Paul, the "not so nice" Saul of the early part of Acts was well known in Ephesus as well as the surrounding areas. He had been through the area as a missionary, planting churches and had spent two or three years there teaching and ministering. He undoubtedly knew many people there, and most likely was close to some of the ones he ministered with.

What a wonderful thing to get a letter from this man that had been such a part of the church's beginnings and growth. What a treat to hear more of his great teaching as well. I suspect there was a lot of excitement in the church when it was received and read.

When he tells them he is an apostle by the will of God I would guess there were a lot of amens in the congregation. They knew who he was, as well as what he was. He was an apostle, but prior to this life he had persecuted believers. His past life had to have had some impact as they viewed his overall character.

Recently I was in a church service where the preacher was downplaying the testimonies of people that have been in the dregs of sin, but washed in the blood of the lamb. He thought that they were braggarts to discuss their former life, yet it is part of their life, of their overall testimony, so why would someone with a life of sin behind him try to cover it up by not mentioning it when giving a testimony for the Lord and what He has done in the life?

The pastor mentioned that he was more excited to see a young child come to the Lord because they haven't gone through all that sin. I am not sure why we should dismiss one person's salvation for another's, since we are all saved by grace and we all come to the Lord with nothing but filthy rags. Indeed, I am not sure, but it runs in my mind, all are totally depraved and all are totally without excuse before God - how can we devalue one person's experience over another's? Indeed, all come to Christ with a totally sinful nature and they are spiritually dead, be they a child

or a drunk of old age - all lost are just as lost as another.

Paul knew he was what he was because of God's will. We can also know the same in our lives if we are on communicating ground with the Lord.

I trust that you have considered what God's will is for your life. Even children can start looking into this area of their spiritual life. Some know when they are yet very young that God wants them in the field of missions, while others know that they are to be preachers, or mothers, or firemen. Note, that God's will does not mean the ministry, but may. Keep that "may" in your thinking as you seek God's will for your life and future.

The fact that Paul addresses this to "the saints which are at Ephesus" rather than to First Baptist church of Ephesus is of note. He was addressing saints, not buildings. We often forget that the church is people, not a building. We often tend to think of church as where we go rather than whom we see.

Paul uses the following description of his readers, "...to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:." This terminology certainly leaves it open to the possibility of this letter needing to go to others outside of the church at Ephesus. It could also just mean that it was to any saints near Ephesus. It is unlikely that a church planted in the city would not have extended its ministry to those in surrounding areas. As people traveled into town for commerce, it would have been natural for believers to have talked to some of the Lord.

"Paul" means short or little, thus descriptive of the apostle's stature, yet God used him anyway - he can, and will use anyone of any type, of any shape, and of any stature if they are open to His leading. Don't ever allow some limitation to hinder your openness to God to serve Him in His way. Moses in the Old Testament used his lack of eloquence to try to excuse himself from God's calling - don't you allow anything to stand between what God wants you to do and your doing it. Ex. 4.10 "And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I [am] not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I [am] slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

The better example of a willing participant in God's will is Isaiah. He was willing to answer the call. Isa. 6.8 "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me."

The term "saint" is the normal term for holiness. Now, that speaks volumes about what we are supposed to be like. When you walk into the break room at work, do people envision you in their minds as holiness walking into the room? Does anyone call you holy? Do your friends view you as a holy one? I trust this term brings you up short in your life, as this is God's standard.

So many people in churches across the country feel good about themselves, but are never told that God holds them to a holy standard rather than a feel good standard. Many are going to be surprised at the judgment seat of Christ.

I rather think this is one of the things that helped spawn the false teaching currently circulating that the Millennium is a time of reigning with Christ for the faithful, while being a time of purification for those that aren't faithful. A protestant purgatory as some are calling the teaching. Some have seen the lack of holiness so have seen benefit in this false teaching to encourage people to live holy lives.

I suspect some would suggest that the holy ones and the faithful are two different groups of people. This may be true to a point. The saints at Ephesus may relate to the believers in the church, while the faithful may relate to other believers around Ephesus. This, however, is as far as I would carry the thought of two groups. He isn't talking about the general saints as opposed to the "faithful" saints.

Darby translates it in a way which seems to equate the two terms to the same people. 1:1 "Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who are at Ephesus."

A note in the Net Bible states that the Greek construction is typical of Paul, and that the two terms are speaking of the same people. It states that the two are identical.

Just a little more relating to how people view you. Not only should they see you as holy, but they should see you as faithful. How faithful are you at the break table when someone begins to demean God/Christ by their verbiage? How faithful are you to your belief system when at work? How faithful are you to your belief system when you are out with your friends?

2 Grace [be] to you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace are the request of the apostle. He asks for these items to be extended from two sources - both the Father and the Son. Rather well speaks to the truth of the trinity, that the members of the trinity act independently and that they are separate, yet God. Only God can extend grace and peace.

Ought we to refer back to what people think of you? How do they see you as a believer? Do they consider you full of grace? Do they consider you at peace?

How often I've seen believers falling apart over minor occurrences in their life - how do the unsaved see this type of action? I rather expect they see a person that believes in a very small God - one that can't help them through the difficulties of life - so why should they listen to you when you tell them that your God can help them through the hard times?

Since Paul asked God and Christ to shed forth grace and peace upon the believers at Ephesus, might we not have an example that we should, in our prayer meetings/times, be asking for grace and peace upon those we pray for, our missionaries, our pastors, our teachers, our children, our EVERYONE? I think this is an excellent addition to anyone's prayer list. Help those you pray for

along by asking God to give them grace and peace.

Know, on the other hand, that if they don't have grace and peace, that God may bring trials into their lives so that they can learn grace and peace. This might be something to consider as it relates to this passage - maybe Paul knew they were facing some times where they would need grace and peace and he was asking God to bring into their lives those things that would give them grace and peace.

The term peace is related to that which is opposed to war. If you have war, you have conflict and you need to work at finding peace. Peace is not a given, it is a sought after and found item that is not all that easy to gain.

Imagine also the person in Ephesus that has been going through hard times. He goes to church and hears that Paul is asking God to give you grace and peace. That had to have been a great encouragement and comfort for them. Maybe your missionary could use that encouragement from you in a letter today - after you have asked God to give it to them.

My goodness, what an encouragement we should be to our missionaries and pastors. Pray for them as often as you can. I was going to say as often as you think of them, but that may not be adequate.

Now, to the question that I am sure has come to some of those logical minds reading this. Why would Paul seek grace and peace from both members of the Trinity? Let's observe.

a. There must be a reason for this request - it isn't just an introduction to a letter that he uses as part of a template in his Word processor - something he says anytime he sends a letter to someone. It was something he had thought out and that he wanted to say.

b. Both members of the Trinity must be able to extend both items requested.

c. God the Father is the Father, while Christ the Son is our brother. There may be a truth in the thought that a father's grace and peace might be different than a Brother's grace and peace. You might consider this for further study; we won't delve into it here.

If both members of the Trinity can extend the items, then Paul must have thought the Ephesian believers needed a double dose of them. On the same plain, why not give the people every benefit that he can, relating to grace and peace.

d. Though there is subservience in the Trinity, it might be possible that the Father must authorize the extension of grace and peace, while the Son would be the source and delivery system. I doubt that this is the case.

e. Since one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace, then it would seem that all members of the Trinity

can extend peace. So, why didn't Paul include the Spirit in his introduction? Is there something different between the peace of the Spirit and the peace of the Father and of the Son? I rather doubt it. (Gal. 5.22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.")

I am not sure that the doctrine of the Spirit was really developed in the mind of the church at this point in time. This doctrine wasn't discussed till much later in the early church's life. Paul may have just been using terms and concepts that he knew the believers could understand and grasp.

I suspect he just wanted to gain grace and peace for the believers so requested it from the Lord in a general way.

This passage also points up the thought of praying to Christ as well as to the Father. There is nothing wrong in praying to Christ, but our primary prayers should be aimed toward the Father as is in keeping with the "Lord's Prayer," "Our Father which art in heaven...."

I might make mention of the idea of praying to Jesus. Again, nothing wrong about it but the example is "Our Father" thus should be our focus. To use the earthly name of Christ, Jesus, as your focus in life to me is rather inconsistent with the Word. The term Jesus is seldom used alone in the New Testament epistles; it is normally linked to "Lord" or "Christ" which tends to relegate the earthly name of our Lord to a subservient position. He is God first and completely, "Jesus" only relates to thirty some years of His eternal existence - seems incorrect to dwell on the minor when there is so much major to concentrate on.

By way of application, I would encourage you to consider your ways if you are one that uses this sort of introduction to your personal letters. Doing this is not wrong, nor do I demean those that do it, but I would encourage you to give serious thought each time you use such a greeting. Be sure you are being serious and thoughtful in your words, rather than just jotting down a greeting to be spiritual or to satisfy a habit.

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:

"Blessed be the God and Father..." is the introduction to a sentence that ends in verse twelve. My goodness isn't you glad Paul didn't write sentence for your English teacher to teach diagramming with! This is one long verse and I want to tell you it is one huge theological gold mine for those that care to take time to look.

Here, specifically we see a doctrine introduced that is seldom talked about any more. God is the Father of the Son. Fact, not open for discussion. I suspect this is one of those doctrines that were included in the "Ephesians is the Waterloo of commentators" line of thought, but it is a doctrine that is in the Word and I think we can understand it fairly well if we take a serious look at it.

There is a related issue, in that some wonder if the Son has always been the Son, or if there was a change in relationship, or if the Son precedes the Father in existence. NOT, the Son is eternally the Son and eternally God, never having not existed as the Father, has never not existed. Others suggest that Christ was not the Son until He was born of Mary. The common sense thinking here would say no because the Word says that Mary was with child via the Spirit, not the Father.

At any rate, I am including a portion from my theology at the end of this file concerning the Sonship of Christ.

One thing we need to discuss is that if the Father and the Son have always been, then is there a Mother? No, but that is a needed discussion. The Son is not a Son born from God, though the word does say that He is begotten.

It seems that there has always been this Father Son relation amongst the two members of the Trinity, just as there has always been a Spirit within the relationship. The relationship has always existed; it did not begin. The Trinity has always existed; it did not have a beginning.

Why is there a Father Son relationship? Probably to show the closeness of the relationship, possibly to be a model for earthly father son relationships, possibly to show and pattern the closeness of the relationship toward earthly fathers. It further is an example to man that there is always a subservience of some to others, and that this relationship is good.

In short you can also say, because it is and it will always be - it was also part of God's eternal, overall plan for the ages.

Some might suggest, and it might be a possibility, that God in eternity past before the decrees determined to have this relationship for the purpose of the decrees. Since most suggest that the decrees are eternal they would probably reject this out of hand, however anyone with a logical mind might seize upon this as a distinct possibility, in that if God is eternal, and He is, then the decrees are something that He decided to do, thus requiring a tad of time between His eternality and His decrees. From our view the decrees are eternal, but when compared to God they might be a tad later.

Remember, time is a medium designed for man and has little meaning to God. He has submitted Himself to it for a little while for the purpose of relating to man, but this too will end and time will become irrelevant once more. "When we've been there ten thousand years," well it sings nice but we won't be keeping track.

One more major doctrine here is to be found. "Hath blessed" is an aorist tense indicating that He blessed us, every one of us, at a point in time - He did it and it was done, nothing further was needed on Christ's part.

This brings up two thoughts.

1. This is speaking of salvation and it is finished, how can it be redone - it can't - eternal security in a nutshell. Also, it is finished; it is not a process of us getting better and better till we are saved - not a valid teaching.

2. The other thought is when did this happen. Is this the act of the cross, or is this the saving of the soul as it comes to Christ in faith and belief?

I would suggest that since He did this in heavenly places (the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle mentioned in Hebrews) and that it is in Him, that this speaks to the work of the cross and offering of the blood in the heavenly tabernacle for the final step in providing salvation.

If this be true, and I think it is quite possible, then that all is done for our salvation at a point in the past - in the heavenly tabernacle - it is done - all that is left is the faith/belief of the individual. This points up to me the universal atonement that is offered to every man, that is only to be received. Indeed, wrapped up in this is the thought that all mankind gained eternal existence at that point in time, it is just that some reject the work so are eternally without God, and those that believe are eternally with God.

There is a lot more to this but we don't have time to delve into it further, just think about it for a while. If you want to dig further, my theology has a lot more about salvation and man. Also the book on my website entitled Mr. D's Notes on Regeneration might be of help as well.

I might clarify slightly - the blessing was from Christ's work, however it seems to me that the verse is showing that this blessing was ultimately from the Father - it was His plan that was enacted, it was His plan that set Jesus on the cross. The overall salvation that we enjoy is from the Father via Christ.

We also have the doctrine of our being in heavenly places. This should be our attitude, this should be our mind set, this should be our testimony, this should be our life.

We also have the doctrine of our being in Christ. What does it mean to be "in Christ" - what truth do we have in these two words? In very brief terms, we are baptized into His body when we are saved, we are in His body, which by the way is the church, and thus we are within Him and part of His being, the church. We are an integrated part of who He is.

Does that give you the creeps to think about being part of Christ and living the way we do - we ought to be ashamed of our living, of our detractions from who Christ is before mankind.

There is also the truth that when the Devil casts his accusations about us before God, God can figuratively point to us and say they are pure, they are in my Son who died for them. There is no accusation that will stand before that answer.

We also have the doctrine of our being able to bless God. Wow, think on that for a while. Paul

called God blessed, or declared his belief that God was a total blessing to us - giving him recognition for whom and what He is - giving worship if you will.

We must move on. This book is full of doctrine and it is a book to study over and over because of its depth, I trust that you will come to it often to study.

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:

According as he [God the Father] hath chosen us in him [God the Son, refers back to us being in Christ] before the foundation of the world [before creation], that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Okay, here we have some more doctrine - chosen - decrees - holiness - all sorts of side studies that you can do if you really want to dig. We have already mentioned the decrees briefly and with them are a number of controversies relating to the when of, the order of and the content of, but we won't go into them here. If you want further information my theology deals with them, as do most any systematic theology books. The information you find will vary with the theological position of the writer so beware which theology you choose.

At any rate God chose the elect before the foundation of the world, indeed, most agree that somewhere in the far eternity past, if not as far as God Himself, He chose which people would be part of His kingdom in eternity future. I am vague on the when of the decrees in that they have to precede God in that God cannot decree before He is, but then God has always been so have the decrees always been? We don't know for positive I don't think but we do know they are eternal.

How He chose, in my mind is based on foreknowledge, though the reform camp would bristle at the suggestion. They pretty much ignore foreknowledge and hope it will go away, however foreknowledge, in my understanding, is in the Word and must be integrated into the scheme of the whole. My view on foreknowledge and free will do no damage to God's sovereignty, nor to any of the other attributes and doctrines that the reform feel it destroys.

This was done before time began, before creation, thus it was set and going to happen in time. The doctrine of choosing is not all that shallow but we can't delve into it here. Let it suffice that He chose. He did not choose some for hell as many would suggest, He merely chose some to be saved. The salvation had a purpose and that was to bring them to holiness.

Now, to apply that for a moment. We can be holy. We ought to be holy. God expects us to be holy. So, how can we justify the life that we often lead - a life of unholiness? We cannot justify it; we can only answer for it when we stand before God in the end.

Holiness is the standard, not the fifth choice in a list of things we can do if and when we get time; it is top option in a list of things we are supposed to do. Remember that verse that is quoted three

times in the Word, "be ye holy for I am holy?" It isn't there three times for nothing; He must want us to be holy - especially if He chose us before the foundation of the world to be so! (Lev. 11.44 and 45; 19.2; - guess it was more than three times - 20.26; 21.8; I Pet. 1.16 and many other places tell us to be holy.)

And, by the way being holy is in the present tense - a continuing action. Being holy in the aorist tense won't do at all; that is being holy at one point in time. Holy is a life style, not an option for one part of the day or one part of the week.

And on top of all that He expects us to be without blame! The idea is that we are to live our lives so that no person can lay accusation against us and make it stick. It isn't that we are so slick that the accusation slides off, but we are so holy that there is no basis for accusation. No one could dare to accuse you of doing something wrong.

The Net Bible points out that this word translated "without blame" is used of the Pascal lamb that is without blemish. One that is pure enough to be offered in sacrifice. This is God's goal for us not only in this life, but it will be totally that way in the next.

And on top of this we are to live before Him in love. This is the deep love, the "agape" love that causes one to give of yourself for the other.

Note it isn't that we are to be holy and blameless and then before Him in love, we are to be before him holy and blameless in love. All three should be part of the desired condition as we are before Him. This is not just in prayer; it is to be our overall condition of life.

I might make a little observation about God's choosing. I eat half a pear for a snack every day to keep my sugar levels in balance. I do not like the juicy messy pears so I pick Anjou pears and when I go to pick them off the counter there are some characteristics that I look for. I like nice bright green ones because they aren't juicy and messy, and I like them green because they are still hard like an apple. I also like the bigger ones - if I'm going to snack I'm going to get as much as possible.

The word used in the verse has the idea of selecting for an office or selecting for one's own use. This wasn't a random, you, you, and you picking, it was a selection of some out of a group.

Often I have heard that God didn't pick us because of anything we can do or be, but I think this word indicates differently. There is nothing in me that could help me find God, there is nothing I can do to bring God to save me, but there may have been characteristics within me that He desired to use in His overall work. Much as a golfer chooses his clubs for a particular purpose (I assume that is why they carry so many different clubs :-)) God looked at the multitudes of people that would populate the earth and he chose those that He wanted to use in His work of redemption through the ages.

Now, that should give your self image a boost - it should make you realize your worth is in Him not in your peers! This verse kind of makes I Co. 1.26ff jump up and become alive doesn't it! 26 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence."

God chose YOU! Think on that awhile and not only thank Him for including you, but get on your knees and ask Him what He wants to use you for in this life, because there is a purpose! If you aren't busy for Him you are in trouble - He picked you to use in a specific purpose. If you are not being useful, you are being useless. When you stand before Him what's it going to be?

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

Uppppps, more theology, sorry all you pastors that can't stand theology - just skip over this book would you. I trust that those that demean theology will soon rethink their lack of thought. Theology is throughout the Word of God, AND He parked a goodly amount of it right here in this short book.

In the newspaper recently people have been writing to the editor complaining that their political signs are being stolen from their front lawns. The next statement is usually that Bush is spreading fear and hate throughout the country with such tactics. They then of course suggest that voting for Bush is spreading hate and fear as well.

I have been tempted to write a letter myself, something along the line of - well I would like to use the same logic that these people use in relation to an incident in my life. Recently I found a twenty-dollar bill on the sidewalk. Bush is spreading twenty dollar bills across the nation to cause peace, joy and happiness across the country. If you want to have money and be at peace, vote for Bush. Humm, don't think there is much thinking going on in our country this election season.

Back to the theology - predestination - adoption - a couple of big doctrines that we want to take a look at.

Predestination, a term that predominates many internet forums, while it appears in Scripture twice - it is a part of a whole, not the predominant entity that is so often made out to be. It is a simple statement of something that God did. It also appears in verse eleven, where we are told basically the same thing as we are told in verse five. It is by His will for his purpose and it is a predestination to sonship which brings with it inheritance.

Now, be sure you understand that this is the whole of the teaching on the word itself. Beware any

other passage that is used in relation to it and be sure that the context supports its being used in relation to predestination.

First of all this is an aorist tense, so it is a one time action. The word itself, according to the Lexicon, is to predestinate, determine before, ordain, predetermine, decide beforehand and they mention that God decreed from eternity. It was an act that was done at a point in time; most would agree that it was part of the decrees. It is something that God did - He determined beforehand that we would be sons and enjoy an inheritance.

That is the crux and total of the specific teaching. Now, because we know that this is part of salvation we can relate it to all that is contained in salvation, the regeneration, the justification and all those other items, but specifically we are predestined to be sons in the context of Ephesians.

I might make a statement concerning the decrees. Some suggest that there was only one decree, while others say there were multiple decrees. Whether one or several, most agree on the content of whatever they hold to. The content is normally about the same, though the order is not always the same. As things relate to order, take some time to logically think through the sequence that was needed. Most systematic theologies cover this, including my own.

We are adopted, based on the good pleasure of His will. Rather simple isn't it. He did it based on his own desire and will. Not on our good looks, not on our good works, not on our anything - nothing we are or can do is related in any way to this decision of the will of God - and it was done long before creation in eternity past. Just what God's choice was based on, I feel there was good reason for His choice - something other than you, you and you but not you. There was a rational reason why He chose each and every one of us. This was indicated earlier in the meaning of the words used.

Romans 8.29 relates to our discussion. "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." Here we see that the term is related specifically to our being conformed to the image of Christ.

Now, specifically the usages relate to results of salvation, not salvation itself. Thus, beware how writers use the term and where they go with it.

It is of great note to me that this adoption and our conforming are pleasurable to God - that is impressive. He found pleasure in making us sons! Again, we see something more than just a cold choosing of some. There was thought and there was pleasure in what He did.

The second usage is of concern to anyone that is not walking with God. He determined beforehand that we would be conformed to His Son's image. Now, I assume that the completion of this is in the end when we are changed and are prepared for eternity, but surely there is the thought that we ought to be bringing ourselves into conformity with His image as we walk with Him. Our

walk should reflect that which we will one day be.

All of this heavy doctrine is part of that phrase back in verse three where Paul tells us God "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ:" All this heavy stuff is a blessing and part and parcel with all that God wants to do for us, and all that He has done for us. And this isn't all - it continues in the next few verses.

He didn't just zap us into the kingdom, He provided all sorts of benefits and blessings for us - now, hate to say it, but just have to - if we don't study theology, we can't know all of what God has done for us.

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

Paul is praising the glory of God's grace. God acted on our behalf in grace, and that exhibits glory of its own in some manner, so Paul praises that glory. Glory can speak to the "glory" as we understand it, but it is also the thought of opinion of something. Paul is giving high regard, or commendation, or praise to our opinion or estimation of the "grace" of God in our salvation.

We know how great a salvation God has brought to our lives, and we know it is because of Him and nothing that we have done, so we really honor and respect the "grace" which He showed in our lives - it is natural to have a high opinion of God's grace, thus we should "praise" or give high regard to all that He has done.

How can we do this aside from verbal praise? By sharing that message of grace with all that we meet. By living a life that is honoring to a God that has done so much for us. Be thankful for all that God has done for us in salvation and our everyday life.

There is a significance in the verbs "accepted" which is an aorist, or one time occurrence, and "in" which is a perfect tense, something that has continuing action to a future culmination. We were accepted at a point in time - we are in the beloved now, and will continue in the beloved until eternity when all things are culminated. It is also of note that the construction of "in the beloved" is such that we are not involved in the action - it is something that is done from without our being.

We are accepted, but due to no action of our own.

Now, there is an application that I should really not have to make but the idea of "accepted in the beloved" needs some of our attention. Just how accepted is the believer in the church today? I know some believe this relates to the beloved as in Christ, but even if that is the thought of the text, it has the overall thought of the believer being accepted. In Christ we are one - His body and we certainly should be accepted as part of the body.

Are we really accepting of other believers in our churches? We visited one church recently and as

we sat down we were given a doctrinal statement by the pastor - "This is what we believe." was his comment. In our time there we were not greeted, other than by the pastor, and we felt as though we were totally outside the fellowship and further more, we felt that the exclusion was on purpose, until they could determine whether we agreed with them or not. This was in a fundamental church.

Also recently we have visited another fundamental church and our presence is kind of acknowledged with a faint hello by the pastor's wife, and later by the pastor, as he finalizes all of his wanderings around and shuffling of papers. The people of the church made little effort to acknowledge us - of course until the greeting time, when we were actually greeted by a few of the people. As we left the church, the pastor did come over and say hello again, but I had the feeling it was more out of "I really should say something to them." than a desire to accept us as fellow believers - well since there was no opportunity for them to know this of us, why would they accept us :-)

Even in churches where we have been members for a long time there is a real lack of acceptance. We do little to promote unity among believers in this day. What are some things we might do to promote unity and acceptance between believers?

1. Set up settings where they can spend time with one another to get to know one another. In most of our churches we are total strangers, we know nothing of the others, and even if we know some, we do not share our needs and accomplishments with them.

a. How about pot lucks, how about small group dinners or deserts before or after church. Coffee times before or after Sunday school class - include foods all can eat. We have many people on special diets today and coffee and donuts won't draw some into fellowship, they will avoid it so they don't have to say no to something they dearly desire to eat.

b. Small groups during prayer times. This develops closeness that may foster openness.

c. Small Bible study groups also will bring closeness. Maybe even have them during Sunday school now and then, for the entire hour - maybe have a few minutes of conclusion at the end.

2. The pastor needs to set the example. If he gets to know people then others may catch the interest. I don't mean the surface news, weather and sports - where do you work stuff, though that is a good place to start, but I mean a getting to know some of the church folks. Finding out their dreams, finding out their ministry, their spiritual gift, and maybe even their problems, and maybe praying with some of them.

We tend to not want to get to know in the church today - partly because we know we will be the pastor's illustrations in his next pastorate if we have problems and talk to him. The same goes for the congregation - few want to open up to others due to the knowledge that spreading of information is the next step in many cases.

3. Assure confidentiality when you start getting closer to someone. This will be the best key to building unity.

4. Sermons on the subject as well as studies on the how and why of unity. People can't always build unity without some know-how.

Much unity comes automatically when we love one another. Realization of this might go far in bringing closeness to a group. I suspect this was one of the reasons Christ said what He said about loving one another. He mentioned in John 15.14 in the context of loving one another, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Now, that is a promise we ought to want to make use of - if we love one another we can know that we are "friends" of Christ. What a deal and love doesn't even cost, nor is it fattening. Verse seventeen mentions that we are to love one another. Love brings unity and closeness.

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

In whom - in Christ, we have redemption. "Redemption" is a word that relates to the paying of a ransom for release. A buying back of someone for a price. Whatever the price, Christ paid it on the cross, no other price is pending, He did all that was required, else wise we would not yet have redemption.

We were redeemed from death, we were redeemed from our old nature, and we are redeemed from all that Adam brought upon us.

In Adam we received spiritual death and a sin nature, both of which are now removed from our beings. He also incurred physical death because he was isolated from the tree of life. We still must go through physical death for the same reason, but we are fully prepared for the next life by Christ's blood and work on the cross.

We also received forgiveness of all sins to that point in time when we responded to the Gospel. Why were we forgiven? Because of His rich grace.

This word translated "sins" is different from the normal word for sin; it is the thought of trespass or failing. This clearly would picture that our sins of action are forgiven, rather than our sin nature. Our sin nature was carried away when we were given a new nature at salvation.

It is of note that the verb "have" is a present tense, it is something that continues on - we ARE redeemed, we ARE forgiven for all past sins of action/thought, we ARE a new creature. All continue, no matter what false doctrine you might hear on the subjects.

It is also clear that all of this is THROUGH His blood. Some have suggested the blood is of no

consequence, that it didn't relate to anything, that it wasn't really the blood itself. Now, I am not sure what they mean. If by saying this they say that the blood, the substance itself, did not have any importance, they might be correct. However, the shedding of that blood is of great significance.

I myself am not convinced the liquid itself did anything, but the fact that it was given for us is of great importance. It was the shedding of innocent blood for the guilty; it was the work of Christ for the likes of us. I suspect this is what the people are suggesting, and they have been taken just a little incorrectly. At any rate it is through this sacrifice, it is through this act, it is through this work that we enjoy the fruits of Christ's work.

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

Now, if you want to know about wisdom, see my study on wisdom - the question here is whether the verse speaks of wisdom given us or wisdom in which He abounded to us.

Prudence can be translated understanding as well as wisdom. I think it speaks to His abounding to us in all of His wisdom and understanding. The abounding, speaks to those items mentioned previously. Our salvation and all its benefits come directly from HIS understanding and wisdom - He knows best for us. Thus, how dare we question His saving us? We ought not ever question His wisdom in saving us, we are chosen by Him for His purpose and for His good will.

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

This thought of "good pleasure" is something to contemplate. Just what pleasures an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God? He knows all there is to know so pleasure reading is out, He is everywhere so speed is out, He can do anything He wants so sports are out, what's left? I don't mean at all to be sacrilegious, just wonder how God can gain pleasure from anything to do with man. Man has spit in His face from the beginning and has made it rather clear that he doesn't want anything to do with God, yet God finds pleasure in making provision for us.

The only logical conclusion I can find is that He finds pleasure in "doing" for man. Now, this "doing" is not only for the saved, but is for all mankind. John 3.16 "For God so loved the world..." thus the whole of mankind has to be in view, even though some reformed would probably scoff at the thought. The fact that He has provided a beautiful earth for us to enjoy is proof that He loves all, but especially the believer. (Acts 14.17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.)

I also see in the Word that He can do special, over and above things, for the Christian in that we are His sons. This "doing" of providing not only salvation, but wisdom, strength peace and all

those items come from His great love of His creatures, especially those that have a Father Son relationship with Him.

I suspect that "love" is the basis for this desire to "do for" the person - seems about the only logical deduction.

Another aspect of this love and desire to do is the concept that when we ask, we are asking things of, not an old meany in the sky, but we are asking of a God that loves us on an individual basis and a God that DESIRES TO DO for us. That puts a neat prospective to prayer for me. This also relates to those answers of "no" and "wait" that we often get. These answers are not due to His lack of caring for us, nor due to His disinterest, nor His desire to hurt or hinder us - these answers are from a God that Loves us and wants to do the very best for us.

I suspect that He derives His good pleasure from His doing, as He is not dependant on us for that pleasure, however I have to think that there is pleasure when He sees us appreciating what He has done, and I suspect He appreciates our thanks for all answered prayer - even the "no" and "wait" type answers.

So often in prayer meetings we hear request after request after request, but seldom do we hear of any answers. Thus most prayer meetings are asking meetings with a little "general" thanksgiving added on for the basics of what we know of His provision - light, air, etc.

Missionaries, pastors, people - share your prayer answers with others. It is not only a joy for others to hear of God's work in your life, it is a joy to Him when He hears a thank you.

The "mystery of his will" is not a who dunit, but rather it is something that is hidden from view. Now, we know what that mystery is, but previous to the cross no man knew of God's will in the way we do now. Barnes explains the word, "something into which one must be initiated before it is fully known (from miew, to initiate, to instruct;) and then anything which is concealed or hidden."

Some might wonder what was hidden and what all we know of His will now. I suspect we know very little of His will, for it includes desires for every man, woman, and child throughout all time, but we do know His will in the area of this context. And to the other part of the question, all we now know of this specific context was not known prior to the cross.

So, what is in the context that we now know that the people previous to the cross did not know? I think that the previous context is related, but specifically the following context (which some is mentioned previously). This would include the fact that all things are going to be gathered together in Christ - this being to bring praise to His name - in the end of time - at the final judgment when all is being taken care of, all will know that God is, and that He loved, and that He desired to do for us. It will also be quite evident that His desire to do was aimed at all mankind, not just the believer.

He has "purposed in Himself" shows not only that He desired to do, but He also at some point committed Himself to action on that desire.

By way of application, we often desire to do, but we not always follow through with action to fulfill our desires. Now, if we desire a new flat screen television, we will purpose in our heart to get it. We will think of ways to pay for it, we will plan on where we will put it, we will plan on what we will do with the old television and we will assure that the new television comes into our home.

However, we might desire to help someone in the church that is hurting or needing, but do we use the same strength of character to assist that person as we would to gain our beloved television set?

In God's case, He committed Himself to "do" by making and setting in motion the plan of the ages to provide redemption for sinful man, before Adam was even created. The plan was set; the plan was complete in God's mind long before Adam was given his first breath.

Might we take that purpose as an example for our own purpose and planning for God's work in and through us as we live through this life?

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:

Dispensation is a word to describe management of a household, or taking care of the affairs of a household. It would be a word descriptive of a trusted assistant or servant taking care of the business of a large house with a family and possibly servants. It would involve being a manager of all that goes on in the home. Not unlike the job of a housewife and husband that care for their own home's business.

It would include paying bills, investments, caring for property etc. We use the term to describe the management or care that God provides over the realm of mankind. We divide God's dealings with man into seven dispensations. During each dispensation God deals with man a little differently. This is not to say, as many nondispensationalists assert, that dispensationalists believe in multiple methods of salvation. God deals with man in different ways, though salvation is always through the work of Christ on the cross.

In this verse Paul is using the term to designate a time in which certain things are happening. I don't know that he had any idea of how the church would use the term dispensations for he had no idea of the dispensational teaching. He however did know the difference between law and the church age. He also might have known of the differences between the ages in the Old Testament, though he would probably not have thought much about classifying them into distinct ages or dispensations.

Here, we see Paul mentioning that in the oversight of God there was the present, to him, economy in which certain things are happening. He calls it the fullness of times. He was looking for an immediate kingdom here on earth - the culmination of all the Old Testament prophetic literature.

It seems to me that this is looking toward a time when God will bring all the loose ends of creation together and finalize all of his plans. It will be a time of revealing all that is, and was, in that plan, and it is a time to bring all those things to a close.

The Net Bible translates it this way, "toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ the things in heaven and the things on earth." indicating that all things will be set to order with Christ as the head over all - that nothing will not be under His headship.

The fact that he was looking for the physical kingdom here on earth is clear from the book of Acts. It mentions that he was continually preaching the kingdom, and this was mentioned in relation to his later life. Acts 28.30-31

Paul declares that ALL things in Christ will be gathered together or unified in Him. All things, includes both the earth and the heavenlies. This would include all saints of all time, as well as the creation itself. There is a possibility that even the lost and their eternal existence will be included in this. I say this for two reasons.

1. All that is, proceeds from God, including the lost and their place of eternal dwelling. To remove this from the statement "both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, would be a bit illogical.

2. There is a passage in the Old Testament that seems to indicate that the elect will be able to view the damned in the eternal state.

Isa. 66.22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

The context clearly identifies the passage as the eternal state and it is clear that God's people will be capable of seeing the transgressors.

All this will take place and seemingly, based on "in him," be culminated in Christ. Since we are now in Christ, as a part of His body, the church, I would guess this verse is speaking of an extension or expansion of the concept of "in Him."

Colossians speaks to this as well. 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: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 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. 19 For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven."

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:

We obtained an inheritance (in the past) based on being predestinated (in the past) according to the purpose of him who worketh (continuing action on our behalf) due to it being a part of His will. Again, the plan of God dictated events future in each individual elect person's life. We are enjoying the fruit of the work of Christ on the cross. Our salvation is from Him, our life is from Him, and our future is from Him. So, how come we serve ourselves so often rather than Him that has provided all that we are and have?

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

This verse has a very interesting tense usage. "Who first trusted in Christ" is in the perfect tense. It is an act of our mind that is bringing about and will bring about until the completion of our act. There is not allowance in the tense and text for anything but eternal security. If we once trust Christ then we will continue on to the ultimate complete fulfillment of that trust in our eternal life with Him.

A pastor recently asked what "glory" was in relationship to God. His conclusion incorrectly was that His glory is His perfection. I would suggest that perfection is only one aspect of His glory. It is but one of His many attributes. His glory is more correctly, in my mind, all that He is. The substance and compilation of each and every one of His attributes, His entire being and character.

We, according to the verse are the praise of that glory. Our redemption brings praise to all that God is. What a thought. Think of all that God is and then consider that we, by our lives, are praising that glory. Realizing that, how have you been doing? Are you praise to Him or yourself of late?

The thought of "first" trusted might be of interest to some. Why does Paul use that term? The term can also be translated "hope before in Christ" thus indicating not the ranking of first of many, but indicating only that they had trusted before the point in time that he was writing.

The American Standard Version translates it this way. "we who had before hoped in Christ:" This specifically speaks of the apostles it would seem from the next verse where it says "In whom ye also [trusted]."

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,

Note, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit." There is a sequence to this whole salvation thing. Belief or faith (the term translated belief is closely related to the word normally translated faith) comes first and then the person is sealed. Now, that time gap is like a nano second or less, if there is an actual time lapse, but there is a sequence to all the grand things that occur at our salvation.

Indeed, if you take all those wonderful doctrines that relate to salvation and really consider them and what they are and how they are accomplished and why they are accomplished, you will find that there is a definite sequence of events, all of which are about instantaneous, though the sequence does exist.

We are sealed. How? With the Holy Spirit. We are given the Spirit, the Spirit baptizes us into Christ and we are sealed by Him. He is actually our seal. God sent Him as our seal. The word seal relates to something being sealed by someone. The seal designates ownership; it designates retribution if you mess with that owner's property.

When I was teaching, we had a missionary from Europe that had joined the faculty. He had sent all of his belongings in a large shipping container. The truck arrived and the faculty had gathered to move his belongings from the container to a storage spot until the missionary arrived.

As we neared the back of the trailer upon which the container rested we noticed a metal band that enclosed the latches along with the padlock. The container had been sealed when the missionary was finished loading it and the shipping company picked it up in Europe. That seal being intact as we looked at it, guaranteed that the container had not been opened between the missionaries home and that point in time.

This spiritual seal is to guarantee that the new believer is God's property and in essence, if anyone messes with this child, God will intervene. The seal is the Spirit Himself within us rather than a mark or a physical seal upon our person.

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

Paul continues to expand the truth of the Spirit within us. He is not only our seal, but he is the earnest of our inheritance, or the guarantee to us from God that our inheritance is sure and safe. The Spirit will be with us until our redemption is complete in eternity.

This, by the way is a basis for the teaching that the Spirit is withdrawn with the Church at the rapture. He is the guarantee that the taking away of the believers will happen and that we will enter into our eternal state.

Other truth is set forth here. We see that we are purchased, and we are also HIS possession - we are not our own.

Talk about theology, Paul crammed at least a semesters worth into the first fourteen verses of this little book.

"Earnest" relates to the same thought we have in real estate today, when we promise to buy a house, we put down some earnest money. It is money that we place with the owner that is a guarantee that we will follow through with the purchase sometime yet in the future.

The Spirit is God's earnest money to guarantee that the purchase will be complete in eternity. It cannot be stopped.

Did you notice that phrase again? "Praise of his glory" - that phrase that has appeared three times in this section. In verse six we see "To the praise of the glory of his grace" and in verse twelve and fourteen we see "praise of his glory" - do you get the feeling that praising His glory and who He is might be a very important thing to do in our worship service?

Do we see this in the hand shaking time that interrupts most services?

Do we see this in many of the specials where glory is brought upon the performer?

Do we see this in the announcements?

Do we see this in the singing?

Do we see this in the preaching?

Some considerations when you want to plan some Scriptural worship services in the future.

APPLICATION:

1. We have noted that this letter may have been to Ephesus as well as to others in the area. Consider for a moment - Paul sends a letter to your church, First Bible church of Anytown, World, but he addresses it to the churches around you as well. Some observations: a. He had something to say to all the churches, but especially to First Bible church because it is the one named. Had he wanted to especially say something to First Bible church of Second town, World he would have addressed it to them. b. All the surrounding churches know two things. They have the same problem as First Bible church, but they also know that First Bible church has a bigger

problem with it than they. c. Would this not focus all eyes on First Bible church to get their act together in a big hurry? In fact I think logically we might draw two more conclusions. c. He wanted First Bible church to take the lead in this problem, and he also wanted the other churches to follow that lead and maybe even support First Bible church in their struggle.

Some suggest that the letter is not to dispel problems. I would suggest that Paul may have known of some under the surface problems that he wanted to blast before they gained a foothold.

2. We have seen God's plan mentioned as well as his purpose and will. Barnes points out that many in his day felt that this was a dark teaching, that God's will for mankind was somehow sinister and surrounded in trouble. On the opposite end of the spectrum we see people that look under every rock in their path to seek God's will. They act as if nothing in the Scripture is His will but that He will reveal it elsewhere.

Let me tell you clearly, there is not one word in His Word that is not related to His will for us and our lives. All of it is there for our learning of what He wants and wills for us. We don't need to look under rocks, around corners, or in other people's business, we have only to look into the Word. Yes, there are times when He will reveal some of His will in a special way such as a call to the mission field or a call to minister to the Lord's people, but for the most part the Word is His will for our lives.

Since Paul makes such a big deal of it in these few verses maybe we should make it a big deal in our lives. Many believers today have never given a thought to what God might want them to do in this life. They live their life as if it were their own to live. Remember those terms redemption and purchase - seems we are His and not our own. It is not up to us to run our lives as we wish, rather we are His to lead, and we ought to live our lives for Him.

We don't want to discount another portion of His will, that portion which pertains to the nations and time. He specifically has a plan for each nation that He raises up and each nation that He puts down. The book of Daniel is clear that He raises up and that He puts down.

In an election, such as when President Clinton ran and now when Senator Kerry is running, the only solace I have is, this teaching that God is in complete control of all that goes on within the nations. If Senator Kerry should get in, it is God's will. If President Bush gets another four years, it is God's will. This can be a grand comfort for those that are in countries where there are dictators and people that are subjugating the populous. It is God that deals with these governments and leaders. He will deal one day with Hitler and men like him that totally abused their power over man. He will deal with every leader in relation to how they used their power in this life.

God will also deal with those responsible for the falsehoods perpetuated upon the American public in this recent campaign. There have been lies and innuendo to the maximum this time around and some will certainly be held responsible for their treatment of the truth and of God's

will.

3. Just a bit of a side note, we know that Christ's blood saves us and we know that His blood was offered by the Lord Himself in the Holy of Holies in heaven (Well that is what many of us have been taught, we will see what we shall see). The question to ponder is how was His blood collected at the cross to be offered in the Heavenly holy of holies? Or is it as some might suggest a picture of His offering that pictures that completed one time sacrifice on the altar in heaven?

Hebrews 9.22ff speaks of the offering or the purification of things in the heavenly tabernacle. It is in contrast to the offerings of blood of animals in the Old Testament, so it would be assumed that there would be a physical purification of the heavenly things. Or would it? Might it not be a spiritual purification of spiritual things?

Since the heavens are for the spirit world, it would make sense that there was some spiritual offering by Christ in this spiritual tabernacle. The how and why of this offering would be of great contemplation if this be true.

There is another aspect. If Christ had to die in the physical realm then there might have to be some physical purification of the heavenly tabernacle. Just how did this offering of physical blood occur in a heavenly tabernacle - if it occurred?

It is not impossible that the spiritual and physical worlds are intermingled in some way. The angels, for example, are primarily of the spirit world, yet they are allowed to appear in the physical world at times thus a physical offering in a spiritual setting would not be impossible.

Some things that relate:

a. The fact that Christ told one of the women not to touch Him shortly after the resurrection and then later told Thomas to touch Him, would indicate that there might be a purity issue to be considered until He had ascended unto the Father. (Jn. 20.17; Jn. 20.27)

b. The Word tells us that Christ, after the resurrection sat down beside the father. Heb. 10.12 "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"

To contemplate. Could this be speaking of Christ/God offering Jesus/man on the cross for the sins of the world? God did not die on the cross. Jesus did die on the cross. The terminology of the above text rather indicates this very thing.

c. Hebrews seven through ten is key to understanding this. Take time to read it. It relates that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were not adequate to the need for our final salvation, but that the death of Christ was that final needed sacrifice that is sufficient for all needs of man.

Make note as you read, that there is an earthly tabernacle made with hands and a heavenly tabernacle after which the earthly was patterned. This heavenly tabernacle actually seems to be the throne of God Himself - the heavenly mercy seat if you will. I say this in light of the creatures around the throne of God having the faces that were carried on the standards of the four tribes that surrounded the earthly tabernacle, and the glassy sea of the throne scene relates to the laver of the Old Testament (I believe it is called a sea).

Heb. 9.12 "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us]." This on the other hand seems to indicate that He entered the Holy of Holies with his literal blood. Heb. 9.23 tells us that the heavenly tabernacle needed to be purified with better sacrifices than that of the blood of animals. However, keep a thought in mind - "but by his own blood" does not require that He took His blood into the holy place.

d. The above passage mentions that He entered into the holy of holies - does this maybe relate to the rent curtain in the earthly temple of His own time. That entering into the heavenly tabernacle (God's throne)? I must wonder if the reason He did not want to be touched before He ascended was that He was to present his bloodied garments as proof to the Father of His Sacrifice once for all for all of mankind.

Indeed, was the actual blood necessary? He offered Himself a perfect sacrifice, and He died for us - He shed His blood for us as an atonement for our sin. Was the actual blood necessary to cleanse the heavenly tabernacle? No, for the heavenly tabernacle was not unclean, how could it be. The cleansing is of the sin of man, not the tabernacle.

Heb. 9.23 "[It was] therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:" Note, that the sacrifice was needed but the passage does not say blood. Indeed, the thought seems to be that like the Old Testament priest entered into the earthly, so Christ entered into the heavenly, both after offering sacrifices.

Let's go to the Old Testament and see what significance the blood being sprinkled had once a year on the mercy seat in that earthly tabernacle.

Lev. 16.1ff speaks of the yearly atonement for all the children of Israel. This would be the equivalent to what we have been speaking of in Hebrews. This was one sacrifice for all the people. The sacrifices were for the sins of the people, but the sins were symbolically placed on a goat that was sent out into the wilderness. The sacrifice of Christ was on the cross, but the blood that He shed, if the picture is to be complete would have to have been sprinkled in the holy of holies in the heavenlies.

There is no clear reason for the sprinkling of blood on and before the mercy seat. One might assume that it was to signify the cleansing or purification of the place, though this probably wasn't necessary for it was the dwelling place of God and already pure and holy. (Ex. 25.22 "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which [are] upon the ark of the testimony, of all [things] which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.")

Heb. 9.8 "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing;" seems to indicate that a similar occasion was required in the heavenly tabernacle. Heb. 8.11 "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us]." makes it clear that this occurred, thus there must be some methodology for that blood having been offered. However, again note that the passage does not require the blood be taken in, only that it was shed and that by that act He had access to the holy of holies.

Did you catch that? He entered into the holy place by his own blood - the blood allowed Him entrance into the area, it was not to purify or anything of that sort, it was only for the purification of the person entering the holy of holies. The shedding of blood was to allow for the bearer forgiveness and allow him entrance. Christ shed His blood on the cross - plus the fact that He had no sin so had no need of His own blood for entrance into the holy place - He was pure already, thus the thought that His sitting down at the right hand of God is that entrance into the holy place which Hebrews 8.12 mentions.

There was thus no need to collect the blood nor offer it in the Holy of holies in the heavenlies - He needed no blood sacrifice for His own sin, He needed no blood to enter into the holy of holies in heaven. Had Aaron and the others been perfect, they would not have had to take the blood into the holy of holies either, but since they were men and sinners then they needed that blood of purification for themselves to enter in to minister to God.

The sprinkling of blood in the holy of holies by the priest seems to be an act to purify the area as you read Leviticus sixteen, however since all is holy and pure in the heavenlies; there is no need for the blood sprinkling in the heavenlies.

In proofing the above I struggled with whether I had been sufficiently confusing. I think I was. I have done some further thinking and come up with the following:

FACTS:

1. Heavenly tabernacle is/was pure/holy. (However Heb says 9.23 "[It was] therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places

made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:") The heavenly tabernacle needed no cleansing or sprinkling of blood. Yet, the verse indicates there was need of purifying.

2. Christ was pure/holy

3. Christ's blood was pure/holy

4. His sacrifice was much different from the Old Testament system. He was hung on the cross. In the Old Testament the offering was placed on the altar and the throat cut to allow the blood to flow.

QUESTIONS:

1. What specifically was Christ's blood needed for?

The sacrifice of a pure and holy sacrifice was needed.

The Old Testament sacrificial system required the blood to be shed.

2. Was the blood needed/required for some purpose, or was that just the method of killing of the sacrifice in that system?

When the Word speaks of "by his blood" is it saying the blood shedding was required, or is it another way of speaking of the sacrifice that was required?

3. Since the Exodus pictures this whole process, the blood was placed on the door so that the angel would know God's people from the Egyptians. Is this the only need of the blood in Christ's case?

The blood that He shed was to identify those that were trusting in His sacrifice for salvation.

4. Does the methodology of question four matter?

I cannot imagine why, as long as there was the letting of blood and the death of the sacrifice.

CONCLUSIONS:

To tie this up, let me say that I am still thinking on this one, but here is where I am at this point in time.

1. The Exodus sacrificial lamb was a picture of what Christ was to do. The blood was placed on the door post to identify God's people. The blood of Christ, in some manner identifies believers

today.

2. Christ, the perfect Lamb of God was offered in a different manner than the Old Testament sacrifices, but the result was the same. A shedding of blood and death of the sacrifice.
3. Christ wanted to remain pure until He sat down beside the Father in that heavenly tabernacle.
4. That sitting down with the Father fulfilled the comments of Hebrews when speaking of a better sacrifice. He did, in that act, all that was mentioned in Hebrews.
5. The heavenly throne cannot need purifying in any manner for God is sitting there and there is no impurity in or around Him.
6. Christ/God may have offered up Jesus/man in some manner as that perfect sacrifice.
7. God planned it and got it done even if we are a little fuzzy on the details due to our limited understanding.

Just a few more thought to get your minds eye working overtime.

1. The word used of the heavenly tabernacle needing to be purified, means just that - to clean or purify. If we take this literally and I am tempted to do so because there is no evidence to do otherwise; and assume that there was need of purification in some manner.

How would it become less than pure? Since Christ's work on the cross was related to man's salvation, it would seem that impurity would relate to sin - most likely Adam's sin. How, I have no idea, but this would be the logical conclusion.

If this is so, then one might wonder if God vacated his Throne area immediately upon the sin of Adam. If this is so, might the Genesis account of the cherubim guarding the gate to the garden have been that new dwelling place of God - that place where Adam and his descendants offered their sacrifices? Then one might conclude that God shifted his dwelling place to the earthly tabernacle followed by the temple many years later.

Ultimately the work of Christ purified the heavenly so that God could return there to sit with Christ.

This might also relate to the fact that in the first part of Job, the Devil had access to the throne of God. Later, there does not seem to be that access, in fact the devil is cast down to the earth. Might there be a whole lot of items that we are not given in the Word about the heavenly challenges to God's power and character?

If you hold to my concept of where the Garden of Eden was - that it was at Jerusalem or there

about, then we might wonder if the Garden was a literal Garden for man and woman that resided in the holy area of God here on earth. Since He was present in the Garden, since the tree of life was present, but isn't viewed until the book of Revelation in the heavenly scene, might one wonder at how closely matched God's throne and the Garden of Eden were.

Now, I want to be sure ALL KNOW THIS IS WILD SPECULATION with some logic mixed in. I would never, at this point teach it as truth, but I would certainly challenge folks to contemplate the possibilities.

With this I will stop and allow someone else to develop the more detailed doctrine, but suffice it to say that some of the teaching on this subject in the past has been shallow and very inadequate.

4. In verse ten it mentions, "he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; [even] in him:" We have discussed this before but I ran across an interesting comment by Barnes. He seems to indicate a belief in life on other planets. "The more simple and obvious interpretation is however, without doubt, the correct one, and this is to suppose that it refers to the holy inhabitants of other worlds. The object of the plan of salvation is to produce a harmony between them and the redeemed on earth, or to produce, out of all, one great and united kingdom. In doing this, it is not necessary to suppose that any change is to be produced in the inhabitants of heaven. All the change is to occur among those on earth and the object is to make, out of all, one harmonious and glorious empire."

Not that I believe this line of thought but it is certainly a possibility, though not supported by anything in Scripture that I can put my finger on.

5. When commenting on "in Christ" Constable quotes August Van Ryn "Thus our being in Christ means that the Lord Jesus surrounds and embraces the believer in His own life, and separates him at the same time from all outside and hostile influences. He protects the believer from all perils and foes, and supplies him with all that is necessary." How do you react to this statement? Do you believe it is true?

I have read and heard many similar statements. I have heard people tell new Christians that now they have a new life and Christ will take care of everything. That He will supply everything they need and protect them.

I have to wonder how a martyr of the first century that was looking eye to eye with a hungry lion would feel about such a comment. I wonder how some of those that have been killed and that have starved to death in Sudan would feel. Being saved is not a guarantee that we won't have problems; it isn't a surety that we will always have the money we want or need.

Being in Christ only means that we are part of His body the church and that we will enjoy that relationship to Him and other believers forever.

6. In verse two we looked at the peace that God gives. I receive many emails from people around the world that have happened onto my website. Many of those letters relate to the lack of peace, that aspect of the spiritual life that comes with teaching and knowing the Word. Often the writers' lack of peace relates to poor teaching relating to the Spirit or to the security of the believer. Many have sinned and feel they have ruined their entire life and that God will have nothing to do with them from that point forward.

The believer is not destined for this sort of upheaval in their life. The believer is to be at peace with God. If there is sin, then I John 1.9 is there for the person to gain back the relationship that they need with God - one of fellowship not salvation. Sin breaks fellowship only; it can never break your bond of sonship with the Father.

This is the peace that Paul speaks of, not that superficial peace that comes from "feeling" good about how excited you get about God. Peace is that which the Spirit fills you with when you are walking with the Father correctly.

I mentioned letters from folks around the world. Many of them, for some reason, are charismatic. They all have one thing in common. Lack of peace. They operate in the land of feeling and when they feel down, they have no idea what is going on, they feel they have offended the Holy Spirit and may be lost forever.

That is NOT the peace that God offers. His peace is based on the surety of Scripture and His promise, not the slippery slope of feelings. I mentioned this to one of these folks recently, and there was out of hand rejection of my comments because they KNEW from their teachers (false teachers from my viewpoint) that they were on the right track when they seek the gifts and side track themselves from all their efforts for God while seeking - that which they won't find, but they don't know that.

I worked with a woman many years ago that was stuck on seeking the baptism of the Spirit. She sought long and hard. One day she called and wanted to tell us something. We drove down to her home and she informed us that she had been saved - she knew immediately that her seeking had been in vain, that what she had sought was the Lord - she just didn't know that until He ushered her into the fold.

7. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown mention of verse one where Paul tells the reader that he is an apostle by the will of the Father, that this is the same will that is mentioned in verse five and verse eleven which speak to the saving of man through the will of God. It is by the same will of God that we are saved, that same will that called Paul to be an apostle, that same will that called the church, the body of Christ into existence.

Does that not give you a little more feeling of importance when you consider who and what you are in Christ? You are a part of this "WHOLE" called the church, because of God's will - if that is the same will that called the church into business, then you must - YOU MUST - have an

important role to play in that "whole" and it is your responsibility to get busy and fulfill that role as soon as possible.

If you don't know what that role is, take some time to read the Word, pray asking for God to reveal the role to you, and maybe after doing this for awhile see your pastor and ask him if he has noticed anything in your life that might indicate what the role might be. (Pastors often see things that others do not because they are tuned into spiritual things more than others.)

8. Paul seems to be heavy on talking about grace. There is a group in evangelicalism called Sovereign Grace. They talk about grace a lot as well. Basically the two, Paul and the group, talk about grace, in my mind, because they know what grace is. They have experienced this grace in their lives and know the effects and meaning of grace to the spiritual life.

I do not agree with all that the sovereign grace folks believe (not sure Paul would either :-)) but they realize where they were as a lost person and they know how far down into the depths of sin God had to reach to touch their lives and pull them up out of that sin into newness of life.

In a sloppy theological sense grace is kind of like our being lucky (not that grace has to do with luck) to have been chosen by almighty God to be brought to salvation in Christ. Do you really know how lucky you are to be saved? Out of the millions that have walked the earth as lost mankind, you were lucky enough to have been picked to be saved. Don't misunderstand me - luck has nothing to do with it, but if you view it as the lucky person that won the twenty-three million dollar lottery - think of their excitement, their luck, their new life - like I said in a sloppy sense, even a perverted sense does this not give us an idea of how we should feel about the grace of God touching our lives. Shouldn't we find some excitement in this grace that God gave to us? Shouldn't we be overjoyed to have been made a part of His family?

Grace in our life should be the most exciting thing that you can imagine, it should cause you to shudder with delight over what God has handed you on the proverbial silver platter.

Be excited about God's grace and do something about it. He didn't shed it upon you for you to sit and glory in your own illustrious life, but He saved you to do a work that He has planned for you to do.

9. In reading through Deffenbach's work I ran across a good distinction between election and predestination. He said that if he wanted to enrich the lives of some youth in the city he could choose ten women and ten men to go to college on his bank account. That would be election, while going to the universities and writing checks for each student and making all the arrangements would be predestination. He made a plan and then made full provision for it to come to pass.

I think this is a good picture of what God did, he chose some, then planned their lives accordingly. Now, some might want to hide behind this truth and live their lives in a poor manner

and then claim that it was God's plan that was in error. Not so. His plan would be perfect for you; it is the person that steps out of that path to go their own way. If we walk with Him we will fulfill all that He has planned or predestined us to.

In reality Predestination itself may be a little more limited than this, but in generalities this is true. His will is integrated into the above paragraph as well. The predestination is literally to the adoption that the text mentions.

You might find a good study for yourself in the following thoughts. Paul mentions election and predestination but does not explain either doctrine. Indeed, he mentions a number of doctrines here but does not define, nor explain them. He has assumed or rather knows that his readers know what he is talking about. He must have taught these doctrines while he was at the church or else there is teaching in the Old Testament that would indicate to the knowledgeable Jew the truth of these teachings.

Take some of your spare time and see if you cannot find an Old Testament basis for these doctrines. At the least there are precursors or hints at the truth of these doctrines.

10. Deffenbach's Calvinism shows quite clearly. He goes to great length to redefine "foreknow" to mean, not to know before as the lexicon shows, but he defines it as chosen, thus completely leaving out the foreknowledge aspect of these discussions.

He mentions "If God were to have looked down the corridors of time, to see all those who were to choose Him, He would see no one." This leaves out much of what most declare of foreknowledge. He forgets to mention that God looked down the corridors of time to see all those who WOULD BE DRAWN TO HIM and would choose Him; they are many for He chose many. To disallow God foreknowledge as His word says He has is not the answer to uncomfortable theology.

When Deffenbach states, "If God were to have looked down the corridors of time, to see all those who were to choose Him, He would see no one." he speaks from within his doctrinal system not from an objective vantage point. He assumes God sees what his personal theological system requires God to see. The Scriptures do not tell us what God saw, only that in foreknowledge he did some things.

Yes, God is Sovereign, yes God can do whatever He wants to do, yes, there are none that will choose Him out of their own understanding, but if He work in their lives, and purposes to draw them to Himself as He says He does, surely they will respond to Him, not of their own ability but due to His working and moving in their life.

At least Deffenbach makes an attempt to do away with foreknowledge, many just don't talk about it as if it were not there in the Word as plain as day. They feel if they ignore it, one day He will remove it from the word from non-use I guess.

He then goes on to list passages that prove that man won't seek God on his own. He has set up a straw man to shoot down. Most realize that lost man is corrupt and unable to seek God on His own, but there is nothing to keep that SOVEREIGN God from working in that lost person's life to draw them to him.

At least he makes an attempt to dispel that which he doesn't want to deal with, but Stedman just makes a statement as if fact and goes on with his message without a line to prove what he says. "Some say, "Well, God can foresee the future, so he looks down and sees that we are going to make a choice, and on the basis of seeing what we will determine to do he then says, 'All right, I'll elect them to be part of my process.'" That sounds very simplistic, and it is, because it is not what the Scriptures say.

You see, to be as the Calvinist believes we are - unable to do anything, unable to respond, unable to do any good works etc. - is absurd if you look at the human condition. Many people do good things, many people respond to God, many people seek God - look at most lost people in our country, they seek God. They seek the God of their own making at times, they seek the God of the false prophets at times, and they seek the God of this world, but in all, they are seeking that which almighty God can supply. Is this not what Romans one speaks to - it is built in?

The ancient heathen Egyptians sought God, sought an after life, they just sought Him in all the wrong places and ideas. All through history we see man seeking God in some manner. They may pollute all their efforts, but they do seek God.

He continues "The ultimate choice of those who will be blessed with eternal salvation is God's choice. This does not mean that men have no choice." I suggest that I agree with this statement, but I doubt that I agree in the same way he does. He would say that man must choose if he is chosen, I would say that he will choose because he was chosen. He was chosen because God knew he would choose. The Calvinist would say that the chosen must chose because they were chosen.

I want to make one further distinction and clarification. The strong comments of the Calvinist usually require that the chosen are chosen to glorification and the rest are condemned to hell. Gill mentions "Predestination, taken in a large sense, includes both election and reprobation...."

In my thinking if we are chosen, and we later choose God, then those that are not chosen chose to reject God and choose unto themselves damnation. The choice is theirs and they make it, not God. There is also the possibility that in God's foreknowledge He saw that they would reject Him even though he was to draw them toward Himself. No, that does not thwart the sovereignty of God, He could force all to choose Him if He so desired but He did not.

11. Gill has a quote that caught my interest. In relation to redemption he says "God's elect by nature are in bondage to sin, Satan, and the law; through the grace of Christ, they are redeemed from all iniquity; ransomed out of the hands of him that is stronger than they; and are freed from

the law, its bondage, curse, and condemnation, and from every other enemy: and this benefit Christ is the author of;" To which I would add amen. However, my thoughts went one step further - that step that few Calvinists take, that step that clears us of our sin nature. Most hold that we are still in lock step with our sin nature if we aren't walking with God. How can this be if we are redeemed from the Devil and his powers over us? Their answer would be that it is us not the Devil and I would label that a sidestepping of the issue. If Christ redeemed us, and He did, and if Christ made all things new, which He did, then how can we still be plagued by a sin nature that is left over from our pre-redemption lives? Sounds very illogical to me.

12. Stedman makes a great point that gives a little balance to this passage. "We don't like to be called saints because we have such a plaster idea of what a saint is. We think of them as being unreal - so beatific, so holier-than-we, so unlike ordinary human beings. But the saints of the New Testament are not that way; they are people like us. Saints are people who are beset with struggles and difficulties, which have disturbances at home, and problems at work, and troubles everywhere else. They're normal people, in other words!"

In all the pomp and circumstance of choosing, elections, predestination and adoption, we are still only human beings that are making our way through this life. The thought of holiness requires of us a higher standard of life, and a cleaner standard of thought, but we are still in this life to navigate through the rigors of said life.

Do it as graciously and righteously as you can.

He continues his thought in a most plain, yet powerful way. "That's what a Christian is - a person who can't quit being a Christian. A true Christian just can't stop! A young man called me this past week to tell me how discouraged he was, how he'd lost his confidence in prayer because he felt that no answer was coming, and how ready he was to quit. So I said to him, "Well, why don't you just quit, then? Give up. Stop being a Christian. Try it." - because I knew that if he did, the first thing he would have discovered is that he couldn't quit. And he knew it, too. The minute I said that, he acknowledged it: "You're right. I can't quit." That is because, as Paul will describe in this letter, there is imparted to us the Holy Spirit of God, and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit so that we can't quit! That is a mark of a believer in Christ."

13. Stedman says "We all have learned that God is to be praised. We are to give thanks in all circumstances, etc. But most of us think of that as something we must make ourselves do. We have to do this because God needs it, his ego needs to be massaged every now and then by our praise, and unless we praise him he won't operate. He gets upset and mad at us and doesn't run things right, and we have to butter him up a little bit to get him to work. That is really the basis upon which most of us act, at least much of the time, isn't it?"

Think about that and see if there isn't a lot of truth in his observation.

He goes on to conclude "But that isn't what this is talking about at all! It is saying that God has

done such remarkable deeds that, if we once understand them, if it once breaks upon our dull intellects what it is that God has already done for us, what is already true of us right now, there will be nothing that we can do but stand in absolute awe and amazement, and say, "You mean that is true of me, Lord? I am overwhelmed! My God, how great thou art!" That is what God is after. That is what he wants to produce - that sense of awe and amazement which causes us to stop and give thanks to a great and glorious God who has given us every spiritual blessing."

Praising God has nothing to do with His needs, but all to do with His being and of it.

14. I have spent a good part of my life being rejected for one reason or another. Many because I was a little ahead of my time, others because they disagreed with me, and others because they viewed me as a conservative nut. In doing this study I was struck with the thought - God chose me to be a part of His family. He asked that I be included. He chose me for inclusion. He prepared the way for my inclusion. He took steps to assure my inclusion.

Wow, He wanted me in His family, even though so many of his sons didn't want anything to do with me in this life. Makes one wonder how easy our regathering as brothers and sisters will be - how comfortable will we be when face to face in the next life with those we have ignored and rejected in this life.

Maybe this study should move us to consider how we relate to other FAMILY MEMBERS in this life. We should treat all believers as brothers or sisters in the Lord, not just those we like or can get along with.

15. Stedman suggests that the reference to the heavenlies in verse three etc. may not relate to the throne of God in Heaven but rather to the general thought of our being in this life surrounded with spiritual goings on. He refers to the time when Elisha and his man were in the city and the man was worried, but Elisha asked God to open his eyes to the Lord's armies around the city (2 Ki 6:15-17).

It is true, much of what Paul is talking about relates in the competed end with heaven proper, but we are all these things now, in this world scene where unseen are the armies of God arrayed to do battle at His bidding.

I have been very concerned at the length of this study. It is over twice as long as most of my study files. I was wondering if I had been straining at a gnat or something, when today I saw an ad for an eight-volume study of Ephesians - guess I'm not so far off as I had thought.

From Mr. D's Notes on Theology

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"III. CHRIST IN SONSHIP:

"Some today suggest that Christ was not the Son of God until He became man. This thought suggests that there was no "Son" relationship until Mary bore Christ.

"Logically then would there be no "Father" relationship? Prov. 30:4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

"MacArthur states that this reference is looking forward to when Christ would be the Son, but that the son ship did not begin until the incarnation." "As was noted, Son is an incarnational title of Christ. Though His sonship was anticipated in the Old Testament (Prov. 30:40), He did not become a Son until He was begotten into time. Prior to time and His incarnation He was eternal God with God. The term Son has only to do with Jesus Christ in His incarnation. It is only an analogy to say that God is Father and Jesus is Son - God's way of helping us understand the essential relationship between the first and second Persons of the Trinity." (Taken from: "NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY: HEBREWS"; MacArthur, John; Copyright 1983, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission. p 27)

"Strong speaks of the eternal generation of the Son, "Not a commencement of existence, but an eternal relation to the Father, --there never having been a time when the Son began to be, or when the Son did not exist as God with the Father."

"Rom. 8:3 Tells us, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,"

"Jn 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Begotten Son...."

"I Jn 3:8 "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"This seems to indicate that He was the Son before He was manifested to man. Heb 13:8 also indicates this fact. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

"The use of the term with the Father and Holy Spirit in the baptismal formula and elsewhere would be curious if the term Son is only for the incarnation as MacArthur mentions. One might decide that the term Father was also for the incarnation only. Indeed, the Holy Spirit's name might also be for the incarnation only.

"Indeed, to follow MacArthur's logic we might suggest that the Holy Spirit is a name to allow us to understand the Holy Spirit. His name is actually not Holy Spirit, but God. That makes the Baptismal formula "The God and of The God and of the God."

"Technically the eternal generation of the Son deals with His eternality. It was a doctrine that was formed as a result of some of the thinking of Arius and his idea that Christ was created.

"The only, known to me, Old Testament reference to God as Father is in Isa. 9:6 which speaks of the "COMING" Messiah. However, it seems that it would be difficult to view three persons of the trinity running around not having names for one another and then in 33 AD deciding that one would be The Father and one would be The Son and one would be The Holy Spirit. Especially when the Spirit is called the Spirit before the incarnation. Gen. 1 for example.

"Since Christ was slain from the foundation of the world in God's mind it would be consistent to view Christ as the Son at least at that point. (Heb. 4:3; I Pet. 1:19-20; Eph. 1:4) A study of the decrees in relation to this might be of interest as well.

"Walvoord mentions that the eternal Father Son relationship has been the thought of the Church Fathers since the Council of Nicaea. (Taken from: "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"; Walvoord, John F.; Copyright 1969, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission. p 39)

"He lists several positions:

"1. He mentions that Wardlaw placed the idea that Christ became the Son at the time of the incarnation into existence."...sonship is inseparably linked with the incarnation and, while Christ existed from eternity past, He was not a Son until the incarnation." (P 39 of Walvoord quoting Ralph Wardlaw, Systematic Theology, II, 32-60)

"2. Some mention that the sonship came only after the Father declared Him his beloved Son at the baptism.

"3. Some have suggested that Rom. 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power...." shows that the relationship came at the resurrection.

"4. Some suggest that the son relation came at the exaltation. Heb. 1:3 is given as evidence. The problem is that He is called a Son long before this in His incarnation.

"5. The eternal sonship position presents the following references:

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

"Jn 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Begotten Son ... For God sent not his Son into the world...."

"Isa 9:6 mentions that a son will be given and it is clearly speaking of Christ.

"Ps 2:7, "I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

"This seems to tie not only the sonship, but the idea of begotten, to the decree. This would place both in eternity past.

"Walvoord states, "According to this passage, [Col 1:15-19] Christ is declared to be the Son of God and begotten in the day of the eternal decree. This is, in effect, a statement that Christ is eternally the Son of God as the decree itself is eternal." (Taken from: "JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD"; Walvoord, John F.; Copyright 1969, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission.)(See also, Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5)

Section two: 1.15-23

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

Those that suggest that this epistle was not written to the Ephesians use this verse as part of their base. Paul would have known of their faith had he meant the Ephesians because he was with them for more than two years. However, since communications were poor at best, in this day it is not hard to believe that he hadn't heard from them in a number of years and had just gotten a recent report of the goings on in the church.

Imagine your faith, your faith so great that other Christians are talking about your faith, be it corporate or individual. What sort of faith produces talk about it in another city? It must have been a great faith. I assume this is a corporate faith of the congregation at Ephesus, and that their faith had been so great in some area that the apostle had heard about it in another city or country. It is probable that some coworker of Paul's had reported to him of the condition of the church, but even then, the faith was great enough to deserve mention.

I would guess that this faith may have been in just in the fact that they still existed as a church in such a perverse city. We don't have it quite so bad in this country, but there are many countries in the world where it is a great act of faith to even meet for a service. In some countries, even to meet in secret takes great faith. Not so many years ago in Romania they baptized believers blindfolded so they could not identify the person that baptized them. It was illegal to baptize in the country. Most baptisms were performed in bathtubs in the secrecy of people's homes.

This might be a good goal for us as believers. To have a faith that will be mentioned abroad. Not that we want the attention, but that we want to serve the Lord in such a way that our faith is obvious to the observer.

This faith is not something that we can muster up to impress people; it is a part of a Godly lifestyle. Paul walked by faith when he walked across the countryside. He had no pension to live on; he had no supporters back home sending him a large portion to live on. He went from place to place looking to the Lord for his provision. At times he received assistance from the churches, other times he worked at tent making to support himself. At other times he allowed the Roman government to supply his needs by being their prisoner. You see, faith may be living on supply from God via many different sources.

Faith may be in the area of giving. The widow that cast in her mites was held as a great example of giving by faith. She gave all that she had and trusted God to provide what she needed. Faith may be in the area of serving. Giving a lot of time to the church to assist in the ministry of the church. Faith may be in the area of witnessing. Certainly to talk to a stranger about Christ takes a lot of faith - faith that the word you share will be received, faith that the Lord will nurture that word you share within the persons heart and faith that the Lord will bring forth fruit as we sow the seed.

Faith is not confined to the huge things either. We can have faith in the little things - things most people would not even pray about. Just trust God to do for you in all things not just the big things. If you can handle the little stuff, go for it, but if there is a need, God can take care of it for you.

This is not to say we just jump out into oblivion and trust Him to catch us, but as we walk with Him and as He leads us, we can be confident that all will be taken care of - He will provide.

Many are the times that we have prepared to move cross country to a new ministry/location at the Lord's leading that we had to do so entirely on faith. When heading off to college, we had some near new appliances that we could not take with us. We advertised them and all but the refrigerator sold. As the move neared we still had the refrigerator, not only was it too big to take with us, it was a good portion of the money that would keep us going through the move and finding a new job. Each day was another day with this refrigerator looking back at us.

The day before we were to load up and leave, we received a call and before the evening was up we had the cash in hand. We had trusted all to the Lord and He provided.

That wasn't quite the end of it, because when we headed to the next town to overnight at my wife's folk's place we discovered the car did not have enough power to pull the trailer that we had so tightly stuffed. We struggled to the next town in second gear and backed the trailer into the folk's driveway where we unloaded and gave away about half the load.

It was of interest; we called our home church and asked if there were any needy families in the church that could use some stuff. Several came over and the Lord allowed us to supply some of his children with their needs out of our surplus.

Faith is an interesting thing. At times we wonder if we have any, and at others we so easily display it because that is just the natural thing to do. Faith normally doesn't take a lot of effort. God asks us to do something and we say yes, and the faith is there to meet the need of the moment. When there is no need, then we wonder if we could ever muster enough faith to do anything for God.

Faith is not a commodity; it is a decision of the mind. It is simply a belief and trust in God and what He says. Faith in Christ is simply trusting that God is correct when His word tells us that the sacrifice on the cross is sufficient work for our sin. It is taking God at face value and living your life in accordance with that belief.

This is what the Ephesian Christians were doing. They were living a godly life in an ungodly civilization - much as we must do today. We must stand against that sinful world, but we must also operate within it and trust God to take care of us in all our needs within that ungodly mess.

It is trusting Him to care for your children in the ungodly humanistic school system (do not take

that wrong, I know there are believers in the school system, but there are many ungodly corrupt teachers in the system as well). It is trusting that we will have financial provision in a very unstable economy when your job is not very secure, when corporations with no ethics are raiding their employees and customer's accounts. It is putting our trust in God for all your life's needs; it is looking to His overabundant ability to supply your every need in this life as well as the next.

Paul also mentions their great love for all the saints - ALL - all the saints. This is the agape, or self giving, love not the brotherly love. The Ephesian believers loved all the saints with a self sacrificing love. That is quite a statement of Paul's. It is not even too easy to love all the saints in your church with a brotherly love, much less a love that would cause us to sacrifice for all believers in our church.

This is another strong statement of the bond believers should have among one another in our churches today. I am not sure how you foster this sort of love in a church of any great size however. We are to care for one another. A good study of this subject would change your church. Just sit down with a concordance and list all the references where the phrase "one another" is listed then read each passage and note how we are to treat others in the church.

If you don't want to take the time to do it yourself, I have a short study on the subject on my website.

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

"Thanks" is the Greek word "Eucharisteo" which simply means thanks, or to give thanks, or be thankful. It is the word that eucharist comes from. The eucharist is the "body" that the Roman church offers - the actual body of Christ that it offers often in the mass, that literal actual body, in their minds, that they offer.

It is of note in my mind that Webster in his 1828 dictionary uses the term in a positive protestant way. "The sacrament of the Lord's Supper; the solemn act or ceremony of commemorating the death of our Redeemer, in the use of bread and wine, as emblems of his flesh and blood, accompanied with appropriate prayers and hymns." He also lists the thought of giving thanks.

Giving thanks for the Lord's sacrifice would be the thought of the term. This brings to mind a question that only history can answer. Did the church through the ages consider the Lord's Table a table of thanksgiving? Was the purpose of the Lord's Table thanksgiving?

Since the Lord called it a remembrance, then I would think if thanksgiving is a part of it, it is a lesser part than remembrance. In all the observances I have been to, the prayers always reflect a thanksgiving for the shed blood and broken body of the Lord, but where does that come from within the context of a remembrance observance?

The term is always, as far as I can tell, related to thanking God in the New Testament. It is used

in relation to the Lord's Table observance. Thus, it would seem that it should be an integrated part of that observance. We are to remember the sacrifice of the Lord, and this would almost automatically bring us to a point of thanksgiving for what He has done for us.

This brings another question to mind. Why was Christ giving thanks when observing the Lord's Table with the apostles? He had no reason to thank God for his broken body and shed blood. Or did He? Since God the Father would give all the redeemed to Christ, He might have been looking forward to the completed work and the knowledge of what He had provided for all those that soon would be His.

First of all the term is not exclusively used with the Lord's Table. It is used at the miracle of the fish and loaves in Matt. 15.36 which relates only to thanksgiving related to the food table, so to speak.

The fact that the word is used elsewhere in situations not relating to the Lord's Table, it would seem that giving thanks for items received at the food table is the natural thing for us to do. At the Lord's Table there is special significance and it certainly moves one to thank God for Christ's provision. We thank Him for food at the food table, so we should thank Him for what we receive at the Lord's Table, the juice and bread that remind us of the Lord's sacrifice for us.

Paul knows of their faith and prays for them. He mentions his requests in the next verse, but at this point considers what it would be like to have someone like Paul praying for you. Not only is he thanking God for them, he is interceding on their behalf as well. That would be a big confidence builder to me to know he was thankful for my assembly and that he wanted to pray for it.

Years ago I stopped in at a small church for a meeting. A church that I was totally unacquainted with. After the meeting I was standing at the back door greeting people and an old couple walked up. The man opened his Bible and displayed one of our prayer cards and said, "We are still praying for you."

I was unable to talk to the couple over and above a short greeting and thank you. I often wondered about two things. First, where they had gotten our prayer card, as it was about three years old, and I don't think that I had ever met them. Secondly, I wondered at length what it was that caught their attention with us to cause them to pray for us for three years without having any current information about us. They were not on our prayer letter list so had no real contact with us.

At any rate, I have to tell you I was so greatly encouraged with that simple comment, "We are still praying for you." What a boost to my week to know that I had that old couple on my side before the Lord. What a ministry they had to me and I did not even know it.

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:

Now, to the specific prayer requests. That they would be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. Spirit of wisdom seems easy enough, the spirit or way of life that is wise - living wisely. As to the revelation in the knowledge of God, I would assume that they would have a knowledge of God from the revelation they have, both natural (Romans one) and written, the Old Testament. The New Testament had not been gathered at this point and the letters were recognized as only letters at that time.

There is nothing in the original language to change that assumption. The term for revelation is the normal word that would indicate information revealed to them. Some in our current society would say that God is still in the revelation business but this is not so.

I had an email recently from someone that had been told by those that had prophecies from God that God was going to appear to the young person. As time went on the young person became quite fixed on the coming revelation and overworked and under fed himself into exhaustion. This resulted in a lot of fear and confusion. Does that really sound like something God wants for His children? Not in my understanding of God.

He is not the author of confusion and that is usually what comes when people claim that He has revealed something to them. Indeed, isn't that spirit of wisdom supposed to fit in here somewhere - if the people used the Word wisely they would not make these foolish statements to others.

Revelation is complete and in the Word for us in this day. That revelation has all He wants us to know in this life, other than His will for our lives and this information, many times comes from the Word as well. He does lead and guide via the Holy Spirit through the Word and peace.

I must wonder where the spirit of wisdom is in our day in the church. This week I saw one of the major evangelical preachers hocking a series of studies on an infomercial. How to succeed at life, for the viewer was the promise. The lost cannot understand the Word of God so why hock the Lord's wares to the world? God is in the business of preparing His people not the Devils.

The confusion in the church today is so great I wonder if we will ever dig our selves back to a proper Biblical base. Now and then I see indication that some are finding their way out of the quagmire and back to a Biblical footing, but so many are just tumbling into the mess.

It is hard to distinguish a conservative church from a charismatic church anymore. I told a young mother that was praising the work of one of the major Charismatic evangelists that the man was a charismatic and the shock on her face was revealing enough; she had no idea that her children were involved in a charismatic organization.

Her church, a conservative church according to their name was recommending these organizations to the parents as outlets for their children. I am sure that some of the church leaders

had little idea of the charismatic nature, or else they did and did not care that they were mixed up in the confusion.

Another leading charismatic was having a national prayer day push and had talked most of the major evangelical preachers into signing on - confusion is rampant - how will these evangelicals' followers know that they shouldn't contribute, listen to and support these charismatics? They won't and then the evangelical leaders will wonder why there is confusion in their churches.

I have a study on wisdom on my website if you want to see what the Bible says Paul was praying God would give to the Ephesians. It was one of the most wonderful gifts that he could request for them, from the Lord. Wisdom is pictured in the word as to be desired, it is pictured as more valuable than all those things we often seek after.

Wisdom is what is needed in our churches today. Wisdom would lead us out of the confusion we call worship today, it would lead us out of the shallowness of our Bible studies, it would lead us out of the questionable doctrines that are being embraced.

Some would question my comment about the shallowness of Bible study in the church, but just go and listen carefully to most any sermon today, most any television message or most any Sunday school class. Go to any Christian book store and look for a reference or a commentary or a theology section. If there is one it will be stocked with little in the way of real information.

Scholarship used to indicate deep study and time involved in the Word, but today it indicates a surface look at a verse or two and a lot of "thoughts" from the author. Scholarship used to indicate honest study; it used to indicate proper footnoting of resources, it used to indicate honest straightforward study and footnotes. Today a proper footnote is an option to many preachers. I have seen discussions on internet boards where people feel quoting without footnoting, use of outlines, even complete studies by other men as your own is all right.

One man mentioned a guest speaker that used the church copier to copy the morning's message he was going to deliver from a book of sermons. He preached, or rather read from the copied pages. This is terrible in case anyone out there cares! It is illegal, it is not spiritual and it is unethical. How many more ways must it be wrong to catch someone's attention. This man was a part of the confusion that we call Christianity today. Maybe we should call it Confusianity, because there is little Christian about it any more.

Might I be so bold as to point out that the way out of the confusion is the wisdom and knowledge mentioned in this verse? The knowledge seems to be knowledge of God and that is where many today are in a mess, they know little of the God that they purport to serve.

The church today truly needs the wisdom of the God that they serve, and they need to get to know Him that they would serve. A proper knowledge of God and His Word would go a long way toward clearing the confusion of today.

Indeed, this seems to be the implication of the following verse. The wisdom and knowledge should bring light to the understanding or the mind. Wisdom from and knowledge about God, will clear the fog that is in your mind. You will be able to see more clearly.

I mentioned a woman that had been seeking the charismatic super blessing that finally was saved out of her lost condition. Her vision was suddenly twenty twenty when she got the fog out of the way. She immediately started growing in the Lord.

Only by knowing Him can we understand and serve 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,

Now, that they are enlightened they will know the hope of His calling. The new believer knows that they have been called out of sin to newness of life, and the saved person that is not mature, will begin to learn of the calling, the salvation that he is involved with - he will understand the hope that he has in Christ, that Christ has paid it all, that all is prepared in the next life for us and that we will one day be with Him in glory.

Not only will they begin to understand the salvation, but all that is entailed in that salvation when it comes to the next life. We will have a glorious time and life with Christ in the eternal state. This is our inheritance because we are children of God.

This is some of that knowledge that I was speaking of - if Christians really garnered in this information they would live more like Christians (residents of heaven) rather than as the lost (residents of hell).

I have never understood why people can't grasp the concept of Christ when He said that we can't serve two masters. Either we serve Him and things heavenly or we serve the Devil and things earthly. It isn't hard to see where many Christians are today. You can't tell them from the world, they live like the world, they talk like the world and they act like the world; for all practical purposes they are lost. They are serving mammon rather than God.

Wisdom from God; oh how nice it would be. James tells us that it is very hard to come by. 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." See that proves it God is an ogre; He places such high standards on us becoming wise. We have to ask Him for wisdom; how difficult can it get?

We have no excuse not to have the wisdom and knowledge mentioned, it only takes the asking for wisdom and some reading for the knowledge. Both are available to the average person, you don't need Greek and Hebrew, you don't need great volumes of commentary, you only have need of prayer and reading of the Word.

I heard an account of an old man many years ago that was asked a very serious question by his young pastor. The pastor was interested in knowing how to know God's will. He mentioned that in the Old Testament there was the Urim and Thumin for determining the wishes of God. The old man thought carefully and then wisely replied, "I've always found that God reveals His will to me by Usin and Thumbin."

What wisdom, the wise "usin and thumbin" of the Word is our key to knowing God and what He wants for our lives.

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

There are two words translated "power" in this verse. The first "power" is related to our word dynamite, the force or power within something; while the second term translated "power" relates more to the position of power or the ability to produce. It can also be translate dominion. The president of the United States by position of office has a position of power, while he also has armed forces at his command that would relate to the first word for power.

Here we see the working power of God is that which is expended for us, while the position power is the basis for all that He does. It should be of great comfort that He expends such power on the behalf of believers. Not only does He do for us, but for us exclusively. We are important enough to Him to bring about his action on our behalf.

Because of His position, that position of calling us to salvation, that position of sending His Son to die for us and that is the position that He has. Because He is busy within our lives, He is also assuring that His plans are carried out, even to the exercise of His power to assist and protect us.

A very loose application might run along the lines that those in authority over us in the church have the position of power so to speak, and they should expend their power, their energies on our behalf not upon their own desires and ambitions. So the parent should do for their children rather than for themselves or their personal desires.

God loved us, God planned for us, God provided for us, and God is expending energy for us. That makes us pretty special in my mind! He cares for us to the point of taking care of us.

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],

The context here is speaking primarily of Christ and the Father. The text states that this same power which takes care of us was used in the resurrection of Christ. We know from other passages that all three in the Godhead were instrumental in Christ's resurrection, but here we are viewing primarily the Father and His actions. (II Cor. 13.4 mentions Christ lives by God's power. See Rom. 6.4, 10.9 also.)

Rom. 8.11 mentions that the Spirit was involved in the resurrection. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (See also Ro 1:4; 1Pe 3:18.)

John 2.19 indicates that Christ was planning on being an integrated part of raising Himself from the grave. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (See also Jo. 2:19; 10:17, 18; Ro 1:4; 1 Pe 3:18).

In the mix of this power and resurrections I Cor. 6.14 gives evidence of our own coming resurrections. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." (II Cor. 4.14 also)

Specifically the power of verse nineteen is the same power that was involved in raising Christ from the grave. Not a plain old low octane power but a very high octane power - a power that was able to thumb its nose at death itself. That's the power we have on our side. The use of this power in raising the Lord is most likely the specific work that God did on the behalf of the believers in verse nineteen.

We see this thought in the book of Romans where Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1.16

The last portion of the verse pictures God setting Christ down at His right hand in the heavenlies. As we have seen, this is in the heavenly tabernacle, the throne of God. It may be significant that God said at His "own right hand" so there is no mistake as to the person on the throne. This is similar to the text we saw in our last section relating to Christ ascending into heaven where it says in Heb. 10.12 "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" See also Heb. 8.1 "Now of the things which we have spoken [this is] the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;"

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:

Some early Christians tried to suggest that these were divisions of angels, showing a hierarchy of the angelic host, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that this was what Paul was getting at. The words themselves seem quite clear that this is just showing the extent of what is being spoken of in the verse.

Paul tells us a little bit about the location of this heavenly tabernacle - FAR above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion. FAR above all names in this life and the next. Guess that tells us that the high paid preachers won't be above Christ when we get there, nor will the arrogant congregate that thought he was the Lord's gift to man, no one. Christ will be exalted

above all. God said it, and God will do it because it is in His plan for the ages.

Principality relates to beginning, or the first in a line. Paul may have had the thought of the Caesars and their lineage through history. It is translated beginning forty times while only eight times is it translated principality.

This is another Greek word translated "power" that means authority or power. Back to our illustration of the president of the United States, he has the power or office, he has the troops to command, and he has the AUTHORITY to use them. He has the right and power to command the troops.

"Might" is that word relating to dynamite that we have seen previously.

What a declaration of the exaltation of Christ that has already taken place such a short time after the cross. There are some aspects of this yet to come, but He was taken to sit with the Father in all His glory to show the powers of the world that He was Lord over all.

This is one of the passages that one would use to show that the Devil knows his time is short, that He is in big trouble, and that he must do his damage now if he is to do any at all.

One might assume, also that this is a passage which indicates that the heavenlies are above the celestial universe. This relates to the third heaven that Paul mentions. There is the sky, the universe and then the heavenlies.

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.

And we come to that which has been mentioned, that Christ is the head of the church and we are part of His body. We also see that ALL things are placed under His feet and He is head over ALL things to the church, not just the figurehead - He is over all transactions, all plans, all conflicts, all everything in the church and He should not be left out of any of those items nor any other item related to the church.

Note that this is a past occurrence and it is finished, He is the Head, He is over all and it is not open for discussion.

The term translated "head" has an interesting explanation in the lexicon. It explains that the loss of the head stops life in the body. It is said that when they used the guillotine, the person's mind kept functioning for a few seconds after the head was removed from the body. This illustrates the importance of a connected head. Relate that now to the church. A church without Christ as the head may be full of activities, but it is dead and no amount of rationalization or argument can change that fact. There can be no real direction, there can be no real leading, and there can be no real life.

A church run by the people with no interest in checking with Christ is dead.

The term translated church is "ekklesia" meaning a gathering of people; in this context the gathering of God's people. Not the building, but the people. I doubt that Christ is interested in being the head of bricks and mortar, even though He is the chief cornerstone. He would definitely opt for the living church, His people.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse seventeen Paul uses a strange phrase. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," It is as though Paul thought the readers may not have known God the Father. The God of our Lord. Christ Himself spoke of God in such a manner so it may be just a way of speaking in the day and culture in which they lived.

Matt. 27.46 "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Christ spoke of the Father being His God.

John 8.46 "54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:" Again the personal "my Father."

John 20.17 "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and [to] my God, and your God." My Father and my God both are used in the same breath.

In John 20.28 Thomas uses the same terminology. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

Yet, in John 10.27-30 He not only uses the terminology, but He also identifies Himself as one with the Father. 29 "My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. 30 I and [my] Father are one."

He had that same wonderful relationship that we have now, or should I say we have that same wonderful relationship that Christ had with His Father when He was here on earth.

The point I'd like to make here is that Paul may have been teaching some very important doctrine in these words. In Paul's day the gentile converts would not have had the background that the Jewish converts had in their knowledge of God, indeed the Jews may not have been well taught in the Fatherhood of God. Paul may have been disclosing some information - this Christ that has saved you has a Father in heaven, your Father.

It is clear from church history that the early church had some real growing to do in the area of theology. They went through a long period of sorting out just who Jesus was, was He all God,

was He all man, was He both in one body, was He neither without a body, just who and what was He. After they had sorted Christology out, they started on the Holy Spirit and who or what He or it was.

In a sense we are still sorting some of this information out in our own day. We have been refining things a little ever since the councils of the early church set down their thoughts on the subjects. Thus it wouldn't be surprising that the listener was gaining information about God the Father for the first time in this letter.

I think that Paul's every word had new information for some of the believers.

2. Later in verse seventeen it mentions "knowledge of him" - I would agree with Barnes on this phrase when he says "That is, in order that you may more fully acknowledge him, or know him more intimately and thoroughly. They had already made high attainments, (Eph 1:15,) but Paul felt that they might make still higher; and the idea here is, that however far Christians may have advanced in knowledge and in love, there is an unfathomed depth of knowledge which they may still explore, and which they should be exhorted still to attempt to fathom"

I don't think any believer ever knows all there is to know about God, nor of God. There is a difference in those two. You can know all about God but not know Him. There is the mental and there is the experiential and both are needed to really know God.

We should always be learning more about God as we walk with Him and as we study His Word. The Word is so full of information about Him and we need to be gaining that knowledge so that we might better serve Him.

So often I have heard old saints tell me that they just keep learning about God, they keep learning new things from the Word.

My question to the reader is this - are you ever-learning about the God that you serve? Are you gaining knowledge about Him that you would serve? Are you in His Word daily so that you have opportunity to learn of Him? I trust you can answer yes to all of these questions.

3. Verse eighteen struck me very personally when I read it over and over for this study. "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,"

When I was in high school, a pastor took me into his office after an evening service, yes, left the congregation to leave without greeting the congregation good-bye; anyway he shared the Gospel with me and I accepted the Lord that evening. The point? This verse was not a priority with this pastor. I left his office and there was little further contact with me over the next months until I went off to four years in the Navy.

There was no discipleship, and there was no instruction. I had no idea what being saved meant; I had been in Sunday school for years and knew all the Old Testament stories and the accounts of the Lord's earthly ministry, but I had never been taught of Him that would save me, or of how He would save me. I was never taught of the glories of heaven nor the blessedness of that hope.

Oh, how great some of that knowledge of my salvation and my God would have been to help me through the hard times in the Navy, to help me say no to some of that sin, and to help me to know how to walk with Him. Yet, nothing of this was ever given to me. What a wasted four years because no one bothered to assist in opening my eyes of understanding to God whom I had embraced.

4. Verse twenty-three mentions "fulness of him that filleth all in all" which most believe speaks to Christ's omnipresence. The fact that He is everywhere and that there is nowhere that He is not. This is true of God in general, not only the Son. We the church, are the fullness of an omnipresent God. We are the best He can do through and with man. We are the true representation of Christ on earth. Now, look at the church today. Are you proud of how we, the believers of the world, are representing Christ on earth today? I trust you see that we could do better - a lot better.

The church may be growing somewhat but in relation to population growth, the church is in its march toward death. We aren't keeping up with population growth in any way. The church is becoming a smaller and smaller portion of the world's population.

Not only are we growing smaller in numbers we are growing less effective. The church used to be a powerful force in the United States political system. Morals had meaning once here in America. Once homosexuality was viewed as wrong, but the country is starting to see it as it is advertised - a different lifestyle.

In the 2004 presidential election they said that the Christians in America were the cause of Bush's reelection. What they didn't say was the fact that around one third of those Christians in America voted for Kerry. The Christian standard is being lowered in this country and the truth of morals is being eroded greatly.

There was a day that this country would not have tolerated the lies, name calling, and the personal attacks related to this campaign. In our local news media the Bush administration was likened more than once to Hitler's Germany. That would have not even been thought of fifty years ago in this country. We had a moral compass that said no to such slander.

Moral compass - something that few know exists, much less know how to operate in this country today.

5. In verse seventeen we see that God the Father is the God of all glory, or that all glory should be shown to him. As we praise God we should direct it to Him. Some might wonder at the

hierarchy within the Trinity. God the Father seems pre-eminent as the planner, caller, predestinater, and now we see that He is to receive the glory. If you remember, the glory seems to shift to the Son at a point in time as all things are put under the Son's feet.

Though there are many similarities within the Godhead there is a clear distinction between the members of the Trinity. Indeed, if one wanted to try to split things up fairly, the Spirit is totally left out of the glory thing - we are never told to give Him praise, just follow His instruction, leading and teaching.

First of all, the members of the Trinity agreed upon this system or positioning within themselves in eternity past. Secondly, they are completely comfortable with the positioning as it is. Thirdly, they will be eternally completely comfortable with the positioning that they have in that era. Indeed, we do not know for sure what positions they may or may not have in the eternal state. It may be that they return to an equal footing as I would guess the footing was pre-creation.

I suspect that the positions became a necessity to work within time and with man. All three members of the Godhead took upon themselves specific roles within the creative process and the outworking of that process to bring the elect to the place to which The Three wanted the elect to be.

It may be that in the eternal state that we will offer praise to all Three as we realize fully all that they did for us on an individual basis. I don't think any of us really understand all that the Spirit does within our lives as we allow Him freedom to work. I don't think any of us really understand the minute ways

God the Father is active in our lives, not to mention all that Christ did on the cross for us - if we could truly understand that I think we would lead much different lives than we do.

6. We won't discuss wisdom at length, but I liked Constable's definition. He says that wisdom is the accurate perception of reality. We all can perceive reality, but do we do it accurately? Do we really understand reality clearly enough to know what it is and what we ought to do with it?

Wisdom is a very interesting study in the Scriptures. The Word has a lot to say about the topic and I think few of us really take time to understand all the ramifications of wisdom and how we relate to it. After all, wisdom will run counter to the many and varied plans that we make in life. It will dictate different choices in life, in action and in all that we do. It will make us want to commit ourselves to walking with God and make us want to follow His every direction. That indeed, will be counter to most of what man in America will come up with on his own.

7. Again, in verse seventeen we noticed the idea of our knowledge of God. Now, I warn all of you that deride theology and think it is for the brainiacs of our time, you are totally incorrect. The word translated knowledge means an exact knowing, or an exact knowledge of God, not just enough to get that fuzzy warm feeling cooking so you can do a feel good hour on Sunday, but an

exact knowing of Who and What He is and how all that knowledge relates to YOU!

Scarrrrry isn't it folks? We are to study God, we are to study Christ, we are to study the Holy Spirit, and we are to study theology - did you notice that we just mentioned the three main sections to theology proper. A study of GOD so that we can know about Him and so that we can know Him.

The inference to me is that if we don't know about Him we can't really know Him. We might have met him in passing in salvation, but we know little about Him and must sit at the pool of theology to get to know Him in a more intimate manner.

So many times I have heard preachers dismiss theology, or demean those that like to study it only to turn around and start talking about a point of theology that they would not know about without knowing theology - or simply, knowing about God.

Constable calls this knowing as the "total apprehension of God."

8. Building on the previous point, our fellowship with God will be dependant on how well we know Him, and since our fellowship with Him is a guide to our fellowship with other believers let us think along that line for a moment.

We have been attending a new church for several months on and off. The pastor is quite cool to people that happen upon the church steps. There has never, ever been a personal eye to eye meeting of minds with us. We have had the casual good morning from the pastor most mornings when we arrive, but no further talk for the most part. We have suffered through one greeting time after another where we were warmly welcomed and greeted, only to be returned to the coldness of unresponsiveness after the service.

There has been absolutely no desire on the part of the church people to get to know us. Yes, there may be a fear from our society about strangers, but how do we get past that fear if we remain strangers? How can we know someone if we don't spend some time with them?

I trust you will consider something further in the way of getting to know some of your church members, take some time to "know" them in an exact and complete way.

One of the hallmarks of the Mormon Church is their caring for one another. If someone has a terrible loss or need, usually within a day or two the entire church mobilizes around that need and sees to it that the need is filled, or the loss is comforted. This type of ministry to one another can only be accomplished by people knowing people, not in just a hello, how are you manner, but in a complete and accurate knowing. This takes time and contact.

I would suggest that if we know Him as we ought, then we will know how to know others if we have the desire and will to do so.

9. Deffenbach has an interesting question to introduce this section. He asks if our prayers would qualify for inclusion in Scripture, or would they only be of a quality to be included in the National Inquirer.

What do you think? How would your prayers fair? I was thinking about my own prayer life last evening and was not impressed. More like a want list rather than a time of thanksgiving, praise and request. There are a lot of needs to be brought before the Lord and we often forget the other sides of prayer.

I was thinking back to a time when I was in a Bible study/prayer time with three other men, and we often fell into the same "request trap" because we were so concerned about the many problems in the families involved in the church.

We need to balance God's need to know and our requests. He knows all the needs - He was listening when we wrote out our prayer lists together so, not sure that we need to belabor that side of prayer. He also needs to know that we are thankful for all the previous answers to prayer as well as our desire to serve Him and praise Him.

Yep, my prayer list of late would probably well qualify for being published in a grocery list - will be working on that from now on.

In a related topic, Paul made known to the people what it was that he was praying for. I wonder how it would affect missionaries to get a letter every month or two telling them that the church was praying for boldness of speech for them, or for opportunities to witness, etc. It would definitely encourage the serious missionary to know that people were behind him, while for the less serious missionary, there might be a sharp prod to do better when reading such a letter.

What an example for churches - pray for missionaries, let them know that you are praying, and let them know what you are praying. Now on the more delicate side, how about letting your pastor know you are praying for him, and then tell him how and what you are praying for in his life. That should be an eye opener for your pastor, especially when you tell him you are praying that he will start including meat for the saints in his messages.

Yes, this concept can encourage greatly while causing some reconsideration of one's life.

10. I have given mention that we might want to pray to all members of the Trinity, but I think this passage gives us good reason to aim most of our prayers toward the Father. He is the prime mover in all of this passage and this is the direction that Paul seems to be praying. We might remind ourselves of the Lord's prayer when Christ taught the apostles to pray, "Our Father" is the introduction.

God has set all into action, it is He that is guiding the plan of the ages and it is God that gave His Son to accomplish these ends in His plan. It is God that has placed Christ as the head of the

church to give us direction, thus we should seek our direction from Him for our lives.

11. Verse fifteen mentions that not only is Paul praying for the saints at Ephesus, but others are also. Other believers are praying for their church, that it would grow and prosper.

What an application. How many other churches are you praying for? Do you know of any that you are on good enough terms with to know how to pray for them? Usually the only churches we know anything about are the ones that we have left and don't feel like praying for. Maybe that is a good time to start praying for them - if they are bad enough to leave they surely are bad enough to need your prayers.

I have been in fellowships of churches where they didn't even pray for one another.

Ought we not pray for other churches in our area that want to reach the area for Christ? It isn't competition; we can surely find converts enough for all the churches without snubbing one another in the prayer closet.

I would like for you to just read through that passage again and just bask in all that God has done for us in salvation. Take time to consider how important He has made us in His plan. Take time to contemplate what the riches of our inheritance will be. I doubt we have a hint of what is yet to come in the next life.

Section three: 2.1-10

1 And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;

"Sins" is the normal word for sin while "trespasses" is a different word meaning offence or falling away from what is upright or true.

As to the phrase "hath he quickened" it is supplied by the translators. As to the validity of that phrase we will have to take a little bit of a look. Of course the King James Only people will know that it belongs just as it is because it is inspired that way. I would like to consider it for a moment.

American Standard Version: "And you [did he make alive], when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins,"

Darby: "and [you], being dead in your offences and sins"

Young: "Also you--being dead in the trespasses and the sins,"

LITV: "and you being dead in deviations and sins,"

Net Bible: "And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins,"

The Modern King James goes quite a bit further than its ancestor: "And He has made you alive, who were once dead in trespasses and sins," It doesn't bother to include the brackets to indicate it isn't in the original.

Notice that no translation inserts this but the ASV. It is true the believer is quickened from his lost state, but this verse does not say that. If you want to skip ahead, a little verse five will get you into the quickening (Col. 2.13 also). The term quickened might be misleading as well if it is taken to be a part of the text. Quicken has the thought of bringing something to some state other than dead, while salvation relates to bringing from the dead and making completely different or completely alive.

I am sure some would suggest this as a basis for some of the Calvinist idea that God brings us to some level of life whereby we can respond to him. Some Calvinists go as far as to say that this quickening is regeneration, but it is not salvation, only a pre-emptive strike against deadness while salvation is the winning of the war.

The Net Bible states that verses one through three are an incomplete sentence and that the first phrase, "And although you were dead" catches the reader's attention, but does not supply the answer to their deadness until verse four. Humm, maybe English is needed to be a good preacher/interpreter.

It is of note how many of the older commentaries see a Jewish/Gentile split in some of these passages. One suggests that "trespasses" is speaking of the Jews that had the law but rejected it and the "sins" relates to the Gentiles. There is nothing in the text to suggest this that I have found thus I think it wise to reject the thought.

Gill, and probably others err by telling their reader that the deadness is due to the trespasses and sin. To be more correct they are dead because of the fall and the trespasses and sin are a result of that deadness. Really a quite important distinction theologically. (Gill states "...he begins with the Ephesians, and expresses the former state they were in by a death, which is ascribed to trespasses and sins...." He actually mentions later on that it was due in one sense to the original sin, but also restates that it was from the trespasses and sins.)

Does it matter that the words are inserted? Well, since they were inserted when the King James was translated, it seems as though they are adding their own "interpretation" to the verse, something the King James only folks abhor in all other translators. Is it consistent with Scripture? Sure it is, but let them do the adding, not me. Based on that we will wait until verse five to deal with quickening in its proper context.

In relation to the idea that we were dead, there are three schools of thought through church history. The Pelagian view says that man isn't quite up to par, but he can be restored with a little teaching. The semi-pelagian view teaches that we were sick but recovery can be brought about, while the most of Christianity today believes that we were dead - door nail dead. We cannot be helped short of being made completely alive by an act of God.

The deadness has nothing to do with our everyday sin, but has to do with Adam's sin. Had we been in the garden when Adam was there it could have been our sin, but we were not so it cannot be. Romans 5.12 "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:" As I said, if we had been there instead of Adam we would have sinned and caused death to all mankind, but we were not. He alone stands as the culprit that caused all to be dead. Not that we aren't responsible - we are.

There is a clear distinction between the death and the sin. Spiritual death is the state of being dead, of being against God and unable to respond to God spiritually. Sin, on the other hand is the outworking of that nature of your being. Our spiritual death results in outward sin.

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:

This verse is important to us as we try to understand what "dead" really means. Simply put we are spiritually dead, but how does that work out in life. We are alive physically. How do spiritually dead people act, or how do they live their lives? Some Calvinists would have us

believe that the spiritually dead are totally incapable of doing anything good. There is nothing good in them, nor can they ever do good.

On the side of reality, I personally have met many people that are not Christians, but that live fairly good lives. They have chosen for themselves a life of doing good, of living a moral life. They can do all this and still be spiritually dead, so understand what "dead" isn't. It isn't the inability to do good, it isn't the inability to be moral, and it isn't the inability to appear to be a Christian. It simply means that they have chosen that lifestyle. Can they do good for God? If He allows it. Can they reach God with their works? Of course not. They can however live what appears to be a moral life.

I make a point of this to put you on notice that all that live moral lives, may not be Christian - don't forget to witness to anyone that has not given you a clear testimony of salvation. Spiritual deadness has to do with response to God, not response to man. I also make a point of it to clear up some fog from those that teach that spiritually dead men can't do anything good. They just can't do anything good for or toward God.

My own life illustrates this point. I tithed, I went to Sunday school and church, I was baptized and I did all sorts of good things for people, but I was lost as dead could get me. One day the gospel was shared with me and I started doing all those things for God. Before I was doing it because my mom said I had to as a child.

In this verse Paul reminds his readers of what they were as spiritually dead people. They were living life as only they could - as a part of the world. The world has its standard and God's people have their standard. The dead person can only live as the world and can only attain its standard.

We will note in the following verses that the lost person serves themselves rather than God, but this does not negate what we have said about lost people living moral upright lives - they do it to serve themselves. They may even do it to gain favor with God, but they are still dead.

My father, shortly before he died, told me that he had always tried to live a good life and do as much good as he could in the hope of maybe getting into heaven. He did good that God might do him good. The believer on the other hand does good because God has done good for them. We do right because of what He has done for us in salvation.

"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:" We once walked according to the world's standard, we once walked according to the Devil's standard and that is the standard for all that follow the Devil. The lost desire fame, fortune, and following just as the Devil. We, too, as lost people served the Devil and his standard - but some of us did good along the lines. Some fed the poor, some watered the thirsty, and some even gave their lives for others. The problem is that all that good did no possible good for them in the next life, only in this.

If nothing else, this verse should give you pause to wonder at where you are in this life today. You are spiritually alive, but why do you do good? Is it to gain fortune and following? If so, it is vain and will burn as wood, hay and stubble.

It should also give pause to consider the good works that you are doing for the right reason. Are you doing enough of them, are you doing the prescribed works that God has directed you to? Doing good works of one sort as substitute for what you know to be God's will is for feeling better for yourself, not serving God - not good.

Note that Paul said "in time past ye walked" - he is assuming that they are now walking as they ought in this life, rather than as they used to in their lost condition. It is assumed that the believer will leave those works and walks of the world and begin the works and walks of the next.

We have another declaration that we should consider. Some have suggested that "The Devil made me do it!" There seems to be some truth to that for the lost person. This verse states that the Devil's spirit works in the children of disobedience. They are dead and capable of doing all the world has to offer, but the Devil works in them to disobedience, seemingly over and above what they would find to do on their own.

Sometimes, you will run into people that are so evil in their talk, walk, and life; they treat others as if with total abandon toward evil. It is these that I believe the Devil is really working in to do evil.

We prize highly the Holy Spirit working in our lives; imagine the horror of one knowing the Evil one is working within them. That life is empty of all that is good. That life is empty of any capability of good. Even these need to know the Gospel of Christ - not saying it is easy, but they need to hear, no matter how difficult it may be.

One more little truth about the Devil. "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" Now, just consider for a moment the truth that some submit relating to eschatology. Some say that we are living in the millennium right now and that the Devil is bound with chains in the pit. Can you relate this passage to that teaching, that teaching that seems quite clearly from this passage to be false?

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.

We all - every single one of us - not one of us that did not live in this condition - save Jesus Christ Himself. All since Adam have spent time in this condition. Some for only a few years before their death, and some all their lives and those will spend eternity in the same predicament.

This seems to contradict those two positions about the deadness of man that we spoke of earlier - Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. One that is just a little sick or maybe even real sick can be

pulled out of the Devil's hold by teaching and some assistance - only through the blood of Christ can assist them out of this problem or should we say condition.

Paul tells us that the lost are lost on several fronts:

a. They are tied up in the lust of the flesh. This would relate to those desires that come from our skin and bones. It would be the sexual desires, the stomach desires, the eye desires etc. It would be those things that our body desires to do that we probably should not do. The lust is that desire, the act is what the lust produces if it is not stopped. In the lost person there is little desire to stop lust.

In the believer we have the Holy Spirit; He convicts us of that lust before we act, we have the Spirit to empower us to say no to that lust.

b. They are tied up in fulfilling those lusts of the flesh. Not only do they lust, they act on that lust. They give in to those desires of the body and continue to sin against God and themselves.

c. They are tied up in fulfilling the lust of the mind. This term mind is the same Greek word that is translated "eyes of your UNDERSTANDING" in verse eighteen. They are treating themselves to anything that their mind can dream up to do. If it enters their mind, it translates into actions to give them pleasure.

d. They are by nature children of wrath. The term "wrath" is the Greek word "orge" and relates to actions of anger, indignation and vengeance. This is their nature. It is who they are, it is what they are, it is their very nature, and it is their very makeup. It is what makes them tick.

I John 2.16-17 is one of the clearest passages on this subject that I know of. It is quite clear in the way of the lost and it is in stark contrast to the way of the righteous. "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." Pride of life relates to being proud of whom or what you are or what you have become.

All sin fits into these three phrases and the three describe lost man as best he can be described. This stands in contrast to the believer - the believer is forever and the lost are destined to pass away into an existence prepared for them by God.

By the way this stuff we are talking about is what many call the old nature. This is the stuff they say God left inside us to fight and war with the new nature that He placed within us. Now, I don't know about you, but if God promised that I would be new, I really would resent knowing He left all this terrible stuff inside me. I'd, even, more than this, be upset that the God I had decided to serve could not clean me up better than that.

To suggest that God left us as we were and just stuck in a new nature to fight with our old seems to be a serious disservice to Him that made us new.

The Net Bible states that "children of wrath" is a Jewish idiom that can be taken one of two ways, indeed it is true either way. It can mean children whose character is full of wrath, or it can mean they are destined for wrath. They are both, by character full of wrath and are definitely destined for wrath.

An idiom is a phrase that is particular to a certain language and that language only. This is not quite as clear in our day as an idiom in America quickly is adopted into other languages and vice versa. An American idiom might be something like, "Ya think." "Well, duhh." I know those aren't real intellectual, but you get the point. Huum "you get the point" is probably an idiom as well.

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

Paul has reminded them of where they were and what they were like, and now begins to remind them of where they are and what they are to be like.

God is rich in mercy - He has ample for all that He would shed it upon. On top of that mercy, He has a great love for us. The love mentioned is the self-sacrificing love rather than brotherly love. It is a love that desires to benefit, even if there is a cost involved for the one that loves. It is a love that acts for the betterment of the one loved.

I like the word "RICH" in mercy. He has a big bunch of it, He has loads of it, He has all that is needed and a lot more. "Rich" reminds me of Scrooge McDuck in the old comics. When I was very young, I was hospitalized for a time, then confined to bed for a few months at home. My folk's friends all wanted to assist my boredom by bringing comic books and toys that could be used in bed. My favorite comics to receive were McDuck's. He was my man, to say the least, he had it all, he enjoyed it all, he thrived in getting it all, and what is more important, he had all that I would have loved to have had.

Scrooge would build humongous safes to keep all his money in, safe after safe after safe. These safes were really huge buildings in the shape of a safe - all full of his money, and usually money pouring out of the windows and falling off the dump trucks that hauled the money to the safes.

God has that kind of mercy and even more. He selected us believers to shed that grace upon, for no reason at all other than His plan and His good pleasure.

This mercy was headed our direction before we even responded to His mercy. Indeed, His great love was love that existed before we responded to Him. He fully committed Himself and His love to us while we were still thumbing our noses at Him in our unbelief.

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

Even in our completely dead state, He reached down and saved us. Made us completely alive. As I mentioned, "quicken" to some might indicate something of an improvement, but not the full range of what salvation is, however here we see that it is the full process of salvation.

We were quickened together with Christ. Quickened would relate to that washing away of the old and installation of the new, the regeneration that was needed to make us alive. We were reborn, or rebirthed anew. Our first birth by man was to death, but our rebirth by God is to life.

Some suggest that God washed away some of the stuff we have studied in this section - the death, but that He left the lust, the flesh, the rotten side that we were born with and poured in a new nature. The result of this is a new/old nature struggle that we are caught between.

I prefer the truth that God washed away all that stuff, completely and finally and left us with a completely new nature, one that is pure, one that can be maintained as pure, and one that ought to be maintained as pure. I John 1.9 and the forgiveness it promises is that maintenance that is needed to be a pure living believer. We may choose to sin, we may choose to thumb our nose at God, and we may falter, but it is not because we are dead, it is not because the Devil made us do it and it is not because of any external or internal force that is working on us - it is simply that we decide to follow self and do what we want rather than what God wants.

Many label this sinless perfection - mostly because they don't want to accept the implications of the teaching - that they should live a fairly pure and righteous life. It is not sinless perfection, that false teaching that once we attain a certain level of spirituality we stop sinning and become one without sin - what a farce that is and many there are that have fallen in their attempt to attain such an ethereal plateau.

I do not teach sinless perfection, I teach what I believe the Word of God teaches - God recreated us new, rather than this illogical view that our being can be made up of two natures at the same time. The word nature means the sum of the whole. What we are is our nature. We can't have two natures, that would make our nature two natures, and that is illogical.

Webster suggests, among others, "...The essence, essential qualities or attributes of a thing, which constitute it..." I suppose you could have an old characteristic and a new characteristic or some such terminology, but nature has to do with the total makeup of a thing. We are a new creation - if we fall into sin, we are a new creation that has erred and which needs restoration, but we do not become a fallen being again, we don't become dead again, and we certainly don't need to be requickened or re-regenerated to correct our being. We need only forgiveness from the merciful and loving God and Father that has released us from our death unto life.

Paul adds "by grace ye are saved;" to clarify that leaving the works of the world for good works

would not be enough. It is the quickening of God that saves us and nothing we can do - it is His grace that saves, not ours or someone else's grace. This counters the false teaching of the Roman church which tells us that the "extra" grace that is collected from others overflow is given to those that are in need.

There is an interesting use of verbs in this verse. We were continually dead, but God at a point in time quickened us (regeneration) and grace saves and keeps on saving until we are complete in the heavenlies with Him. "Saved" is a perfect tense, showing something that has happened, and the results will extend into the future to some future end when all will be complete. The Net Bible says that "you have been saved" and "you are saved."

Another of those many indicators that the believer is eternally secure in Christ, but easily rationalized away by those that don't believe in the doctrine.

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

Now, this verse has some interesting implications. Notice the past tense of "raised" and "made" us - both are actually aorist tense which is a statement of something that occurred at a point in time. Sometime past of when Paul stated it, they were all "raised up together, and made to sit together" in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This pictures our standing in the overall plan of God. I would suggest that we were all raised in Christ at the point of His resurrection. We have this standing and it is ours never to be changed no matter what we might try to thwart it. Again, that eternal security stuff.

Apply that to the way you live. We have a standing of sitting with Christ and the Father in heaven, but what is our state, our lifestyle, like? We ought to live as if we were with Him in the heavenlies. That rather discounts being short with people, being a liar, being troublesome, being lazy, being slothful etc. Years ago there was a book by Francis Schaeffer entitled HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE? According to this passage we should live as if we were sitting beside God in the heavenlies.

"Hath raised us up together" is actually only one word in the original, which means raised together. This indicates all of us at once were raised. I would suggest that this is also true of all Old Testament saints. They were in Sheol awaiting action on their final salvation. I personally believe that the Old Testament saint was not regenerated as we. They were unable to be allowed into heaven because of this deficiency. They awaited the work of Christ to have their faith rewarded.

This was the reason for Sheol; it was a pleasant place to be until the resurrection of Christ when they could be released into God's presence. My book on regeneration explains all this in much more detail if you are interested.

The term translated "made us sit together" is rendered quite accurately, as it means to be made to sit together. Again, the thought of eternal security comes to mind. Some suggest that we can walk away from salvation, but this passage seems like God puts us in a seat - are you going to get up and walk away from that situation? I rather doubt it.

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

It would seem that there may be more grace and kindness and riches to come in the eternal state as well as here on earth. He has called us, he has done all that was needed to save us, He has saved us, He cares for us daily and He has even greater riches and grace and kindness to shed upon us in the coming day.

Exceeding has the right thought, but maybe even a stronger emphasis would be the true meaning of the word. If an item costs ninety-nine cents and I have a dollar, then my assets exceed that which I desire. This word has the thought of way exceeding, it is the thought of throwing something far and above that which is expected. His grace exceeds - even way over exceeds all that is expected. Indeed, His grace is not only sufficient to the salvation of all mankind, but His grace is way over sufficient, there is a large abundance of left over grace if you will.

I mentioned riches as separate from grace and kindness, but indeed, is not his grace and kindness toward us riches for us? It is the richest gift that He can give to His children.

I think the primary idea is to benefit His children richly, but there is also the benefit to God that He is able to show the Devil and his followers just how great and grand He is. They thought themselves so great and so grand, yet He is so much more than they and at that point in time they will certainly know it.

When Yasser Arafat died the media mentioned that he had been offered a great offer from Israel to end the Palestinian conflict and he flatly rejected it. The point was made that at the time most of the world knew he had made a grand mistake. It was revealed that he understood that this was a great mistake after the fact, but it was too late, the offer had been withdrawn.

So, with the Devil and the fallen angels, they will one day know just what a terrible decision they made when they turned against God. They will know, but it will be too late. The same goes for all the lost people of the world throughout the ages - all will one day know that their decision was a grave error and they will also know that the mistake can never be remedied.

In this respect, if none other, we ought to feel a touch of sorrow for the Devil, for his followers and for all the lost of the ages. Yes, they deserve all they will receive, but empathy is not misplaced if we feel it for them.

This is why it is hard for us to understand the Lord throwing them all into the Lake of Fire. We

may feel sorry for them and wonder why there isn't mercy for them, while from God's perspective and at this future time our perspective as well, we will understand their punishment is a direct result of the justice of God and the intolerance of lost man toward Him.

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.

Faith brings grace which saves us. The gift is in dispute by many as to what is the gift, faith, grace or salvation. Salvation is not of works so that we don't get puffed up in what we have accomplished. This is the teaching of the verse but many add a parenthetical clause onto these two verses. They believe they are saved, they believe they are saved by the grace of God, they believe that they are not saved by any works that they have done, but if you press them on the passage, they add, "but you have to work to keep this salvation."

Now, to the question of what the gift of God is. Is it the grace, the faith or the salvation? If anything I would add that verse nine is a gift in and of itself. Not having to prove to other humans that I have done the work needed for salvation is a tremendous blessing. To some human beings, you could never prove such a thing to their satisfaction, but now back to the question.

Some suggest that the faith or the grace or both are the gift of God and salvation is the end result of the gift. I would hold that salvation is the gift of God as Romans 6.23 tells us "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I would also hold that God's grace is a gift and that faith is that part of us that trusts in what God has told us, however in this passage I believe that the gift mentioned is the salvation rather than the grace.

Some very old translations/texts translate it "you are saved through the faith" indicating that we are saved by holding faith in a particular creed or set of beliefs. Some reform people hold dearly to their Westminster confession. Indeed, you can't be a part of some of their internet boards unless you subscribe one hundred percent to the entire creed.

Now, I don't think any one of them think that the creed saves them, but they are coming very close to that line of thought, and I would guess they are endangering some followers that might misinterpret their strong stance on the creed for a way of salvation.

As you minister to new believers and lost people be sure you are setting forth the Word of God as the one and only standard for salvation.

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

And now we see why one might feel that works were important enough to class them as a salvation keeper. Works are way more important than most believers allow these days. We were created in Christ; we are saved unto good works. We are ordained to walk in good works. We are

to be constantly in good works, not just on Sunday, not just on Tuesday, but all the time - walking in them is the passage.

Think about walking for a moment. You are putting one foot in front of the other, you are concentrating on where you are going, you are looking at where you are going, you are evaluating your situation, your path, the bumps and rocks in your way, you are planning ahead as to where you will turn, you are planning as to where you are going, you are constantly involved in your walk.

If your walking is not similar to that described, then you should come and walk with me. You have to watch out for rises, holes, rocks, chunks of concrete, branches, dogs, cats, trash cans, trikes, bikes and about everything else along the way, then you must wonder who is lurking around the dark corner.

That is the way we should be in our good works. Always planning how, where, and when we can find and do good works. How can I do the most that I have time for as I walk along the path that God has set before me?

For a pastor or a missionary the good works are kind of second nature to the ministry, but for the person in the pew, good works are something that is not always a typical part of our life. It can be if we walk in them, but if we don't walk in good works, we tend to do little good for the Lord.

It is so easy to get bound up in the everyday hustle and bustle of the world system in which we operate, but we must do our best to take time for God and the works that He wants us to do.

I am reminded of the candle on my desk that is burning. Its entire existence is to burn, its total concentration, if a candle can have concentration, is to produce a little light and a little fragrance. It never deviates from those purposes, it only burns and emits. It doesn't decide in the middle of the day to go do its own thing and start singing and dancing, indeed it cannot step aside from its prescribed purpose.

How can we then step aside from that which we were created for and ordained to do? Now, tell me that man does not have free will. Anyone that has been in a church these days knows full well that many believers never get involved in good works.

It is no wonder Christ used the illustration of a candle and the believer in Matt. 5.15 "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Do please notice he related the candle to good works showing forth. (No, I didn't put the illustration in to fit the passage, I set the illustration down and the passage came to mind. Nor, did I realize the passage would mention good works - it was totally accidental - well on my part, I suspect God knew it was going to happen :-)

Be involved in good works is the thought of the text. If you can't figure out how, go to your pastor, I'm sure he has something for you to get involved in. There are always ways to get involved in your own neighborhood as well. Good works don't have to be in the church, nor do they have to be aimed toward Christians. The account of the Good Samaritan would bear out this thinking.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse one the distinction was made between spiritual death and sin. We noted that spiritual death is our condition and that sin was the outward working of our spiritually dead nature. I doubt anyone would argue with that analysis, yet many reject, in practice, the opposite of this. If we were spiritually dead and the outward sign of this is sin, would not the outward sign of our new nature be good works. As a new creation in Christ we are a new creation, we are totally alive, and good works would be the outward manifestation of that life.

Interesting, that when we were spiritually dead we had no problem manifesting our condition with sin, but now that we are spiritually alive, we seem to be quite handy at not manifesting our condition by not doing good works. Amazing what free will can do if put to the test.

There is an interesting side note. If Christ did all that is needed to bring man to God - ALL man - then might it be that spiritual death is removed and taken care of? Might it be that the only sin that would put us into the lake of fire be rejection of Christ? Personally, eternal life/death was not an option until the cross. Now that the cross work is done, are not all men going to live eternally? Are all not going to exist eternally? Correct, some will be in torment for that eternity, but the rest will be with God for eternity.

I suspect that spiritual death was dealt with at the cross and that until then all were placed into Sheol until the cross work was done.

2. There seems to be evidence here that the Lord sitting down at the right hand of the Father, may well have been the occasion of the Devil being cast out of and barred from entrance into God's presence. We know from Job that in the Old Testament Satan had access to God's throne and he would go there to accuse the saints. It was there that Job and his spirituality was challenged and the challenge met.

No more can Satan enter into God's presence and accuse, the Devil is limited to the earthly sphere for this time before the end. Indeed, this seems to be what Ephesians chapter one verse twenty-one and twenty-two are speaking of - the casting down and limiting of Satan. Later in the end time there will be one thousand years in which he is bound and he will have no say even here on earth.

Now, that he is not allowed into heaven he is limited to the earth and those upon it to cause problems. He is confined to the earth and its atmosphere, to cause it all sorts of spiritual

pollution, but never fear, one day Christ will shine forth and eliminate all of Satan's pollution from this world. He will do all that is needed to correct all that Satan has unleashed upon the earth.

3. In verse ten we saw that we are His workmanship, we are made by God. I have always been amazed at how a sculpture is created, how the artist can see in his mind what he wants and then to take chisel and mallet and begin to create that desired end product. I have even wondered at the ability of an ice artist that could look into a block of ice and create something so fascinating. In a crude way the same goes for the chain saw artist. This one that takes a log and chain saw and creates artwork.

An interviewer asked a chainsaw artist once how he was able to do such fine work with such a crude instrument. He simply replied, "I just imagine what I want to produce and saw away everything that isn't it." Simple enough, cut away all material that isn't what the end product needs to be.

God didn't have to go through this cutting away procedure to create us, He had in mind what He wanted and formed us according to his purpose for us. Take a moment to think about that one. How often have you wished you were something that you are not, how often have you wished you looked different than you do, and how often have you wanted to be educated in a different manner than you are? Face it folks, you are what God wanted you to be. You look like He wanted you to look, you are educated as He desired, and you are what He wanted you to be.

How arrogant of us to say Lord, you made my nose wrong, I'm going to have it fixed. God you didn't do it right but I can remedy your mistakes, I will reform, I will struggle to change, I will go into the world and wheel and deal until I am what I should have been. NO! God made you just like He wanted you, he is the craftsman, and you are the clay. Just to clinch the thought, how often have you seen a lump of clay up and form itself into a pot, or a block of ice begin to shudder and shake and become a swan, or a log begin to splinter into a wonderful grizzly - not too often I don't think.

Folks, lets be satisfied with whom and what we are. If you are a small church pastor be satisfied to tend the sheep he has given you. If you are a missionary, be content to go out day to day and do what you can for the Lord. If you are a store owner, be satisfied that God has prepared you to do what He wants you to do. If you are a house wife and/or a mother, be satisfied that you are doing the job that He wants you to do.

If He wants you to do something else, you need not worry - He is capable of letting you know.

Oh, so often in my life I have wished that I was good with talking to people, good with preaching to large congregations, good with words to the betterment of people in their walk with the Lord. I have done the best I could with what God has given me and I find in later life that He has prepared me perfectly for the ministry that He wanted me involved in - writing - some might

disagree but that seems to be exactly where He has placed me. I find my thoughts transfer to the keyboard like water flowing from a faucet, while my word tumbling from my lip are rather like pebbles being expelled from a mouth overfilled with them. At least with writing the dyslexic mistakes can be corrected before anyone sees the - well most of them anyway.

Short or tall, brilliant or not so well inclined, rich or poor, God has a plan that He wants you to be involved in just the way that you are, you don't need to struggle for change, He will assist if He wants it for you and His purpose. You are what you are by a divine plan and design, who in the world are you to second guess the Creator of the universe?

Part of our obedience to Him overall, is that satisfaction with whom and what we are in Him. If he wants you changed, He is capable of leading you to that change. If you need more education, He will lead you to it. If you need spiritual change, He will lead you to it.

4. We should not loose sight of the sequence that Paul sets forth here. We were dead - we had no hope - then God saved us. To put it bluntly, as we witness we need to get them lost first, we need to help them realize they are dead before we give them the good news. Give em the bad news first and then the good news.

I have a message that I have preached variations of many times over the years and the main emphasis is that we need to get them lost before we try to save them. If you ask most in America if they want to be saved, their mind would probably suggest "saved from what?" They are having fun in sin, they are fun being out drinking and chasing the opposite sex, they are having fun chasing the American dream, so why do they need to be saved, why would they want to be saved out of that.

It is of interest that many of the tribal peoples that are contacted know that they are in a miserable condition and are quite ready for the good news, while people in some of the European countries don't even know there is a God. You have to tell them there is a God before you can tell them that God loves them.

Realize where your contact is spiritually before you blast them with information, for you may well be giving them information they don't need. It is much like the technical computer service you get these days. You ask the support people a question and they totally ignore that question - your need, and give you a lot of information that answers somebody's question but not yours.

Recently I wanted to know what the cartridge numbers (there are three different cartridges available) were for my computer printer so that I could purchase some new ink. I could not find the information in the book, nor could I find it on the manufacturer's website. I emailed their support address and asked, "What are the cartridge numbers for a model i3 printer? Black: Color: Photo: thinking that they would fill in the numbers.

The reply came fairly quickly but to my surprise and disappointment the technician told me to

run a self diagnostic test on the printer to see if the problem was in my computer or if it was in my computer. They wanted me to determine whether the computer could print to another printer. They decided I did not know what I needed so they were going to step in with their superior intellect and guide me to the answers they wanted to give. They certainly did not answer my question. He had a good answer to someone's question, just not one for mine.

5. We have given a meager contrast to the difference between the lost and the saved. We know there are differences, but do we realize the depth of those differences? They are totally lost, they are dead, they are completely without hope, they are totally unresponsive spiritually to God, and they are completely unable to know the love of Christ.

We on the other hand know Christ, we know His love, and we know what death is like and enjoy the benefits of true life. We know what the inheritance we have coming is and we love and worship the God that provided it for us.

Now, consider the outworking of this chasm between the lost and the saved. Is it any wonder that they don't want to talk to us, is it any wonder they don't want to associate with us, is it any wonder they are uneasy around us? Well, that used to be the case, but I am finding in recent years it is the Christian that is uneasy around a spiritual believer, it is the Christian that is uneasy about talking about spiritual things, and it is often the lost person that feels some affinity with the spiritual person.

I personally believe that the lost in America know they are lost and I further believe many want to know what we know, but there are too few believers that are witnessing. I further believe that there are many believers living where the spiritually dead live and this is why the country is sliding into the depravity that we see around us every day. We have not been the light of the world; we have been a graying factor upon sin and the terribleness of lostness.

I trust that you will begin to realize the importance of being truly spiritual in you life. If you do not you are contributing to the problem of so many that want to hear of Christ but do not.

Some suggest that America is full of Bibles, so no one is without excuse. Well, technically no one is without excuse whether they have a Bible or not, but to prove the point in America, I was told by a student that he was talking with some friends and some of their friends in Denver, CO and the young people were talking about Christ. One fellow inserted himself into the conversation by asking who this Jesus they were talking about was.

It is incomprehensible to me that in America we have people that have never heard of Christ when supposedly by the surveys, over half the country is evangelical Christians. Even if you cut that to twenty-five percent, we aren't doing a very good job of spreading the good news to lost man in America today.

6. Most commentators point out that Paul shifts from "ye" to "we" to include himself. What they

do not mention is the why of this shift. They suggest he wanted to identify with them, but I think there was a much more clear explanation of this. All of these people knew what Paul was like before his conversion, what a striking effect this would be in the readers mind to hear the apostle talking about “ye” and suddenly insert himself and all his terrible persecution and murderous ways into the equation.

This is an illustration of the terribleness of the lostness of man and Paul was the prime example that would close the person’s thoughts around just how dead and spiritually corrupt they real were.

I trust you have this concept well in mind - this concept that before Christ you were no better than Adam thumbing his nose at God in the garden set for his enjoyment - this concept that before Christ you were no better than Paul when he was out persecuting Christians to the utmost of his ability.

Yep, we were lost, we were dead, we were stinking rotten dead, we couldn't get any deader. And yet, God in ages past said, Son we are going to do something about these and began planning and acting to bring us back to life for an inheritance with Him for all eternity.

7. We won't take a lot of time to discuss the fall, nor the fact that all are spiritually dead until we are reborn. If you want further study in these areas, go to my Theology online for more.

Suffice it to say all are spiritually dead when they were/are born. There was only one that was not and that is Christ Himself. He was born of a virgin. This tells us that the sin nature is transmitted to the child through the man, rather than the woman. It was man that fell, it was man that sinned first, and it was man that corrupted the entire race.

This is why mankind is universally lost to the lake of fire unless God intervenes in the scheme of things with the individual.

One of the objections to this doctrine is that babies die and a God of love would not condemn a poor baby that did not have opportunity to be saved to the lake of fire. Many believe that God will take those to Himself in some manner. King David, when he lost his child, declared that he would see him in the future thus indicting what has just been said. Most also believe that there is an age of accountability at which time the individual comes to a time intellectually that he needs to decide upon God. After that point of time God has no responsibility to allow this one to live another moment, nor give him another opportunity, yet often times God is so gracious in allowing these to go on living and rejecting him through much if not all of their lives.

One might suggest that we were just as far down the dead end of the spectrum as we now are at the far other end of the spectrum in life. You can't get any deader than we were and you can't get no more aliver than we now are.

8. The point has been made, but again might be of benefit. The lostness of man results in sin, the salvation of man results in good works - both sins and works are actions of the condition. Are we not to assume that a person living in sin is not lost - even if they have made good professions of faith? The believer is saved, is set aside unto good works, thus if there are no good works, and there is sin, one might have validity to wonder of the profession of faith and the soundness of it.

No, we are not to judge, to condemn that one living in sin to the lake of fire, but we are surely to consider the outworking of the inner spirit. If that outworking is sin, then the inner may well be dead.

9. A comment or two about security. Constable quotes Wiersbe on security and I think it is a catchy phrase, but one which bares remembrance. "Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works."

Of course this is a rather flip statement of security, but it tells it like it really is; there is nothing we can do to get salvation and there is nothing we can do to lose it.

Just think of the love God has for us and then think of the kind of salvation that He might design for us in ages past. Why would he love us, and want to assure our spending eternity with Him then design a salvation that was very "ify" at best. It does not make sense that He would create a scheme so flimsy as to be thwarted by man giving himself over to his fleshly desires.

What would that say about the love of God? What would that say about the intelligence of God? What would that say about the wisdom of God? It all would say that He isn't much of a God if He couldn't do a better job than that.

10. There has been a teaching around, a controversy if you will that relates to this passage. Paul makes it quite clear that the salvation that God has given is designed to result in good works. He created us, He was the master planner for each one of us and the resulting design was to produce good works.

However, that is where Paul stops in his teaching. He does not go that one step further and state that if a person does not do good works, he is then not a true believer.

The Lordship controversy centers around the fact that some say that you cannot be saved if you have not made Christ Lord of your life and if you are not involved in good works. This passage does not teach this nor in my mind does any other passage in the Bible. All the Bible states is that we are created and designed to produce good works, but it is a decision of OUR mind whether we produce them or not.

God designed, God desires, and God expects good works, but it is the choice of man as to whether they will be produced or not.

The other side of the dispute, as you can easily imagine, is the "Well we are saved by grace not by works" crowd.

In my mind, we can wonder at the salvation of a person without good works, but it is not a clear indicator of lostness, it may only be an indicator of coldness.

11. In verse eight we mentioned that there was some discussion as to the word "that" and what it refers to. Many say that "that" is neuter and faith and grace are feminine so "that" cannot refer to either of them so it must refer to salvation. There is an editor's note in Gill's work - I don't know if it is someone that edited the digital version or some other version - but it points out two things. He points out that not only are "grace" and "faith" feminine, but so is "salvation" thus "that" cannot refer to any of the three, or that it may refer to all three. He mentions that he had discussed this with a professor of Greek. He suggests that the conclusion one might reach is that the Greek is not quite as exact as some commentators have given us to believe. In my mind I'd suggest also that Greek in general is not as definitive as most would have us believe.

I would like to pursue this for a moment. He goes on to suggest that the words are a tautology, or a series of words that show a sequence. Webster describes tautology as "A repetition of the same meaning in different words; needless repetition of a thing in different words or phrases; or a representation of any thing as the cause, condition of consequence of itself, as in the following lines. The dawn in overcast, the morning low'rs, And heavily in clouds brings" He suggests "that" refers to all three and that even faith is the product of God implanted in man so that he can believe. Now, this is the normal Calvinist position that quickening or regeneration is something that allows us enough spiritual umph to believe in God.

The problem with this is that faith is basically believing in what God has said. How can we be given faith so that we can believe, when in fact faith is belief? To say this they must suggest that God gives us faith/belief and thus there is no part of salvation that is man's - even the belief is from God, leaving man with no choice in the matter, and this is the result and product of that system of theology.

It would seem that if the "that" belongs to all three, grace, faith, and salvation, then wouldn't it be a better interpretation to say that the "that" refers to the whole of salvation, from call to finish and that the whole is the gift, which does no damage to the fact that the faith is on man's side. Robertson in his work suggests that the grace is God's part and that belief is man's part. This seems to be the teaching of the Word. God provided salvation as a whole to man, while man has a responsibility to believe within that whole gift of God - salvation.

12. Ray Stedman mentions a book by Os Guinness, the associate of Dr. Francis Schaeffer. The book's title was DUST OF DEATH. Mr. Guinness stated that he had been reading all of the great books of the great men of the day and found that they all had the answer for man in this present world, but as he read these books he found that the answers presented were quite lacking and that there were, indeed, no answers for man in this present world. He related that he was depressed by

this verbiage of despair and he turned to the Bible and the fact that Jesus Christ is the only answer for man in any age, including this present age.

It has been mentioned that man can do good deeds, that he can live a moral life without Christ, but we must not miss the very important truth that even within this "good living" these folks will one day realize that their life has not measured up and that there was something very important missing in their life. They will understand that that was not enough, that they have missed out on something much better than the best that they have offered.

Stedman relates this to our good intentions; that really misses the mark. All of this was to explain the term trespass in verse one. I feel that this explanation is quite valid in reality, but I am not sure how valid it is in this context. The verse speaks to our deadness, our total deadness, our not ever going to live again deadness, not just our missing the mark in life.

13. The Life Application Bible states that because all men sin we have proof that we are all dead. I would argue that all men are dead thus all men will sin. We were dead in sin. The verse does not say we sin, thus we are dead; it says we were dead in sin. Perhaps the writers believe in one of those teachings that say man has some good inside and that sin brings them down. God is clear in the Word that we are dead, not kind of alive.

Is there a difference? Yes. Does it matter? Yes. If we are dead because we sin, there might be the thought that if someone didn't sin, that they would be alive - alive until they sinned. This is not correct theology. We are dead because of the fall, and because of that death we can only sin.

Section four: 2.11-22

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;

We are to remember on a continuing basis. It has the idea of calling to mind, considering a thing or situation. We tend to operate in this mode anyway, so Paul gives them something spiritual to call to mind.

We have no problem calling to remembrance the good old days, the times when we had more money than now, the good times in a marriage, the best Christmas etc. Paul wants them to remember what Christ has done for them - something worthwhile to consider. In Philippians he called the believer to "think on these things" to consider the good things of our spiritual life. The other alternative is that we dwell in all those things that make us unhappy and discouraged, so it makes more sense to consider God and His things rather than us and our things that we can't buy right now. Phil. 4.8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

I included verse nine for its statement that this will bring the realization that God is with us whether we have that old "self" stuff or not, that it is God that is important, not the rest of all the stuff of life.

"Gentiles" is the Greek word "ethnos" which can mean as little as a company, troop, or swarm, but usually depicts a class of people, in this case all that are not Jews. Paul uses this term to speak of all non-Jewish peoples. (In Acts 2.5 we see "ethnos" used to describe all of mankind. It relates to all the "nations" of the world. "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.")

Here he makes a distinction in mankind - the Jews and the Non-Jews in a general statement of the Gentiles relationship to God. This usage is somewhat time sensitive, in that not all God's people are Jews. The Jews came much later in history and many of the peoples of the Old Testament were not Jews. At the time of Abraham God began to deal with only the one people, though even in the law there was grand provision for any non-Jewish people to come to God and be a part of His people. There is a complete system whereby people of this sort can be brought into the Jewish community and find acceptance with God.

However at this time in the family of God it was Jews and the rest, two divisions of mankind. Within Judaism there was coming that body of Christ which would eliminate this division and basically set up another. God's people and the lost people. Jewish and Gentile believers become one body, the church, the children of God while all else on earth is lost and never to be a part of

the family of God lest they believe upon the head of that body, the church.

The phrase "made by hands" interests me, though I am not sure there is anything special meant by it. It seems that it is of note because Paul included it, but just why he included it is of interest. Was he suggesting that the Jewish Christians might give a little more emphasis to circumcision than they ought? This is possible because that is what they seemed to do in the early history of the church until the apostles set them straight on the topic.

Was Paul giving a contrast in the verse? "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;" Paul seems to point out that the circumcision was no real special SPIRITUAL thing to be excited about. It was done by the hands of men - no big deal. The context is the thought that before the Gentiles were outsiders, while now they are insiders and equal to the Jews. The point might be suggested, that being insiders, they are on now equal to the Jew and no more outsiders. This might have been written for the Jews as much as for the Gentiles.

Some suggest, and I would tend to agree that Paul is showing the division between lost Gentiles and lost Jews. The phrase relating to hands would point out the lostness of the Jews he was speaking about. The thinking is that if he were speaking of Christian Jews he would have phrased it differently.

Most Jews in Paul's day were Christ rejecters, but very pious in their devotion to the law, even if their devotion was to the law as they understood it and interpreted it. Paul's use of the phrase would point out their reliance on their own efforts had the lost Jew had opportunity to read this letter.

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:

This section reminds me of a mission policy in a church in which we were members. We were also missionaries on deputation. I was asked to assist on the missions committee so I jumped at the chance. The first item of business for me was to read their missions policy.

They had devised a grid system by which they determined whether a missionary could/would be supported by the church. As I read the policy there were many required items. Being a Baptist missionary, being with a Baptist mission etc. There was nothing out of the ordinary in the requirements, just that I fit nowhere in their criteria. We were with an independent mission and were not going to be working with Baptists and a bunch of other noncriteria items. The result was that we, as members of this church, could not be supported by the church in our missionary endeavor. We had so many marks against us that we had no possible hope of support.

Indeed, when we asked the church to be our sending church, they did agree to send us, but there

would be no financial support. Not sure how you send someone without support, but that was their decision and we were glad to abide with it and continue to be members and serve on the missions committee.

As we had no chance of support, Paul is laying out a solid case to show that the lost gentile was totally out of luck when it came to heaven. There was no way that any Gentile was going to make it into heaven.

Remember what he told them in the last section - they were dead. Now he adds five more things that were against them as dead men. They are also without Christ, not Jews, not under the promise, they have no hope and they are without God. They were at a disadvantage I'd say.

Consider these points:

Spiritually dead

Without Christ

Not Jews

Not under the promise

Having no hope

Without God

Hey, we weren't just up a creek without a paddle, but we didn't even have a canoe. We had no hope of life, we were without a Savior, we couldn't get in because we were Jews, we weren't sojourners so we weren't under the promise, and we had no hope for anything and worst of all we were without God. Not a chance to gain entrance into heaven, no matter how hard we scrambled to suggest we might.

Now, if this is God's opinion of the lost, and it is, then how can any lost person logically think that they can do something nice enough to gain entrance into heaven? They do not realize where they are spiritually before God or they would not entertain such folly as to think their good works will gain them anything.

No one standing at the pearly gates, if there are pearly gates, will offer any of these excuses for not having Christ and be accepted into heaven. Only Christ and His shed blood will allow entrance into eternity.

It almost seems that Paul is countering some teaching that they might have been receiving. He is taking great pains to show that they were totally unequivocally without hope before Christ. That

there was no chance for their salvation except by the grace of God. Since verses eight and nine are so clearly for grace and against works it would seem that someone was teaching that there was some good in man and that that good was going to help them gain acceptance with God.

I've mentioned my father before on his death bed talking of spiritual things for the first time on a serious level. We could see a Lutheran church across from his hospital room and we talked of what they believed. He remarked, "Well, I have always tried to do as much good as I could and hoped that I would do enough to get in."

Do good he did, all his life, he did good, he would do for anyone that was in need, he would give of himself to do good, but this passage tells us that he could not do enough good to gain access to God. He was totally dead, without hope, without Christ, and without God unless he had accepted the gospel at some time earlier in his life. This was a slight possibility, as he attended a Methodist church back when the Biblical gospel had root in that movement.

I was able to share the simple plan of salvation with him, but only he and God know the results of that hearing of the Word.

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

Ah, there is a change in the landscape. Christ made a difference. Before Him we were way off from God, but now that Christ is a part of our life we are made close to God.

As you read this passage you get the feeling that not only were there some false teachings relating to our lostness, works, but also this text seems to indicate there was a division between the Jewish converts and the Gentile converts. Paul is making the strong case that these two groups are now merged into one in Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [between us];

More theology coming at cha. "Who hath made both one" speaks to the unification of Spiritual Israel and the church. Not, that it is speaking of unification of all promises, rules and regulations however as some would teach. We, the church are not under the law, nor are we under the promise; we are under the cross as is all Israel. Israel was in a special state until the cross; there was a barrier between them and God, which only the cross could deal with. The work of Christ allows all peoples equal entrance into the presence of God without need of works or keeping of the law.

Just what is this "middle wall of partition?" A couple things might come to mind. There is the division of the temple, the outer area from the Holy of Holies where God dwelled. There is also the thought of the wall between Jew and Gentile. And there is also the wall between God and lost man. The question is this - which is it?

The answer is quite obvious if you read the context of verses twelve to sixteen. It is all that divided Jew from Gentile, or maybe a little more correctly we should view this as the division that kept Gentiles away from the Jewish relationship with God. There is a little thought, in my mind of that which keeps the lost from God, and that would be valid here, but specifically Paul is talking about the wall that kept the Gentiles from the Jewish relationship to God. This is a general statement of what has happened at the cross.

There were laws in the Old Testament to allow seekers to come into a relationship with God by becoming a Jew in lifestyle and commitment; however this wall that came down was the general wall that blocked Gentiles from direct access to God without coming to Him through the law and all it involves.

The Gentiles come directly, and the wall being removed, so do the Jews. There seems to be several aspects to this wall. The fact that it kept Gentiles from a relationship to Israel and God, the fact that it kept Jews from having direct access to God without the law and the fact that it kept Gentiles from direct access to God without the law.

Christ was our peace - He brought peace between all parties. One must wonder why the Jews do not see this. Well, not really, as they are still following the law, having rejected their Messiah and having their eyes darkened by God. A few have found that peace with God through the cross, but most Jews still await His coming and yet serve the law in some manner or another.

So, how does this apply to the movements today that want to mix the Old Testament with the New? Those in America and Israel that are trying to rebuild the temple by their own efforts. Those that take upon themselves Jewish names to find favor with God, those that take on the Jewish trappings in an attempt to put Jewish flavor to the Church.

Nowhere in the Word are we told to pattern the church after Israel, nowhere in the Word are we told to pattern our lives after Judaism, and nowhere in the Word are we told to stir the Old and New into one big pot of slime called Messianic Christianity. Messiah was Christ; Christ is Christianity so the two terms become redundant. Instead of pointing out their uniqueness in life and belief, it points out their error in life and belief.

When my brother died, I found that he had become involved in this movement to some extent or another. His girl friend was shocked to the quick when I told her I was not going to go to the expense of flying his remains to be scattered over the Jordan River. He had declared this a wish, but I rather doubt it was much more than a passing statement of hope in that he was planning to move to Israel to work assisting immigrants. He had told me only a year or two earlier that there was to be no expense in getting him into the ground. We both saw the futility of the modern mortician practices that dwell on the sorrow of bereaved people.

There is nothing in the Word to indicate that there is any significance to the human body after it ceases to live. It returns to dust, so why prolong the process with all the tactics of modern

mummification and preparations for the departed. They are going to rot, no matter how nice you make the process begin so why not move on with the process at the earliest possible opportunity?

When I see mummies of the distant past I am interested due to history, but I also am humored at the ploys of man to make the old pile of dust last longer than the manufacturer designed it to last. We are dust; we will never be anything else, so why struggle and squirm as we do to keep this body from its intended future.

Personal opinion here, but I really cannot understand the expense Christians go to in giving their loved ones a big send off. They aren't there to send, they are long gone folks - read the Bible. We aren't in that shell, we are with the Lord ignoring what's going on around the body we once knew. The cheapest method to dispose of the body is the good steward's duty, not the terribly expensive funerals and caskets and flowers that are dying themselves by the way. They are just not quite as far along in the process.

To return to the point, if you have anyone trying to pull you back into compliance with the Old Testament laws of life and living, you have someone that does not understand that we don't need that, someone that does not understand God's ongoing program and someone that does not understand grace and all its benefits. Do not allow anyone to draw you back or away from God with such attempts - refuse them - follow what grace teaches - freedom from the law and all its requirements, the most significant one of which is, that if you try to obey one point of the law to gain with God, you are required to keep the entirety of the law perfectly and you will not succeed.

There is also the thought that there was a solid wall between the court of the Gentiles (in the temple) and the rest of the temple - to separate the Jews and the Gentiles. This pictures that partition being removed from between the two peoples.

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;

Here we see the Scriptural basis for what has just been stated - Christ took care of all that stuff. He made from the two, Jews and Gentiles, one new man "making peace." There should be no division between Jewish believer and the Gentile believer - peace is their lot.

The term translated "ordinances" is the Greek word "dogma" or doctrine. One must wonder if this wasn't speaking again of the false teaching that Paul was setting out to refute. He may have been working against those that had instituted doctrines of works to be followed to gain access to God. The further into this study the more it seems to me that he was writing against Judaizers.

At the very least he was attempting to stop the hatred between Jews and Gentiles. This was a strong hatred in this time as the Jews thought the Christians were a heretic sect of their very own. They wanted to stamp it out at all costs, yet Paul says that Christ did the work to stop this hatred

and to bring about peace between the two parties.

There is another aspect of this enmity, or great difference between the Jew/law and Gentile/grace. The stark difference in the two is totally obvious, and this difference/enmity may have been giving rise to hard feelings between the two groups. The Jews that had been under the law may have felt it unfair that they had been raised under the law and all of its limitations to life, and then they see these Christians coming out of sin and the like to walk free from any restriction under grace. Even a Jew that had found release in grace might have felt unfairness in the ease with which the Gentiles were coming to God.

There is quite a difference between law and grace. In a sense law is all that grace is not. Grace is free and clear, without limitations and requirements while the law is costly in obedience and clearly has many limits and requirements.

The law was limited as well in what it could do for the believer. It could not put the person into a completed place in Christ until after the cross. He was not a believer in full standing. He was allowed a relationship with God, however limited. They did not have the Holy Spirit as those under grace, and they had not been fully restored from the fall nor their personal sin. They awaited the cross for both to find their completion. This was the reason for Sheol in Luke sixteen. It was a place where Old Testament saints enjoyed joy, but yet separation from God awaiting their full standing before Him in Christ. Christ went there to retrieve all those that were waiting and ushered them into the Lord's presence after the resurrection.

The parable of the laborers illustrates what I am suggesting. The owner came and hired some, then later more, and then late in the day even more. When it came pay time all received the same amount. Those hired early cried unfair. I have to wonder if the Jews weren't suggesting some unfairness in this idea of grace for the Gentiles.

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

Does this not state what has been said? He wanted to reconcile both unto God. Evidently the Jewish believers were not yet reconciled to God. They were not yet fully children of God though, because their sins were only "covered" by the blood of animals, their sins were not "washed away" by the blood of Christ.

This is a very disturbing teaching to some but I believe it to be the teaching of Scripture. I was contacted by email by a man that held to a different belief on this topic wanting to discuss it with me. I told him if he would set aside his preconceptions and look at the subject openly I would discuss it. After about five rounds of emails it was obvious he was arguing against my belief because he disagreed and his entire line of thought was based on his belief which he was assuming was correct and as a result found my conclusions to be incorrect.

You can't seriously consider the Word if you argue from your preconceptions as this gentleman and many others do today. My thought answers several questions of theology that had always bothered me. I asked the man to answer the questions that my position answers and never once did he attempt to give response, which tells me he had no such answers, thus he was willing to retain a belief that is inadequate because it is his belief rather than because it was Scriptural.

Christ has done all that is needed to bring all peoples, whether Jew or Gentile, to God in the full and proper manner that was required. There was full reconciliation with God.

Watch it now; there is another one of those "DOCTRINES" that we must deal with - "reconciliation."

Just what is reconciliation? I will include a study on the subject at the end of this section for those that want to look at the subject further. Basically it is bringing man and God back together after man turned away from God. In a marriage if one of the spouses leaves and then at a later time returns to the home and to the marriage it is called reconciliation. Thus it is with God, man turned from God in the garden and God was thus separated from man spiritually. Christ brought about all that was needed to bring man and God back together.

There may even be good suggestion that God turned away from man after man's rejection of Him. We won't delve into that here, but most any systematic theology would treat the subject.

Yes, there is the question as to whether Christ reconciled all mankind with God. There is indication that this was the case. Christ did all that was needed to bring all of mankind back into a proper relationship with God. The question is whether all mankind will accept that work on the cross. The answer is no they have not and will not.

There is even indication that Christ's preaching in Sheol may have been Christ's offering to Old Testament non-believers of all that He had done on the cross, but there is no indication that any accepted that work. It seems that man, once he has rejected God, has made up his mind and has had his heart hardened to further information relating to salvation. I am not convinced personally that the Gospel was preached to the lost Old Testament saints, but even if it was there is no indication than any lost turned to Christ, indeed they could not have, the Scripture is clear that once death overtakes the person, spiritual change is impossible.

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

This undoubtedly speaks of the earthly preaching of the Lord. He preached to all that would listen seeking to bring them into a peaceful relationship with God.

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

We all have access to God by the Spirit. This is an interesting verse in relation to what I was

mentioning earlier relating to reconciliation. NOW, we have access by one Spirit. This is the crux of my thinking. The Old Testament saint did not have the Spirit dwelling within as we. The Old Testament saint/Jew did not have access to the Father until the cross. Seems proof positive to me that my thinking is correct.

In the next four verses we see a grand picture of what we have been talking about. It is a picture of Christ and the great body that He has prepared and provided for - the church. 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."

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

The Gentiles in the Old Testament time that wished to unite with the Jewish people for a relationship with God were called strangers and sojourners - this seems to be a call back to those people. I often wondered why they were called thusly, instead of at some time in the process being called Jews. It would seem that there was always a distinction between them and the Jew.

The term "strangers" is used of anyone that is a person that does not normally belong in a land. God's people were called strangers when they were in Egypt. Years ago I was able to make a trip to Ireland, where I automatically was a stranger. You couldn't tell it till I opened my mouth and had no Irish accent, but I was indeed a stranger.

"Fellowcitizens" means one having the same citizenship as the others. There were some minor differences in the Old Testament sojourner/stranger and they were not full citizens of the house of God in an earthly sense, but were the same as the Jew spiritually. These Gentiles now are the same as the Jew in rights, in all aspects before God.

Lev. 17.8 mentions these strangers, "...Whatsoever man [there be] of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you...."

The application in this text is that we are all fully God's children, and that no matter what our looks, our talents or our possessions, we are equal before God - oh, yes, we ought to add, no matter what gender we happen to be - we are fully children of God. Not to say there are not differences in our function while here on earth.

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the

chief corner [stone];

We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets - we have a solid footing upon which to take our stand. We are part of a building that has Christ as the corner stone. He is the strength of the building, the identifier, if you will. All can look at this building and know that we are His.

The apostles we can understand since some of them were involved in the writing of Scripture and they were the teachers that went out into the world to evangelize, it was the apostles that set the world on its ear with the Good News. The work of the apostles was the founding of the church and their teachings were the strong foundation that we now build upon.

The question is, what prophets? They may be the New Testament prophets, though they seem to be of little importance in the written word. I would assume that this refers back to the Old Testament prophets which had set down their messages for the edification of the Old Testament saints. This teaching became some of the teaching of the New. This was an integrated part of the foundation that was set for the church to be built upon.

The Net Bible translators state that this is the New Testament prophets, however I have to wonder. There is no indication that I can think of to show that the New Testament prophets received any revelation that made it into the Scriptures. Yes, they did some predicting, but they did not add to the revelation itself that God made of Himself to man. Only the Old Testament prophets fit this requirement, if indeed my requirement of revelation is correct. Gill agrees that the prophets are of the Old Testament variety rather than New.

However, in studying the next section I ran into verse five which to me would show that this phrase IS speaking of the New Testament prophets. "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;" Note "now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets..." shows that the Old Testament prophets were not involved in this revelation and in my mind not in the verse twenty information either.

Barnes suggests that "prophets" probably refers to the whole of the Old Testament as a foundation. Indeed, this might be true, but "prophets" is in a phrase with "apostles" which would indicate specific people as "apostles" refers to the twelve.

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

The term "building" might be slightly misleading to the reader. It actually relates to edification or of building up. In whom all the building up is framed together, might be the sense of it. The builders are building up this building and the parts are fit together precisely.

On Public Broadcasting they have a show about old time tools, and workmanship. One show was about a building method that was used in Europe hundreds of years ago. The building had no

nails, it had now bolts, it had no way of holding itself together other than tightly fit joints designed to seal the frame of the building together with great strength. The building was assembled by fitting these different beams together in the proper sequence so that the building took shape and was held together by the pieces that gave one another support.

The church is precisely built, there are no errors, there are no cost cuts that will weaken it, and there are no shortcuts to bring about cutting of expenses. It is "fitly framed." Actually, this can relate to how the body parts are fit together. Now, my body is not a good example of this, the knees are shot, the back is bowed and poorly supported, the roof is long gone and the ankles can barely support the upper structure, but even then I know how well my limbs and bones are tied together. They were fitly framed to do the work that was needed. Now, we can look back over the years and years that I have used this body, and the falls, and the stresses, and the injuries, yet the body continues to work and function in a relatively good way. Imagine how wonderful the design of this body is to have lasted through six decades of work - and I might add abuse.

Such is the building that Paul is speaking of. Only this building has no damage from the decades, only growing strengthening and broadening. The church grows as an organism and increases in all manner of ways due to the designer and builder.

Also, consider I Pet. 2.5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

What a description of the church - a blending of all sorts of people, brought together by Christ to live with Him and to be a habitation for God in that wondrous body of Christ. The God that planned all these great things for us, the God that planned the universe and the God that gave His own Son to accomplish all this - He wants to live with us - and eternally at that.

My goodness, is there any better place in all the world than that to exist? I think not. We are a truly fortunate people to have met the Savior and be implanted into His body, His Church, the building built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse twelve when it says, "That at that time ye were without Christ" Jamieson Fausset and Brown make an interesting note from the Greek. They describe this phrase as it should be ""separate from Christ"; having no part in Him; far from Him." but they make further comment that there would have to be an addition of another word to make this phrase to mean that Christ was not with us at that time - we were far from God, but He was not far from us.

This is true today in our spiritual walk as well. We can be in outright total rebellion, and yet we can know that He is nearby, He is awaiting our return, He is ready and willing to respond to us.

2. I always come up with these dumb questions. Here Paul has just laid out a mass of information relating to us; that Christ unified the Jews and the Gentiles, and that He has done all to reconcile man and God, and I am thinking, Why did Christ want to unify the Jews and the Gentiles?

True this may have been a problem with the church at that time, and true man was far from God, but why was there a labor of love to unify the Jew and the Gentile? What purpose was there? Did the Gentiles care if they were separate from the Jews? Do the Jews want unification?

In pondering this question it seems that the unification was the process by which God was tying two dispensations together. He was merging all of the saved of the Old Testament economy and melding them in with all of the future saved of Grace Economy.

The result of the unification is actually the eternal state, though we aren't to it as yet. He needed to bring the believer that was under law into the same relationship that those under grace were enjoying.

It was a necessary process to bring all peoples together under the cross. One of the main accusations brought against dispensationalists is that we believe in two methods of salvation. Not so. The accusation is based on an unfortunate comment in the first edition of Scofield's reference Bible. He indicated that those under the law were saved differently from those under grace. This comment was revised in the next edition, but none of the foes of dispensations will include this in their comments.

The Old Testament saint came to God the same way as I did - by believing in what God said. I had a little advantage in knowing that Christ existed and that He died for me, while the Old Testament saint only knew that God had a plan for a Messiah and that there would be a better life in the end if they believed in what God said.

Both arrive in heaven by the same method, but from a different system of government under God.

This unification was only one of the many steps in the overall plan of God for the ages.

3. In verse fifteen it mentions, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [even] the law of commandments...." The Net Bible translates it this way, "when he nullified the law of commandments in decrees." Nullified is said to have meant, to render it inoperative. Now, I won't comment about those that are today trying to obey the law and the fact that it won't work, but just the fact that Christ did all He needed to do in His life and death to make the Law of no effect for this day in which we live.

4. The Net Bible suggests that "cornerstone" is actually the capstone. The Lexicon however relates it to the corner stone that ties two walls together. The capstone is that middle odd shaped stone that the arch is supported by. I suspect that the point is that Christ is the chiefest of all the

stones rather than specifying any particular one, or there may be the thought of the cornerstone being the stone set by the builders by which all others are aligned to. This is usually the one with an inscription placed on it in modern days.

None of the translations I checked use the term capstone, but all use cornerstone. The lexicon speaks of the stone placed at the extreme corner. I Pet. 2.6 is the only other place the word is used and it is translated cornerstone there as well. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

The word comes from two words, one of which is used in Mark 13.27 when it says, "uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." The word here is "uttermost." It is also used in Luke 16.24 when the rich man wants Lazarus to dip the TIP of his finger in water to give him to taste. The second word relates to corners, thus extreme corner.

We might suggest application of the thought that the cornerstone was laid, and that all other stones were laid out in relation to it. This was to guarantee squareness and correctness of the building. Christ is the standard set, Christ is the only standard set and Christ is the only standard we should use in our lives.

5. The reference to a grand building and temple must have resonated in the Ephesian mind strongly in contrast to the Temple of Diana - that great edifice that people came to worship in from the surrounding area. Paul may have been drawing the contrast knowing that the people had worshipped in Diana's temple and that they would know the stark contrast between it and what they had learned of God.

I Cor. 3.10-16 is a very appropriate text to consider here. 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. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built hereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

We see here that Christ is the foundation and the cornerstone - He is the strength, stability and squareness of the church in which we live.

6. Constable tells of some of the rancorous feelings that the Jews had for the Gentiles. They felt that if one of their children married a Gentile that they would have a funeral for the child. They would not help a Gentile woman in the time of delivery for it would only assist in adding a

Gentile to the world.

One must wonder if Hitler and others didn't find such rhetoric in history to be basis for their hate of the Jews. This hate continues today in some of the Arian Nation groups that hate Jews and call for blood shed.

The hate of the Gentiles for the Jews isn't proper nor is the hate of the Jews for the Gentiles. This hate is not acceptable in the church between believers and it is not proper outside the church either. The lost Jew and the lost Gentile have no reason to hate one another for they are both lost and on their way to the fire prepared for them.

What arrogance they must have to think themselves better than someone else that is going the same direction. We all die. Someone was interviewing Dustin Hoffman and they spoke of his tomb stone. He had two things he was considering for his stone. One was "Thanks to my mother and father for without them I could not have come so far." The other is more tuned to our context, "I knew this was going to happen."

We all know we are bound to become dirt, why should we think more highly of ourselves than another? Within the church it is the same. We are all saved by Grace and we are all equal before God, yet we tend to think we are better than others.

Indeed, when a Jew accepts Christ there is a flutter, there is a stirring, there is an excitement. This person won a Jew to the Lord! Often the one leading a Jew to the Lord thinks himself special because of God's work in the Jewish person's life. I have seen strange reactions in a church where they have a converted Jew. A converted Jew is no different than a converted Italian or converted Swede - we are all human beings under the grace of God and none are special.

7. Sin brought death and separation from God when Adam fell, while Christ on the cross brought life and reconciliation. What a contrast - no further apart elements could be gathered together into one truth. Adam lost all there was to lose for mankind and Christ restored all for our acceptance.

Man lost it all and God restored it all. That shows the distinct difference between man and God. We destroy, and He restores. We cause trouble, and He brings peace. We ruin all He has done and He gives it back to us out of His grace and love.

Humm, ought we not find something in that for our lives - something like, following HIM is better than following ME. Our way is the highway and His way is the only way. We need to realize the one that is better for us, He has our best interest in mind, and even though we think we do also, we tend toward things that do us great harm while He tends toward things that bring us great benefit.

8. This idea of one body has two distinct areas of teaching.

A. First it speaks to the ONE church, as opposed to the thought of some that their church is the only ONE. Let's discuss the universal/local church issue briefly.

Most everyone would say that Paul was a Christian and that he was a member of Christ's church, indeed, most would agree that all dead saints were members of the Lord's church. On the other hand some suggest that there is no church but their church group. Now how they get from a singular to a plural without some basis is beyond me but they do. They don't see Paul and all the other saints as part of a universal church, indeed they abhor the thought of a universal church.

Christ said He would build His church, speaking of all saints, of all times - His body. This is the universal church and no more. I don't know what is done with these few facts by those that say there is only one church, the local church. All of them would agree that there is more than one local church yet there is only the local church - subdivided I guess.

Their church (group) is the only true church and if you aren't baptized by one of their men, then you are not properly baptized because they draw their authority from John the Baptist himself. They all descend from him or someone he baptized.

Seems that this teaching is counter to what Paul is saying here. All believers no matter who they are, no matter how they were baptized, no matter what nationality they are - all are one body and that body is Christ's.

B. Secondly this speaks to the Israel/church distinctiveness. Some suggest that the two are separate and distinct groups (the dispensationalist) and others suggest that the two are one, no difference, all one big bunch of God's people through all time (the covenant theologian).

This passage seems to show that there were distinctions between Israel and the Church. Anyone thinking about it will realize that Israel still has a distinctness in that God is not done with Israel yet. Much of prophecy speaks of a future Israel - again, distinct from the church.

In this church age there is still Israel and the church - this passage only shows that God views all BELIEVERS as one and the same, in the body of Christ. Paul knew that lost Israel still existed for he was busy at all opportunities to share the Gospel with Jews, to draw them into the church.

Within the church, there are no distinctions, but without there are still distinctions. Israel is still bound by the law, they are under the promise, and they seek God by that system, though few there are that do. Judaism today is far from what the Old Testament pictures.

9. The Greeks felt that they were THE people, and all others were barbarians. The Greeks felt that if you didn't speak Greek, you were a barbarian. It always came down to us and them in life. When the Romans took over, they adopted the Greek idea and it was Roman or barbarian, so Paul takes this line of thinking to illustrate what was indeed fact with the Jews.

This whole idea of the Jews attitude toward the Gentiles seems to fit well in our own day. It is not the Jews that are the problem in the church but the "sects" that assume their theology is better than anyone else's. The reformed and strong Calvinist often look down their theological noses to any that would be so lowly as to disagree with them. Their verbiage drips with sarcasm and arrogance when speaking down to those that dare disagree with them. They have basis for this attitude, in that they have the truth and all others are lost ignorant buffoons that can't understand the plain teachings of Scripture - as interpreted by them.

Then there are some of the dispensationalist crowd that have the truth and their rhetoric toward those without their own confines is similar to their opposition. Both are wrong in case you haven't caught my drift. We are one in Christ if we trust Him for our salvation.

There is another aspect to this divisiveness - class - if you don't succumb to their mold and character, you are automatically excluded from the normal course of church life. This is evident in pastor's get togethers. If you don't talk as they and if you don't dress as they and if you don't follow their forms, then you are not quite to be accepted as you may pollute the gene pool.

I have seen some very good preachers that weren't quite the norm that were never accepted as part of the norm. When they needed a church, they were not recommended, when they wanted to join in the activities they were excluded.

This ought not to be - we are one in the Lord - remember?

RECONCILIATION

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DEFINITION: Thayer as quoted in Pardington states, "The word is used in the New Testament...of the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust into the expiatory death of Christ" (Pardington, Rev. George P. Ph.D.; "OUTLINE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE"; Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1926, p 254)

"Reconciliation is the restoration to friendship and fellowship after estrangement. Old Testament reconciliation contains the idea of an atonement or covering for sin" (Taken from: "UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY"; Unger, Merrill F.; Copyright 1957, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission.)

RECONCILIATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

"And he slew [it]; and Moses took the blood, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it."

(Leviticus 8:15) "And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded [that] the burnt offering and the sin offering [should be made] for all Israel." (2 Chronicles 29:24) "And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. 16 All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17 And it shall be the prince's part [to give] burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel." (Ezekiel 45:15-17) "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Daniel 9:24) These are the references where the term reconciliation appears in the Old Testament. Let us gather some facts from these verses.

1. There was shedding of blood in preparation for reconciliation. The blood was a means by which the altar was purified, so that sacrifices could be offered for reconciliation. (Lev. 8:15)

2. There was a shedding of blood to make reconciliation for the nation of Israel. (2 Chronicles 29:24)

3. There will be offerings of animals in the Millennial Kingdom for the people of Israel. It is not known just why these offerings will be given. The Lord will be in their presence and Israel will have turned to Him nationally. Whether they will be under the sacrificial system literally or for a memorial, we are not told. (Ezekiel 45:15-17) It is of note that the offerings for reconciliation were commanded by God, not devised by man. Again, we see that the different items of salvation are God's idea!

4. In this passage as well as the others, reconciliation is linked to the sin of the people. The sin was separating the people from God. (Daniel 9:24)

The question that might come to mind is this. Is reconciliation a prerequisite for salvation? We always tie reconciliation directly to salvation, but should we. It would seem that these verses show reconciliation to be the restoration of fellowship between Israel and God.

Salvation is not mentioned in these texts. It seems, at least in the Old Testament, that reconciliation may be that action which brings the believer back into fellowship with God.

It seems that Lev. 16:20 might back up this idea. It mentions a reconciling of places rather than people. It seems that the term has the idea of correcting a relationship. In the case of the holy place, it was correcting from impure to pure.

Now let us move on to the New Testament.

RECONCILIATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

WORDS USED

I will list the words and the passages where they appear. Comments will be made as needed. (All usages of the words are listed.)

VERBS

"katallasso" (Strong's 2644) "properly denotes to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile." (Vine, W. E.; "AN EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS"; Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.)

Rom. 5:10 "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." It seems that we may have been reconciled even before we were saved. It seems that the term relates to that action of Christ which made it possible for God and man to have fellowship. It is a changing in the relationship.

I Cor. 7:11 "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to [her] husband: and let not the husband put away [his] wife." Though this passage is speaking of marriage and separation, it depicts the action by which the wife can be brought back into a proper marriage relationship with her husband. The term reconciliation again seems to mean the action of repairing a relationship.

II Cor. 5:18 "And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;" Here we see that it was God's idea to reconcile us to Himself. It is also shown here that it is our responsibility to share the Gospel so that others might also be reconciled to Him. II Cor. 5:19-20 adds to this thought.

"apokatallasso" (Strong's 604) "to reconcile completely...to change from one condition to another, so as to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace" (Vine)

Eph. 2:16 "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" This passage indicates that there was enmity between God and man, but that the enmity was done away with by the cross. Again, it would seem that Christ's work repaired a relationship, but it does not indicate that this is indeed, salvation. Salvation was made a possibility because man was reconciled with God through the cross.

Col. 1:20 "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven."

Col. 1:21 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works,

yet now hath he reconciled"

"diallasso" (Strong's 1259) "to effect an alteration, to exchange, and hence, to reconcile, in cases of mutual hostility yielding to mutual concession" (Vine)

Matt. 5:24 "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This shows the repairing of a relationship as has been mentioned before.

NOUNS

"katallage" (Strong's 2643) "primarily an exchange, denotes reconciliation, a change on the part of one party, induced by an action on the part of another" Vine.

Rom. 5:11 "And not only [so], but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." The word we are looking for in this text is atonement. It is normally translated reconciliation.

Rom. 11:15 "For if the casting away of them [be] the reconciling of the world, what [shall] the receiving [of them be], but life from the dead?" This pictures the world reconciled. It seems that reconciliation was provided for all of mankind, through the cross of Christ. Christ's action repaired the relationship between God and man. All has been done by Christ, so that man can come to God. If man refuses, then this results in his eternal position in the Lake of Fire.

II Cor. 5:18, 19 "And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;" 19 "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

"hilaskomai" (Strong's 2433) It is translated merciful in Luke 18:13 and reconciliation in Heb. 2:17. (This term is related to the Greek term translated propitiation. Ro. 3:25; Heb 8:12)

Lu. 18:13 "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as [his] eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

Heb. 2:17 "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Let us recap what we have learned from these passages.

1. We were enemies when we were reconciled. Rom. 5:10; 11:15; Eph. 1:21

2. We were reconciled to God. Rom. 5:10; II Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16. This reconciliation was a restoration of man to God, not the other way around.
3. We were reconciled by Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:10; 5:11; II Cor. 5:18-20/by His death Rom. 5:10/by His blood Col. 1:20.
4. We went away from God by our own will, and now Christ makes it possible for us to return. Though this verse deals with marriage it gives the essence of the term. That is one that has gone away of her own will is to return. I Cor. 7:11
5. We are ministers and ambassadors of reconciliation to the world. II Cor. 5:18-20
6. The world is in view when God was reconciling. II Cor. 5:18-20
7. We are to beseech the lost to be reconciled to God. (We do this in Christ's stead.) II Cor. 5:18-20
8. God has COMMITTED the job of reconciliation to the saved! II Cor. 5:18-20
9. We are reconciled WITH the Jews, unto God. Eph. 2:16
10. There is more to reconciliation than man alone. Col. 1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself - by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The earth and heaven are under duress in some manner due to the fall of man. The ground only was cursed in Genesis three, however this verse would indicate that the whole of creation is in the backwash of man's sin and fall.

All things have been reconciled unto Christ. The completion of this is yet to come, but the provision has been made for all things to be reconciled unto him. In the creature realm it is limited to those that can, and do choose to respond to that reconciliation. (The angels can't, but man can, if he desires.)

11. Reconciliation should cause joy in our lives. Rom. 5:11, "And not only [so], but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Thiessen relates the terms propitiation and reconciliation thusly: "The two ideas seem to be related to each other as cause and effect: Christ's death 'propitiated' God, and as a result he is 'reconciled'" (Thiessen, Henry C.; "LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY"; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949, p 327)

He relates an apt illustration. "At first God and man stood face to face with each other. In sinning, Adam turned his back upon God. Then God turned His back upon Adam. [due to His justice demanding He turn away from sin.] Christ's death has satisfied the demands of God and

now God has again turned His face toward man. It remains for man to turn round about and face God. Since God has been reconciled by the death of His Son, man is now entreated to be reconciled to God." Thiessen, p 327-328)

Have you really thought about all that we have been studying to this point? Have we really gotten hold of the truths that we have been studying? II Cor. 5: 18-19 states "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, [This almost sounds like God has not been keeping track of sins since the cross. This would be a good study sometime!] and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

"GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF"

IF WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST died for all sin - the sin of the world - IF WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST propitiated God for the whole world-IF WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST reconciled the whole world - IF WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST did all there was to do to bring the sinner to a point that all he had to do was to reject or accept Christ's sacrifice for his sin - THEN - We have the sinner at what position before God? Think about it. What position is the lost person in today, before

almighty God?

IS HE NOT AT THE POINT OF ADAM IN THE GARDEN IN ESSENCE - TRUE HE IS IN A DREADFUL STATE OF SIN AND ALL ITS RAMIFICATIONS BUT ISN'T HE AT THE SAME DECIDING POINT THAT ADAM WAS?

"DO I WANT TO OBEY GOD, OR DO I WANT TO DO MY OWN THING? In reality I believe that is just were lost mankind is today, and has been since the cross!

Thus, one that argues against the total depravity of man being based on the sin of Adam - he argues a mute question. It really doesn't matter in the context of salvation.

THE WORD OF GOD STATES THAT CHRIST HAS PAID THE PRICE, AND THAT YOU MUST RECEIVE HIS WORK,

OR SPEND ETERNITY IN THE LAKE OF FIRE.

YOU WILL ACCEPT THAT IMPERATIVE OR REJECT IT. IN SO DOING YOU ACCEPT OR REJECT GOD'S INJUNCTION TO ADAM TO OBEY GOD.

The application of this thinking is to the fact that we are all like Adam - we all chose to sin. Thus at the point of decision which God has so graciously brought us through His Son, we will as

Adam - reject God's injunction to obey. THUS, WE HAVE THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN PROVEN AS WELL AS THE ELECTION AND DRAWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE ELECT TO GOD!

HE DID HIS PART. "That man is an utterly lost sinner who could never find his own way back to God, is a very unpalatable truth for the average natural man or woman. We all like to think that there is something we can do to help save ourselves, whereas, according to God's Word we are not only lost, but without ability to retrieve our condition. It is remarkable how apt the colored folks are in quick illustrations of spiritual realities, as the following instance will show.

"A recent convert, a colored man, rose in a meeting to give his testimony to the saving grace of God. He told how the Lord had won his hear and given deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. He spoke of Christ and His work, but said nothing of any efforts of his own.

"The leader of the meeting was of a legalistic turn of mind, and when the Negro's testimony was ended, he said, 'Our brother has only told us of the Lord's part in his salvation. When I was converted there was a whole lot I had to do myself before I could expect the Lord to do anything for me. Brother, didn't you do your part first before God did His?'

The other was on his feet again in an instant and replied: 'Yes, sah, Ah clear done forgot. Ah didn't tell you 'bout my part, did I? Well, Ah did my part for over thirty years, runnin' away from God as fast as evah my sins could carry me.

That was my part. An' God took aftah me till He run me down. That was His part.' It was well put and tells the story that every redeemed sinner understands." (Ironsides/"ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTHS")

Let us close with a summation of the doctrine by Unger. "By this change lost humanity is rendered savable. As a result of the changed position of the world through the death of Christ the divine attitude toward the human family can no longer be the same. God is enabled to deal with lost souls in the light of what Christ has accomplished. (Taken from: "UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY"; Unger, Merrill F.; Copyright 1957, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Moody Press. Used by permission.)

Section five: 3.1-12

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

Some commentaries suggest that "For this cause" is really the introduction phrase to verse thirteen. All the information in between is supposed to be a rabbit trail that he runs off on because he is so excited about the information. True he was excited about it, but whether it was merely a rabbit trail or not I am not overly sure. Since the Holy Spirit is inspiring him, I would suggest if it is parenthetical that it is most certainly an insertion of the Spirit rather than a random thought Paul succumbed to in his excitement.

The order of Christ's names is actually reversed in the Greek and should appear as Christ Jesus which gives emphasis to the Messiahship of the Lord and point to the imprisonment being due to the Jews actions against him for preaching to the Gentiles a Gospel of Christ.

Paul mentions he is a prisoner for the Gentiles, yet in Acts 28.17-28 he tells the Jews he is a prisoner for Israel. Well which is it? In verse twenty of the Acts text he says, "For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see [you], and to speak with [you]: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

Later in the Acts passage it is clear that the Jews were deaf to the Gospel, while Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles for they will listen.

I think that verse one tells the Gentiles he was a prisoner for them - as he was a prisoner for the Jews - he is a prisoner because he is preaching the Gospel and in the specific context of Acts it is because of the Jews accusations that he was a prisoner. Here he is a prisoner because he was preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles - the Gospel being the prime motivator, but specifically to the Gentiles because they are the people Paul was told to go to with the Gospel. This is not to say that he didn't preach to Jews at every opportunity. He normally went to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles.

Paul says, "for this cause" to tie this statement to the previous context - the context of the unity between Jew and Gentile believers and the fact that we are one body, one building, and one church. This is what Paul lived and ministered for, this is what motivated Paul, and this is what He knew Christ wanted him to do in life.

And to the application, just when is the last time you suffered so that you could witness to anyone? We often refrain from our duty of being a lighthouse so that we can remain secure. The lighthouse keeper weathered all storms so that the sailors could be secure. We are to be light houses, not secure. If we need to take a fall in order to witness, then we should if that is the situation God places us in.

Some say that you should witness at work. Well, if you can do it in the context of not taking time

and effort away from your employer, yes, but we should not slight our employer so that we can witness. Of course after work, before work, and on break we are free to voice our witness - and we should as we have opportunity. To not witness so that we aren't spoken ill of, or so that we aren't thought ill of is not the trait of a believer that is to be the light of the world.

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

"If" and assumed so is the construction here, thus Paul assumes that they have heard of the dispensation of the Grace of God and they know what he is talking about. It would be also assumed from our end that they understood more than just the words - they had probably been taught a certain amount about the dispensation and the meaning of it somewhere along the line in their spiritual walk.

Indeed, they may know more about it than we do since Paul does not give us the background that they seemingly had. That is of interest to me - just what did they know? How did it impact their lives? I would assume that anything we needed to know about it is included in the Scripture so that we can know as well.

The term "dispensation" is "oikonomia" which relates to a stewardship or the administration of the affairs of a household. The word appears seven times in the New Testament. Luke 16.2,3,4; I Cor 9.17; Eph. 1.10; Eph. 3.2; Col. 1.25. In the Luke text we see it as the steward of a rich man. One that oversaw the affairs of the rich man's household. This often took in the day to day management as well as seeing to financial matters relating to the house.

We saw it related to a time when God will bring all things to conclusion in our study of chapter one verse ten and here we see it related to a period of "grace." In Colossians it relates to a time when Paul is given stewardship over the Gospel for the benefit of his readers.

The idea of dispensations came about under the teaching of John Darby and later by C. I. Scofield. Some covenant people relate it back to a mystic nun and some of her visions, but this has been an "Urban Legend" of the internet. Darby made the teaching popular and others of his time saw the validity of looking at Scripture in this manner and adopted the system.

Over the years many have started drifting away from the system, indeed, some of the major seminaries that have been bastions of Dispensationalism have nearly eliminated the teaching from their course work.

It is a system that is much maligned and totally misunderstood by most that reject it. Many on the internet have assumed what the system teaches and have made straw men to shoot down, but few really take time to study the system and understand it. Most pick up the falsehoods and perpetuate them to all who will listen.

I feel for those that spend their lives building these straw men so that they can shoot them down.

They are being dishonest with themselves as well as those that might listen to them. They cannot stand the study required to understand something so just take a guess, or take something they have heard and find a way to dispose with the position that they have created in their mind and feel good about what they have done, when indeed, they have duped themselves.

What is worse is that many of these, when confronted with truth ignore what they have been shown, ignore the fact that their thinking is incorrect and they go on perpetuating their error at every opportunity. Many are the times on the internet when I have confronted people with their straw men and their invalid arguments against Dispensationalism, but they simply ignore what is put before them in favor of their own "INTELLECTUAL SIDESTEPPING."

The system does not teach two ways of salvation, never has and I doubt that it ever will. All dispensationalists view the Old Testament saints coming to God through the cross and not by keeping the law.

Most dispensationalists see all of time divided into seven dispensations. They begin with innocence in the Garden, another dispensation that covers the time between the fall and human government with Noah which is the third, then Promise with Abraham, Law with Moses, grace with the coming of Christ, then they add the final of the kingdom.

There are variations on the seven and some add an eighth for the tribulation. The point is not how many, but that God operates over man in differing methods. He does not operate with those in the church age as He did with people under the law. If you think about the law and grace you will see many many distinctions. This is all that Dispensationalism says - God works with man in different ways in different ages. His governing is different and his requirements are different, but the way to salvation is always the cross no matter what dispensation you live in.

I might add that Dispensationalism is almost always linked with literal interpretation and that the other system, covenant theology, is always linked to allegorical interpretation. In fact most covenant theologians admit that if you interpret the Word literally you will become a dispensationalist. I see that as a very good thing myself.

If you do not hold to the teaching of dispensations, then you will mix all of Scripture into a big bundle of promises and requirements that relate to everyone, and have a result of confusion. This is why covenant theology sees circumcision and baptism as partners and this is why they baptize babies. The mixing of promises to Israel with the church leads to all sorts of confusion about the end times as well. If what they say is true, you can go to the Old Testament and pick out any promise you want and claim it as your own - just don't hold your breath till God fulfills that promise.

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)

Paul asserts that his information was revealed directly from God. This is about as straight from the source as you can get. God revealed it directly to Paul. In fact some manuscripts translate this "by revelation was the mystery...." A few observations.

- a. It is the real thing.
- b. It is God's direct wish for us.
- c. It is something very important.
- d. It is something to be listened to.
- e. It is something to be believed.
- f. It is something to be acted upon.

He reminds them that he had written of these things at a prior time as well. This may have been a personal letter or maybe a lost letter that he had sent. It might also have been in a circulatory letter to several churches. Some relate this, and they may well be correct, to the statement of the apostle in chapter one verses nine and ten. See, it is important to remember what the preacher says from week to week, he may call on you to remember something sometime.

This thought of revelation is of great importance in our day. Many are questioning the validity of the Bible. Even in formerly evangelical and now in some evangelical circles the total validity of the Word is suspect. They question if ALL the Word is without error. They suggest that only in the area of salvation is it valid. If invalid in all areas but salvation, why in the world would anyone trust it for their eternal soul?

To question part of the Word is to question all of it. If part is faulty then all is possibly faulty.

Revelation states that God gave us the Word in a manner in which we can trust it completely and unquestionably as it was given in the original manuscripts. For further study see my theology and check the index for "revelation."

Paul wants them to understand all the knowledge he has about this subject. The person that is trained in sharing the word, in sharing his knowledge of the word is of utmost importance to them. What we know, we want to share with others so that they may know.

This is the natural way of things. There are some that glory in the knowledge that they have and that you do not have. I worked with an organization that was functioning on this principle. If I know something you don't know I have power you don't have. The revelation of that knowledge always was made known only when it would profit the person that held that knowledge most.

What foolishness for Christians to act this way but many there are that function this way in schools, in church boards and even in families. The norm is to desire to share your knowledge with others not keep secrets and use knowledge as a tool to make gain.

Another application of this might be the frustration that knowledgeable people have in churches. They sit Sunday after Sunday desiring to share their knowledge with others in the church, but are not allowed to. Classes are often structured for the pastor to preach a second sermon for the day. Others are structured so tightly that any outside "new" thought is not allowed for it would confuse and distract the teacher.

There are many very knowledgeable people in churches that are not allowed to teach for one reason or another. I know personally of many believers that are well qualified to teach but their exclusion has caused them to stop attending services. There are other reasons why they stop but because they are refused by the church, they sit idle with all that knowledge that God has instilled for the edification of the saints.

Pastors that teach Sunday school in their own church often are control freaks and are afraid to allow anyone else to talk with their people for fear they will teach truth and find the pastor in error. Others don't allow it so that they can be the focal point of everyone's attention, and still others just don't want anyone teaching anything except what they want to be taught.

Share your knowledge of God with others. If not in the church in your family, at work, at play. Even some unsaved people enjoy hearing of God and His word. They are interested - may have little knowledge and weak understanding, but then that is true of all believers before we believed.

When God shows you something neat from the Word, share it with others as soon as you can. Don't hide what you know, share it. Don't hide your light under the bushel, but let it shine brightly to glorify God and what He has done.

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;

We have here clear indication of another doctrine called progressive revelation. Not only did God reveal information to man, but He did it along time. He gave some to Adam, He gave some to Abraham, He gave some to Moses, He gave some to the Old Testament prophets, and now He is giving more to Paul and the rest of the apostles, as well as to the New Testament people.

This progressive type revelation is important as we try to understand the Scriptures as a whole. That revelation that was given to Moses may or may not relate to us today. On the other side, what we know today, was not incumbent upon those of Moses time.

Each age is responsible for its own revelation specifically, while also responsible for that of the preceding ages which relates to all time. When the Old Testament writer mentions something of the character of God, then that is also revelation for us, however when an Old Testament prophet warns of coming judgment upon Israel it is not incumbent upon us.

You must be careful in how you apply Scripture. When study is done in the Old Testament you need to determine what is for us, and what was for that day. Many today use the Gospels for today, when some of that material was given specifically to the person that will one day live in the Kingdom/millennium. If you want some basic principles of interpretation of the Gospels there is a section at the end of this study from my theology that will give you a start. There is much more information around if you want to study further.

Some items of interest.

a. The New Testament prophets received revelation from God. This is important in that the Charismatics say that they have prophets, but they don't believe that they are adding revelation today, only that they state things that are in keeping with Scripture. Then they aren't prophets - the New Testament prophets received and communicated revelation and they also were for-tellers at times.

Some charismatics believe that we still have apostles, as do some non-charismatics, however the non-charismatics view the apostles as preachers today rather than apostles on the order of the New Testament ones.

b. The prophets received revelation that Paul did not, and the other apostles received revelation that Paul did not. So, how come Paul didn't throw a hissy fit because someone else knew something that he didn't know? Apply that one to the church today folks. We are all on the same team, but we don't all know all that there is to know about all that is going on, nor do we need to know all that is going on.

Different people are prepared differently than you so be sure to understand it is God that does the preparing, and that it is not of your business to be similarly prepared if God doesn't do it for you. We are prepared as God has prepared us. He gave us the education that He desired us to have. Be satisfied with how God has prepared you.

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

The knowledge that Paul had was that Gentiles were to be fellow heirs and of the same body as the Jewish believers and they were to be partakers of that part of the promise relating to Christ - the salvation. This verse does not say that we are partakers of the promise in general, only as it relates to Christ.

Now, if I understand the Jews of this time I suspect we are talking of people that would hide knowledge for their own benefit as I have indicated earlier. The Jews were a tight bunch and did not cotton to outsiders, so to speak. They were isolationist at best when it came to their God. This is one of their great sins in the Old Testament, not reaching out to the world with their God. All was in position to accept Gentile believers into their fold but they didn't go out to do this. If someone came along wanting to follow God they would accept them in, but there was no outreach into the world.

Note might be made that we are becoming a part of the Jewish community of believers - at that time this was true, most of the first converts to Christianity were Jewish. Today we the church tend to think of ourselves as accepting a Jewish convert into our midst. That is true in that there are few Jewish converts, but we might want to remember a proper attitude - it is we that were taken into the Jewish community by the blood of Christ.

Not sure how that has application in our day, but it is the Scripture and maybe we need to consider it some in our future days.

It might indicate the need to know what the Jewish mind set is toward God. That would tend to change the way we do worship today. The Old Testament believers were not as flip and casual as we are before God.

It might indicate the need to know the Old Testament Scripture so that we know how to act before God.

Then you might combine these and understand the Old Testament from the Jewish mindset rather than from our Gentile mindset.

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.

The word translated "power" is that word from which we gain dynamite. The word "gift" is always used in relationship to a gift of some sort from God. It is used of all three members of the trinity. There are other words translated gift, but this one is exclusively a gift from God.

The gift wasn't that he was a minister, but that he was given grace and his being a minister was part of that whole package. I would guess, having said that, that this might well have been a gift of the Spirit to empower him to minister. The term "minister" is the word from which we gain deacon. It is one that ministers, that fulfills the directions of another, in this case God.

This word seems to be, in this context at least, more than just the servant in the church idea, but in the next verse it is clear that the gift was related to preaching or evangelizing. This would be in keeping with Stephen one of the first deacons being a servant, but also a preacher. (Acts 6-8)

I once met a pastor that was thinking of leaving his church to pioneer another work. I asked how his congregation would like that because he had been at his church for many years. His comments ran along the line of, if I dropped dead today they wouldn't miss me as far as the ministry goes. I have trained all my deacons to preach. They fill pulpits in the area when pastors need to take a day off.

This pastor knew the importance of training leadership. I have not seen this sort of training very often and this is sad, for the church as well as the untapped reserve of lay preachers that are going untrained and unused.

One of the joys of hearing from the mission field is to hear that missionaries have trained a local person enough that they are teaching or preaching in the mission church. That is what the church is about - training the local sheep to take the church into the next generation.

There is also good application along the lines of responding to and using your gift from God. He has gifted all of us in one manner or another with a spiritual gift. It is up to us to see that we are exercising that gift. If you are in a church and unable to use your gift then I would consider finding a place where you can. I am not much for moving from church to church, but if you aren't using your gift the church is hampered in what God wants to do.

Many pastors tend to do it all so they can be sure it is done, but they ought to learn to trust their people to use their gifts and to function within the church as they ought.

This thought of deacons preaching is of interest in the thought that pastors normally call in outsiders to fill the pulpit when they are on vacation or away from the church. Their deacons should be able to fill that role. If they can't then there is need of training.

There is also the aspect that there are deacons that are capable but not allowed to preach in their own churches. This is wrong. I have run into some that say they love to preach but that the pastoring is not for them. This is the situation - they aren't gifted as pastors, but are gifted to serve and preach. The "Pastor" concept is slightly incorrect in our day. The pastor is not the only one that can be in the pulpit, indeed some I have been under ought not to be in the pulpit. They are poor preachers at best and ought to concentrate on their pastoral aspects. There are also many pastors in the world today that are not teachers, and this is against the qualifications for elder - again, things are amiss.

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;

"Less than the least" can also refer to lower than the lowest. In other words Paul views himself as the sand under the belly of the snake as it slithers across the desert. He is so low that you can't get any lower. Is this just false humility on Paul's part? I doubt anything about the apostle Paul was ever false, so I assume this is how he felt about himself.

If you read in the diaries of some of the great men of God you will find that most viewed themselves as pretty worthless, as not having done all they should, somewhat poor as disciples of Christ go. I think it is a worthy contemplation of where you are in the grand scheme of things. Many of the nations big preachers appear to be pretty stuck on themselves when they ought to realize they are the messenger not the message - the gift of God to man is the gospel message not the messenger. They only bear that great gift of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many pastors I've met have this low view of themselves - a servant of the Living God rather than someone of special esteem but there are some that are so stuck on themselves and how great they are that they are not much good. I recently heard that one of these types was fired from his church and he was in depression for over a year due to the realization that he wasn't the great man that he thought he was. I assume that he was shocked that anyone in the world did not have the same estimation of his greatness that he had.

I also assume that Paul may have dug back into his persecuting of the saints days to gain a real feel of who he really was in this life. A total worm that God decided to use even though he had been the great persecutor of the Gospel. Paul knew he was being used of God but he had a very healthy view of who he had been before God interrupted him on the road that day.

Gill says it well, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints,.... This is an instance of the great humility of the apostle, and indeed the greatest saints are generally speaking, the most humble souls, as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and others; these have the meanest thoughts of themselves, and the best of others; they rejoice in the grace of God manifested to others; they are willing to receive instruction, nay admonition, from the meanest believer; they have the least opinion of their own works, and are the greatest admirers of the grace of God; and do most contentedly submit to the sovereign will of God: the reasons of their great humility are, because they have the largest discoveries of the love and grace of God and Christ, which are of a soul humbling nature; they are the most sensible of their own sinfulness, vileness, and unworthiness, which keeps them low in their own sight; they are commonly the most afflicted with Satan's temptations, which are suffered to attend them, lest they should be exalted above measure; they are the most fruitful souls, and boughs laden with fruit hang lowest; and they are the most conformable to Christ, who is meek and lowly."

Some suggest this was a play on words in Paul's mind since his name means small or little and most believe him to have been a small man, however I personally would doubt this is the case.

The term "is" and "given" are the same Greek word, the verb is "is given," the translators just split it up for reading sake evidently.

"Preach" relates to evangelize, or preach the Gospel. A clear statement that Paul was to be preaching to the Gentiles.

It was of interest to me, on a recent television broadcast I had the misfortune to see, that the

person was trying to prove that Paul was not as ALL Protestantism teaches. The man was setting up lies about Protestants, white Protestants to be more specific. He would tell the audience that the white protestant taught a certain truth and then disprove that truth. That is one of the marks of a phony in my book; the setting up of straw men and then shooting them down. I see it all the time on internet boards.

Anyway this colored man would give a reference and another sitting beside him would read the passage while the first man would interrupt with multiplied interpretations, and commands to reread a phrase. The man "proved" what he said of Paul and thought he proved that the twelve tribes of the Old Testament were black peoples of the Americas. He further attempted, though failed to prove, that the whole of Scripture is to the Jews only and that the black people are the Jews. Salvation was never given to the Gentiles. He stated quite clearly numerous times that salvation was for the blacks only. Guess he didn't read this passage.

"Unsearchable" can relate to something that is past and you can't find anything else about it. When working on my family tree, I found many dead ends. It wasn't that these people were out of their tree, but they were the last to produce any further information. Those that preceded them are gone as well as all record of them. The past is not able to be found out. The information is not there, so there is no way to dig it up - it is gone, and no one can search it for further information.

How does this relate to our text? The riches of Christ are unsearchable. I would suggest that His riches have been spread throughout time and many of those riches have been lost, yet there is a whole passel of riches that we can still discover and enjoy. It may also relate to the fact that Christ is gone from the earth and His abundance is no longer here to view and enjoy and study. Paul is to be preaching these riches - showing the Gentiles of what Christ was and is. This is our ministry as well to all that will listen. He is God, He loved us, He died for us, and He was raised for us - what a message we have to give.

There is a more precise meaning to the word in my mind. Unsearchable in relation to Christ seems to more specifically apply to the vastness of His riches - they are so vast and immense that we can never grasp the vastness, nor understand the extent of His riches. Paul was to go into the world preaching the vastness and richness of what Christ had done for mankind. Not sure how he would have worded that experience on a resume today, but he was out doing the best he could to do the job set before him.

We should be doing the very same thing. We have a glimpse of the richness of what Christ has done on the cross and we should be sharing it with all that will listen.

"Riches" has the idea of over abundance, or more than an abundance. In the Old Testament the people of Israel were asked to give of their means over and above the tithes that were required. This giving was to be a love offering to God to build the tabernacle and associated items. The Word records that they gave so much that the leaders had to tell them to stop giving. They already had an over abundance of materials to build that which God had commanded. (In Ex.

25.1ff and Ex. 35.5ff we see the call for people to bring of their goods for the making of the tabernacle, and in Ex. 36.5-7 "And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. 6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. 7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.")

What a problem to have. Folks, stop giving we have enough to do the project. Only once in my life have I seen this happen. A man had gone to a distant land to plant a church. He raised all the support needed. He went to the field, planted the church and the church grew. When the church could support itself and the pastor's needs the pastor wrote to all of his supporters and said we have accomplished what we set out to do. The church can now support itself, so it is time for you to stop giving to this work.

May other ministries try this principle instead of just finding bigger and better ways of spending the money people give.

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:

This seems to be a recap of all that has gone on before - the plan of God, the creation, the story of redemption, this is the mystery that had formerly been hidden from the Gentiles view. Paul was to make man see what God had been doing through the ages for them, as individuals.

"To make" is the term "photizo" which relates to illuminate or shine light upon. Our house is on a fairly dark street. There is a street light in front, but it does not help in our yard. I started turning on the porch light, I then added a light to the garage, then another light on the garage, and it was still not enough so I added two more to the house on two of the darker sides. Finally I felt our yard was illuminated - I could see what was going on. Paul was to illuminate man about what God was doing on their behalf.

You have read of the perfect tense, and it has been mentioned that it is something that occurs, but has continuing action until a point of completion. In this verse we have the perfect tense used with the fullness of its meaning. "Hath been hid" is a perfect tense. This information was hidden in the past and continued to be hidden until Paul's day when the completion of the hiding took place - revelation of that which was hidden.

"Fellowship of the mystery" is of interest. The term "fellowship" is "koinonia" which relates to fellowship. It is that relationship between believers as well as that relationship between a person and God. What is meant by the "fellowship of the mystery?" Does it relate to the thought that all mankind has a relationship with this mystery? Yes, this is true.

It is of interest that some state that the older manuscripts show the term normally translated dispensation rather than the term normally translated fellowship. The two are normally viewed as quite different, the one relating to a governing relationship between God and man, and the other being a personal relationship between God and man or between believers.

It may show that older theologians viewed our fellowship with God as an age or economy - which it really is related - our time with God on this earth, our fellowship with Him is certainly limited to a specific time and our relationship to Him is marked by certain governing principles.

It may be that fellowship is the outworking of that dispensation or governing relationship that we are in.

I am not suggesting we add four hundred and fifty million dispensations the seven we have, but in essence that is what we have with God - a dispensation of our own - a set of responsibilities of our own before Him, and He in turn responds to us as is befitting our own personal dispensation.

Paul is to make ALL men to see they have a relationship to this mystery of God - the plan, the election, the creation, the cross and all that is associated with God's work with mankind - Paul is to tell ALL that they have a relationship to this plan.

Now, think about that for a moment. We tend to witness so that we can win souls, but ought we not be witnessing to all to let them know that they are related to the plan of God. Even if they reject Christ, it is obvious here that they have a relationship to the decrees of God. If there is a relationship, then there is also responsibility. If responsible then the results are on their shoulders.

If they reject their responsibility to the relationship, they suffer the result - they refused their rescue - eternity without that relationship that they refused. Just another way to say they are going to spend eternity in the lake of fire because they did not want to respond to God.

There is an obvious teaching here. "All" is the term that Paul chose to use. He could have said the elect, he could have said the predestined, but he did not. He used "ALL" indicating what? Do you suppose he meant ALL mankind is to be told of this fellowship? I should think so.

Yes, this is the term that indicates all but not every one, however we do not know which will or will not respond to the gospel, but we should attempt to tell ALL of their relationship/dispensation with God.

"In God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" What an explicit statement of the Lord Jesus being the creator. God planned it, Christ produced it and the Spirit moved on the waters. Some suggest that God planned it, Christ spoke it, and the Spirit produced it. I would suggest that God planned it, Christ spoke the materials and form into existence, and the Spirit gave it life. Gen. 1.1-2 speaks of the Spirit moving on the face of the waters. Later we see that the whole of creation was water in the beginning, and later land appeared. This would indicate that the Spirit

was moving or calming the waters. One of the meanings of the word used is to soften or to relax. The Spirit was calming or relaxing the creation, thus not really involved in the actual creation of matter or forming of form. He was however just as involved as the other members of the trinity.

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,

"Principalities" has to do with the corner, or the beginning of things, or one that starts a series of things. In a way Christ is the principality of the resurrections, He was the first to be resurrected. It could relate to the corner of a building that starts the rest of the wall. It can also relate to the head of a group as a magistrate, a president etc.

"Power" relates to the power over. The principality might be the dictator, while the power would be his rule and power over the people.

"Might be known" relates more to the making known than the being known. When I explain a text, I am declaring its meaning, or making it known, while you knowing the information is being known.

Here we see the church making known the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers. The Net Bible translates it as follows, "The purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms."

"Manifold" means of great variation as in a variation of colors. The rainbow would be manifold, variegated yarn would be manifold. The wisdom of God is variegated, there are many facets to it. I have done a large study on "wisdom" and I did not notice this verse. The wisdom of the Scriptures is varied as is the wisdom of man thus it isn't surprising that the Lord's wisdom would be the same.

The question comes to mind, how does the church declare the wisdom of God to the principalities and powers? What do we do, or how do we act to declare God's wisdom?

First of all we must know of God's wisdom. We can't declare what we don't know. I could teach basic math, but I could never teach Algebra or Calculus because I know nothing of those systems. Knowing God's wisdom is of necessity to be a part of this verse.

Secondly, we note that it is the church that does the declaring, not the individual, which is a real relief - it is a corporate job rather than an individual's responsibility. However, it most certainly is a corporate responsibility.

Actually, the responsibility is more in God's ball park rather than the church itself. The context sets the stage, and all that is before results here in the declaration of God's wisdom to the

principalities and powers.

The very fact of the church's existence is that declaration. As the church continues to exist, it continues to declare God's wisdom. Or ought to be declaring His wisdom anyway. Some times I wonder if the church is declaring anything but the picture of the world, but as the church walks with God it will automatically be the declaration mentioned by Paul in this verse.

One must wonder how we are doing as a corporate body of believers. Are we declaring God adequately to our nation's leaders? Are we as vocal as we ought to be? Are we making it known that what they are doing at times is just plain wrong? When you see a leader taking a wrong stand let him know what is right and suggest he reconsider.

I must add that I'm not sure how much good one voice is, but many voices can be an earth shaker to a man that wants to be reelected. Why do you think that presidents watch the polls. They may say that they don't care about them, but polls seem to be shaping our nation's direction at times.

This declaration of God's wisdom is the result of all that He decreed, all of His planning and all of His actions have resulted in a people for His Son. The church is the culmination of that plan for this age. The church is the result of all actions taken by God to this point in time. What He was doing with Adam looked forward to the cross, what He did with Noah looked forward to the cross, what He did with Abraham looked forward to the cross, and the cross resulted in the church, God's people, a peculiar people separated unto Him.

There is, in my mind, a real possibility that this variation of His wisdom may well be the dispensations. We noted that the Church is to declare this wisdom, and the church is the culmination of the salvation portion of His program. This information was not revealed until the churches beginning. This, however, is not the culmination of all that God has planned for mankind, only this portion, or this age or this dispensation.

As the principalities and powers observed God dealing with man, they saw His action with Adam, they saw His action with Noah, and they saw His action with Abraham. They saw just how God was dealing with different peoples in different times, and now Paul states that they have seen how God is dealing with the church, His people. Thank God that His wisdom had different facets, we would be in most miserable shape had He not acted in different ways from His relationship with Adam.

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

Here we see that which we mentioned in the previous verse, the decrees, the eternal purpose of God, that which He set in motion before the creation in eternity past.

"Purpose" is the Greek word "prothesis." It means something that supports, or sets forth something. It would be as a table holding something. In our own language it is something that

supports something else.

Everything He purposed, was tied up in Christ Jesus our Lord - Christ the Messiah, Jesus the perfect man, and Lord the object of our service.

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

The Net Bible adds "to god" after confidence for clarity. I'm not sure it is needed in that the text seems to clearly indicate this on its own. At any rate, we have access to God whenever we are on praying ground with Him.

"By faith of Him" is often seen as Christ's faith, but the Net Bible notes suggest that it might also mean that it is through Christ's faithfulness. This is the way I took the King James, because our access is not due to the faith that Christ has in something, it is through His work on the cross that we have access. It really must relate to His faithfulness to God's plan and desire for Christ and the work of the cross.

What a verse of promise, we have full access WITH CONFIDENCE to God Himself, at any time of day, under any situation, we can go to Him with our burdens and needs.

The question arises, which member of the Trinity do we have access to? Actually all three in reality, but in this context I would think the text would indicate God the Father. We may pray to any of the Trinity, but Christ told us to direct our prayers to the Father, thus this should be the pattern.

Not only do we have access and that access with confidence, but we have boldness in the Father with our access. We can be bold in our approach to His throne in prayer - assuming we are on praying ground.

Do you have a need? Go to Him with boldness and confidence and make your request known. Know that He will answer your prayer, one of three ways. Yes, No, Not now. This is where the confidence comes in - you know He will answer one way or another, and you know that He knows what is best for you, so that answer is exactly what He wants and exactly what you need for the best gain of your life. So, if it is no or not now, then don't worry, fret and be disappointed, go boldly ahead with what He has planned for you.

As a young believer this was one of the truths that sank deep within me for some reason. Long before I was walking with God, and long before I knew anything about God I always had a boldness and confidence in prayer. I don't know why, it was just a "known" in my life that if I needed something that I should ask and that He would care for the need.

Shortly after getting out of the service I was unemployed, near broke and no good prospects on the horizon. I had prayed about the situations, and I had a real confidence that His care would be

upon me, that I didn't need to worry about all the details. And, He took care of me - a job came along quite quickly and it was a good paying job beside.

My wife and I have always had a strong confidence in God taking care of us. When you don't have anything, you have no where else to turn and it is only God that can deal with the situation. Many are the times when we were in hopeless situations and He would come through with glowing colors. Not always on the timetable that we had in mind, but always provision was made.

Now, no matter how confident you are, be sure to go boldly to Him in prayer concerning the issues. Some wander why there is no answer, and they haven't asked yet. God answers prayer, not silence.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse one we saw that Paul was committed to the Gentiles, and more specifically the Gospel of Christ. I would suggest that you think along the following line for a moment. What would you have done in life if God had not called you to the ministry in which you are in? What might have been? What could you have accomplished in life if God had not stepped in and given you specific direction?

I ask your consideration of this because in late life it is not uncommon for a person to question just what might have been. I want you to understand that this is not wrong, it is not sin, unless you dwell upon it day after day and find yourself side tracked. It is normal for a person to take stock of their life, to consider what was, what is and what might have been. Even in secular jobs, people question the choices that they have made and the life that they have lived. It isn't wrong, it is normal.

I have to admit I have taken some time to consider where I might have ended up if I hadn't accepted the call to ministry. I've considered how easy it would have been, I've considered the position I might have attained, I've considered the financial situation I could have been in had I been working at a professional position, I've considered what was, and what is and am not overly impressed with what is, but then I am not overly impressed with what might have been either. I can't imagine a life lived not following God's direction. I can't imagine being anything to be impressed with. I might have become rich, I might have become of high position, and I might have become one with tons of friends, but I would not have become what God wanted me to be and I would not have become friends with Him that has called me.

Now, in the grand scheme of things, I like what is in my life a lot better than what might have been.

Take time if you wish to consider what was, is and is to come, but don't dwell on it, don't reconsider your life because you have failed - if you have followed God, then you are in the best

place you can possibly be - even if you are as Paul - in prison.

At the end of life I trust you are with Christ rather than with yourself.

And for those that are not following God or His direction, I would encourage you to consider these same things with the twist - what might be if you were with God and not by yourself - these are some important considerations to not only think on, but to dwell on and to consider very seriously. Many I have heard that have said, that they wished that they would have followed God rather than their career - by the time you realize it it is too late, so consider it while you have opportunity to do some course changing.

2. In verse eight we saw the statement of Paul, "that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" where he declares that he has a message to preach, the message of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Compare that statement to some of the preaching we hear today. Are we the congregations of America hearing of the riches of Christ or are we hearing of the fuzzy wuzzy thoughts of man? Are we hearing the riches of Christ or are we hearing of the ideas and philosophies of the fathers? Are we hearing the riches of Christ or are we hearing of the social injustice and social should be? Paul was preaching the riches of Christ - the decree, the work of Christ, the election of the saints and all those grand points of theology that our faith is founded upon, yet we hear the namby pamby tripe of the pulpits of today.

When Christ is mentioned, all too often it is what the person has done for Christ, when the church is mentioned it is normally the church that the speaker built rather than the one Christ built. When we hear of doctrine and theology it is usually in a demeaning light, something to be rejected because people dwell on it too much.

Paul knew the riches of Christ and knew that the Ephesian believers needed to understand those riches, the riches which were heavy doctrine, not simple topics of the day to humor and interest a flock of unbelievers that someone gathered together so they could preach the gospel to them.

The church is for training saints, not converting the lost. The individual believers are to go out winning the lost and bringing them to the church for training, not bringing the lost to the church so the preacher can save them. Where have we gone so wrong, when did this flip flop occur - when preachers decided they knew better than God, how to run His church.

3. Verse ten mentions, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," There is an application that is loosely related to this verse. Today in 2004 we have a situation where the church is beginning to be placed in a position to realize that persecution is coming for the American Christian. Prior to these recent years the country has been morally on the side of Christians. Indeed most would agree that there was until recently a majority of believers in this country. Today, however, the tide has turned and the morally right are no longer the majority. Those that do not agree to our moral values are now in the lead and they are leading a strong battle to

subjugate the believer.

Christian's rights are being attacked right and left in the school systems, in the courts and in the work place. A witch can spew her venom in the workplace, but let a Christian speak of Christ and they will be labeled as divisive if not fired. Let a child take a New Testament to school and they will be rebuffed, if not expelled. Courts are ruling against small Bible studies being held in homes, in fact it is illegal in some communities.

The point being, it is time that some of the believers of our day take the time and effort to prove to the principalities and powers that the wisdom of God has a right to exist and that it is an alternative lifestyle to the corrupt pagan lifestyles presented today as the norm.

I am pleased to see the uprising of Christians to this blatant attempt to quiet our Lord's message. It is of interest that governments and corporations are preaching and teaching diversity - that idea that all thoughts are of equal value and that we all should get along - all except Christian thoughts and values - they are to be banned from government and the work place. We give freedom for pagans to speak their minds, we give freedom for Muslim's to speak their minds, and we give freedom for all to speak their minds, except the Christian who is "ramming their beliefs down their throats, or proselytizing."

Have we no rights because we are Christians - this is the way our country is going - if you don't see this, start reading the newspaper, and listening to the news. Christian clubs are not being allowed on some college grounds, even though they have pagan, homosexual and immoral clubs of every shade. The country is rejecting the morals of God for those that they "feel" fit their lifestyle. And why not, that is what our tax dollars have been financing in the public school system - find the life and ideas you like and go with them, no matter where they come from or how right or wrong they might be. What does right and wrong have to do with living is the question - the answer - nothing, according to the world.

There is talk of legislation that would make it a hate crime to make any derogatory statement against anyone else. In short a preacher could not speak out against homosexuality from the pulpit without committing a hate crime. He could no longer speak of the paganism of the world, he could not speak of the Muslim as being lost, or the Buddhist being wrong.

Wake up believing America, your rights are being trampled upon by the "diversity" philosophy of our country. We, as a country, want to be accepting of all peoples and ideas - except those that follow God and the Bible. Now, if that isn't hateful I don't know what is.

The wisdom of God is the only chance for mankind. We are the deliverers of that message and we need to get busy doing it before it is outlawed - as it is in some countries today.

4. Verse eleven mentions, "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" The item that seems to be much hidden in this verse is so obvious. "Our Lord" is a statement that

most today have no concept of - there is no lordship relation between many believers and Christ today. This is sad since this is the most important relationship after that of His being Savior.

He purchased us with His blood to have us for a possession, yet we live as though He has no claim on us. We live as we are our own to do with and do as we want. This is not true. We are His, fact, but we have to submit to that relationship. This is the step by which we say yes, to allowing Him to have control over our lives, to allow Him to use us as He wills, and to direct our lives in detail.

It is not to say that if we allow Him His Lordship that he will have us serve in darkest Africa, it only means that we will do as He wills. It may be to work full time and be a good church member, or it may be to serve a church as pastor - the what isn't important, it is the fact that you have allowed Him to be Lord over your life.

I might suggest as a bit of a sidelight that at times He sets us aside for His purpose. We might be highly trained in one area and assume that is where we should serve, However, He may have other plans and those plans are just as important as any you could dream up. "Aside" may well be the most important part of your life - it is His will and His life that He is controlling - allow Him freedom to do as He wills.

If we have submitted to Him, and the Spirit has not convicted us of any sin and we are still not where we think we should be, then go with His leading and the situation He has placed you in. If you are "set aside" under these circumstances, you are exactly where He wants you. Don't fret, don't worry, don't strain and grown to be elsewhere - He is Lord and knows what He wants.

This is not to say we will enjoy "aside" but we can know that is where we belong. I can't imagine Moses enjoying the caring for sheep for all those years, yet that is just where God wanted him to be. Imagine, raised and educated in the court of Pharaoh and herding sheep. I can just imagine the conversations he had with himself on those long lonely nights wondering if he had missed the boat, if he had blown it with God, if he had gone too far away from the Lord for the Lord to lead him. No, all was well, and God knew perfectly well where he was when He wanted Him for leadership. (Ex. 2-3)

Consider well your lordship relation to Christ and then hold onto the truth of that relationship for the rest of your life - it can be your rock to lean on. After all, Christ is the Rock and no other is better to lean on than He. (I Cor. 10.4)

5. Verse eleven also has another grand truth, "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" The "eternal purpose which he purposed" - that plan, that purpose, that decree that He set down in His mind before the foundation of the world.

Just contemplate that sometime when your mind is clear of the cares of the world. Then understand that you are in that plan and all that is rolled up in that little fact.

Sometimes we feel like we are the smallest of small in God's plan, but remember - you are in God's plan no matter how small you think you might be.

I read recently in the paper that someone had thanked one of the older ladies that were picking up dishes from tables in one of the large buffet type establishments. When the woman heard the thank you she simply replied that she was just doing her part to keep the world moving along. She knew she was a small part, but she knew she was a small part in a great big world, and not only that, she knew that she was a very important part in that big world for where would we be in America without those that pick up dishes and those that wash them? We would be in a bit of a mess for sure.

God included you in His overall plan to do a specific amount and type of work and He wants you to do it. Not that He can't get along without you, but it is a plan that He has set to accomplish the maximum benefit and the fantastic part is that He included you and I to assist Him in what He wants to do.

There is a section in my theology on the decrees if you would like further information.

6. Verse eight tells us, "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;"

Notice the attitude of the apostle toward his calling. Is it one of sadness? Is it one of disgust? Is it one of regret? Is it one of apathy? No, he seems to be excited about it - he calls it a grace, something worthwhile, something to be desired, something that offered him some benefit. How do you view your calling to be a witness for your Lord? Do you greet it as something you want to do? Do you greet it as a calling to serve your Lord? Do you greet it as something that will enhance your life? I trust that it is something you like to do at every opportunity.

This is not to say we will be excited about taking that step of courage to open the conversation. Most of us are very timid about witnessing and this is rather normal. Most do not have that natural ability of the one gifted as an evangelist to open spiritual conversations every time we open our mouths, but it is incumbent upon us to share our faith at every opportunity that opens to us.

Most of us could slip in a word of witness much more often than we do if we would only take the opportunity. If there is opposition then you can stop and all will be well, but if you do not start, then you will never know what the person's response would have been.

If there is opposition, it is opposition to the Lord and the message, not to you personally. It is not uncommon for people to declare that they do not like proselytizing. To which you might suggest, well if I feel I have a message of truth that will save you from an eternity of suffering, wouldn't it be my obligation to tell you? If the building was on fire, would you not expect me to holler "FIRE?"

7. I have mentioned over and over that we are a part of God's decree. We need to really understand this and relax in that knowledge. As we realize He has a plan for our life, we can understand that all the problems that come along are to prepare us for living His plan. We don't have to worry about when or where we will die, for we will die at the appointed place and time, nowhere else, and not at a time not appropriate.

Mr. Bradley in his book the "AVIATORS" discusses at length the first president Bush and his World War II experience. Bush was one of a number of pilots and crewmen that flew a raid over an island that was a very important target. A storm came up and they knew they would be fighting headwinds and that there was a likely chance that they would have no fuel for a return flight. The men went anyway.

Plans were made to fly on into China with what fuel remained. The raid was finished but the fuel was also finished and the crews bailed out near and over the island that they had just bombed. President Bush ordered his crew out of the plane and he waited in a burning plane to allow them time to bail out. He finally bailed out himself and parachuted into the water.

He was picked up by an American submarine that was on patrol nearby. He was the only member of his crew that survived. He related to the author that he had time on the submarine to wonder at the fact that he was the only one that had survived, and that he had a strong feeling that he had survived for a specific purpose. He became the president of the United States. It was not his time to die and God saw to it.

The rest of the crews were later killed on the island where they were held captive. Why one out of so many? Because of the decree of God - relax in the knowledge that He is just as concerned for you each and every day of your life.

I have never had such a definite knowledge that I was here for a purpose of any specific definition and have always wondered if God didn't just save my worthless hide so that I would have a family. I have always had a deep thought that our family might well be the reason that we were saved and that we married. We were not the perfect married couple nor were we the perfect parents, but with our bumbling efforts at both, and God's "often" intervention we turned out three great kids that married three other great kids and they have produced nine grandchildren. Quite something to consider what we have unleashed on the unsaved world. I often wonder at what all might be done in that short three generations.

I trust you never discount how important you are to God's plan - He saved you for a reason and you need to walk with Him to see to it that you fulfill that work He has for you.

8. We saw in verse eight that Paul had a low view of himself and his position in the scheme of things. I would like to emphasize this a little more. I saw an ad for a book written by one of the television darlings of the spiritual airwaves advertising "THE MAN THAT MAKES THE SCRIPTURE LIVE!"

My last theology professor may have taught me wrong but he used to say that the Word was living. It was made alive by God, but here we see that this preacher makes it live. Which is it? Did God make His Word alive or does this particular high paid preacher make it live? I think you can make the proper choice and watch out for the flashy money grubbing advertising.

When someone starts lifting you up, you should know it is time for you to let yourself down to your knees and rethink how you relate to people.

It isn't that people can't look up to you as a good minister of the word, nor is it wrong for them to respect you, but when they start lifting you up it is time to reconsider.

9. Some in our day get discouraged with the poor results in their ministries. They become discouraged if they haven't built a mega church in the first eighteen months of ministry. Often pastors leave after only the briefest of times due to the lack of growth. Some fail to realize that growth in some communities is near impossible.

I'm reminded of a small church on the plains of northern Wyoming. The church sat within a mile or so of the post office. A nice little building, well kept, and adequate for everyone in the area. You could drive for miles and not see a ranch house, only desolate plains.

They could not grow in that area if they had to. There were only a limited amount of people to draw from. This place was so out of the way, that the main road into Montana turned into the wagon trail of old, just two ruts in the grass.

This group realized what their church was and they were very happy to have it to gather in weekly for fellowship and nurturing. They realized that it was Christ that was in the business of building His church, not their straining and groaning to build theirs.

Here we have Paul the apostle, he had been given revelation, he knew his job, he knew his purpose, and no one was listening to him. He had to prove his credentials when he wrote the churches, he had to combat those that opposed him, yet he continued on in what he knew God wanted him to do.

This is the attitude that ministers of the Gospel need to have. They should do their work and leave the building up to God.

About thirty years ago I met a couple that was missionaries to Ireland. They had been there for a number of years. They retired and others went to replace them. Others have since replaced those folks and the work goes on today, even though there are only a handful of Irish believers in the churches there. The work over the years has resulted in two very small churches, but has also seen some converts that were trained and then they moved onto other towns and areas.

From man's view, not much success, but in God's view it is Christ building His church as He sees

fit. Consider this attitude pastor of eighteen months that is considering moving onto a bigger work. This same story is playing itself out all over the world where people have been working for years, with little results.

Today we are plagued by the "cost effective" the "telephone survey" the hype of some of our organizations that will only start a large church rather than allow God to use them to build the church He wants.

Know you are called, know your calling, and let God use you where He places you.

10. Here we see Paul is a prisoner, for not what he had done criminally, but for what he had done for God - he had been preaching. There is a day coming if things don't change when Christians in America will be finding themselves in jail for preaching.

Today in 2004 there are pastors in Australia that are facing jail time for preaching against homosexuality. This is not far off in our own country. Legislation has been introduced under which preaching against homosexuality could be construed to be a hate crime. If this is allowed, it won't be far behind that preaching against any sin is a hate crime. If you start to preach against alcohol, it will be hateful preaching against the drinking segment of our society.

Don't shirk your duty to preach the Word, stand for the Word that you believe in just as Paul.

Note, also that Paul lays his situation totally at the feet of God in that it was Paul's response to God that placed him in this situation. It is the plan of God that Paul be what he is, and that he do what he was doing, thus the result of prison is not Paul's fault, nor is it the fault of the Gentile converts he is writing to. It is simply the result of Paul doing as God had directed.

11. In verse five we are introduced to the concept of things not previously revealed to the follower of God. Now, that tweaks my interest greatly. I have known that concept, I was taught of progressive revelation, but this morning it crossed my mind that there may well be things that are not revealed to the church age saint as well. God has done this in the past, why would he not do it in the future?

We have some information about the millennium, but not a lot, so it is quite probable that new information will be revealed to those in that kingdom. We know that there will be some sort of sacrificial system in that dispensation, but we don't know the use of it, or the meaning of it.

We should not feel we have it all, for we probably don't. We know all we need to know, as did the Old Testament saint, but we may not know it all.

12. There is a minor point in verse five when it speaks of God revealing to the apostles and prophets. The ultradispensationalist suggests that the church did not start until Paul was on the scene because God revealed the church through him. Here however we see plural apostles as well

as the prophets of the New Testament time receiving this revelation. The church started on the day of Pentecost, not at the conversion of Saul.

Some thoughts on how to properly interpret the gospels.

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The importance of how you interpret a text was brought home to me many years ago in a graduate class where the professor would assign a text for study and then bring us together for a discussion. He was an expert at forming the class into the different positions that came from the study, and then pitting those groups against one another to show how poorly we had studied. He once assigned the text of Job 19:25-26 and asked us to determine what the text was about. The discussion went on for three class sessions before he taught the proper interpretation. There were three different views that seemed very good, yet all three groups failed to determine the context of the passage. Once the context was set before us we realized the meaning of the passage.

So it is in the gospels when you determine to interpret. The context, the audience and the speaker all go together to determine what age the information is meant for. There are some texts that are definitely for those living under the law, there are texts that are definitely for those that were going to live in the kingdom that Christ was offering, and there are texts that are for the coming church age. The question is, just which are which.

We submit the following as a guide to begin your interpretation of the gospels with.

1. Pay close attention to the context: For example Luke 10:1-3 is not for the church, but Matthew 28:16-20 is. Look at the context to determine.

2. Pay close attention to the recipient: If Christ was speaking to Jews, then the information is for Jews. If he was talking to Old Testament saints then He was not talking to you, however there may be some application to you since you are a saint. Just one outrageous example would be the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus wound up in bliss while the rich man ended in

torment. Now, would we apply the rich man's situation to ourselves - believers and the position of Lazarus to the lost of our day? NO!

3. Determine whether the principle is stated elsewhere in the New Testament: For example some might suggest because of Matt 10:9,10 we should have no material possessions. "...provide neither gold, nor silver, nor copper in your purses, nor a bag for your journey neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet a staff..." This is not a principle for our day. It is not mentioned as a lifestyle anywhere in scripture. Indeed, Christ contrasts this Himself to another lifestyle for those in a different situation in Luke 22:35-36.

Don't claim promises blindly. Look at the context, recipient and whether it is taught in the epistles before applying it to yourself. The epistles are for church use and we have no question about them, so they can assist us in determining other texts.

If the truth fits the general tenor of the epistles then it probably is usable for today. Christ spoke of meekness in the Sermon on the Mount which is definitely kingdom information.

The fruit of the Spirit seems to give that principle validity in our day so that meekness should be desired by the church age believer. The problem is that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5). Do the epistles mention that the church will inherit the earth? No, and indeed we will not inherit the earth. This is not a promise for us though we can draw the principle of meekness from it.

4. Determine what dispensation is in view: Christ made quite a promise in Matthew 6:33. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." See, he will give me everything I want. That is the usual misinterpretation. First the context speaks of those needs of living that we have and not desires. Second, the promise is to the one that seeks His kingdom. The kingdom in Christ's mind was the Jewish kingdom that He was offering - the Millennial kingdom. So, if you are seeking the millennium, He will see to your needs.

This text is for those looking for the kingdom and no one else. This is not a promise for me today. However, there is an application for me in this day. As I seek His righteousness and His future, I know that He will supply all that I need. This is a general principle throughout scripture. God always takes care of His people.

5. Realize that God's revelation is progressive: The gospel record is information for that day and time, while the epistles were meant for a later day and time. The information given to Moses was not meant to be carried forward to the church age. An example of this is the sacrificial system. It is no longer needed because Christ completed the sacrifice for sin on the cross. The Old Testament may relate to our day. The writer of Hebrews uses many of the people of that age in Chapter Eleven to produce the great text on living by faith. This shows that the information is not specifically for us, yet we can find application to our lives in those specifics.

The idea of examples of men is also related by Paul in Phil 3:17 and II Thess 3:9. Christ when he cleansed the temple was not telling us to cleanse the churches, we disagree with, though we can apply His action by being indignant at wrong activities.

There may be a truth for only one dispensation, or the truth may be a universal truth. John 3:3 mentions, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is a limited truth in that it was given in the context of the kingdom that is to come. A person cannot enter the kingdom unless he is born again. This proves that all at the beginning of the kingdom will be believers. There is also a universal truth in that if you personally want to be a part of the kingdom you must be born again.

Remember that all Scripture is beneficial. II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, thus we need to search the gospels for information that can help us know our God and live rightly before Him. The danger is in applying before studying.

Let us draw some conclusions then.

1. If it's not for your dispensation, if it's not for your nationality (gentile), if it's not for your circumstance, THEN it's not for you!

2. If the same principle is restated elsewhere in the New Testament epistles then it's for you.

3. If it's a valid principle universally in scripture then it's for you.

4. If it's a spiritual quality of personality, life, or holiness then it's for you.

5. Primarily the synoptic gospels were written by men still looking for the kingdom to be set up shortly thus the specific information is meant for the kingdom. One should not weigh heavily on the gospels nor the book of Acts for church age promises.

It is hoped that this will be helpful in your use of the Gospel accounts of the life of our Lord and Savior in your own life.

Section six: 3.13-21

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

"Desire" is a word that has many shades of meaning. There is the desire to see someone, which can be mild to strong desire. The principals desire to see a student in need of discipline lacks somewhat when compared to the desire of a boy to see the girl he is engaged to.

The desire here seems to be a strong desire as in crave, beg or require. This is something that is very important to the apostle. This desire is also something that is partially from without. He is moved with this desire due to some outside force, namely the Spirit of God.

"Faint" has the thought of weary or tired out, someone that has really had it with something. When we were on deputation, I made a number of trips to the Midwest from the west coast. We did not have motel money so I always drove straight through both ways. When I arrived at my destination, I was weary to the point of exhaustion. I would faint at the thought of further driving. One commentary mentions the word "despirited" as an option for "faint" which really gives the thought of the word.

Paul does not want them to be deterred in any way by his tribulations. He wanted none of that.

Instead of fainting or being discouraged by his tribulation on their part, they are to glory in it. "Glory" is the word normally translated glory, and is the Greek word "doxa" from which we gain doxology. The Ephesians were to glory in the tribulation of Paul. Now, that is a statement that is going to need some explaining. Why should they glory or be proud of his tribulation - the tribulation that was caused because of them?

Some possibilities:

1. The text states more specifically that the tribulation is their glory. The tribulation is somehow a glory to them, a good mark for them in some manner.
2. Some suggest that God loved them so much that he gave His Son for them as well as allowed Paul to suffer on their behalf. This may be the thought of it, but if so I think to add the Son into it is to read a lot more into the verse than is there.
3. It would seem that Paul's tribulation is a glory to them in that Paul was willing to give his all for the propagation of the Gospel, which is a glory to all gentile believers. He was willing to do all for them, thus their worth in Paul's mind must have been great.

Now, I am going to meddle here and I am warning pastors right now. I have met many (pastors)

on internet forums that indicate that their parishioners are rather on the dumb side, often obnoxious, and seldom what the pastor wants of people he has to work with. I have seen a real "US" versus "THEM" mentality between pastors and their congregations.

I see pastors that think they are above apologizing to congregants when they are wrong. I have seen men that feel the people should overlook his flaws while he makes mountains of theirs.

Here, Paul says he has suffered imprisonment for their sakes. Pastors, please catch that vision - honor your people as co-heirs with you in Christ, for that is indeed what they are.

Now, go back and read the last three paragraphs and substitute your name where I mentioned pastor and substitute pastor where I indicated the congregation. We are all equal in the church, we are all co-heirs with Christ and we ought to value one another.

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

Ouch, if you are old and have damaged knees you know what the old apostle might have gone through. I'd guess with all the walking, all the cold damp nights and all the heavy work over the years that his knees are in about as bad a shape as mine and I hurt when I bow, yet Paul was still getting on his knees before the Lord.

It was my privilege to attend a Bible study prayer time with three other men. Three of us were in our sixties and on bended knees is how we prayed. I must admit there was a lot of shuffling during prayer to find a more comfortable spot, but I'm sure God could hear over the background noise. Not that we were super spiritual, just that four men on their knees before their God was quite a unifying factor amongst us.

It has surprised me that more prayer meetings aren't conducted on the knee. In all my years of church life, I have only been part of two churches where the men knelt for prayer times. If you study the term worship in the Bible, you will find that many of the references include the thought of being on one's face before God. It is placing ourselves in a position of waiting upon Him for His will, not our own.

Now, notice the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" and make a mental note to yourself to notice the words that are used with the term Jesus. You will find the majority of the time, outside of the time He spent on earth living as a man, that the name Jesus is also accompanied by either or both of the terms Lord and Christ. I have to wonder when people constantly use the term Jesus if they really understand that that is His earthly name, but his rightful office and position is Christ and Lord.

It seems to constantly use the name Jesus is to dwell upon His earthly ministry rather than all that He really is as Lord and Christ.

Barnes suggests the following texts for further information on prayer. "2Ch 6:13 Da 6:10; Lu 22:41 Ac 7:60, 9:40; Ac 20:36 21:5"

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

Which member of the trinity are we named after? It could be the whole human family, and we are called God's creation, or it could be that the family relates to the believers and we are named after the Son - CHRISTian. The verse limits the family to a group in heaven and earth, thus must relate to believers.

It may be that this should be more specific. Since Paul's comments prior to this verse are related to the church very specifically. If this relates to the church, and I believe that it does, then those that reject the thought of a universal church are proven incorrect with this verse. He names a group that is in heaven as well as here on earth, thus all believers, living and dead, thus a universal church would be the result.

I have no idea why these people reject the thought of a universal church for it makes no difference to their doctrine of the local church, unless they believe something more than what I have been able to discover about their belief.

We might apply this to the fact that we are, as Paul has taught, us co-heirs and equal to all others in the church - we are equal to Calvin, we are equal with Arminius, and we are equal to Augustine, we are equal to every other great saint that has gone on before. It does not mean we have accomplished what these men and women have accomplished, but it means we are equal heirs in the eternal state - we are all His children.

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;

Do we have two prayers, one relating to riches and one relating to power. Now, watch the charismatic use this verse. I'd bet it is one of the arsenal of the rich and powerful group that believes all should be rich in the church - not that the leaders don't get rich, but seldom does the congregation.

No, I believe there is one prayer here, that we will have power to live a proper life, and that life being, not one of riches, but one that is described in the following context.

Paul asks that out of His great riches, he might empower us to live a proper life. Bummer, no money, no cars, no jewels - oh well, might as well go eat worms as the children's song goes - the song we sing when we don't get our OWN way.

Now, put that on your prayer list for those you pray for and don't spend so much time on the material stuff that we often pray for.

There is an assumption that God has enough of this stuff to go around, and he also assumes that He is desirous of giving this stuff to believers. He further knows that it is the ministry of the Spirit that will do the giving.

Some things to note. First, this passage shows the subservient nature of the Spirit to the Father. The Father is being asked to do something, but it is the Spirit that will do the outworking, or inner working in this case :-)

All this is related to the Father's glory and its richness. His desire for all believers is for us to be empowered to live a godly life, and Paul is just asking that He assure this in the lives of the Ephesian believers.

Note, that the inner man is where the Spirit is to do the work, and it is the inner man that is to be strengthened - to live a proper life. I won't push the verse to say that the inner man is where the Spirit resides, but that is probably the case. The preposition used here is rather general and could mean this or it could only mean that the inner man is where the work is to be done.

At any rate the Spirit has access to our inner most central core. In medicine there is what is called the "core temperature" that temperature that is measured at the inner part of our body. The spirit of man is the inner most part of our being and glory to God, that is where God the Spirit works - it ought to show forth to the outside don't you think? Thus if the Spirit is really working, outward change would seem to be the result in the believer.

"Might" is that word "dunamis" which relates to explosive power - something to be reckoned with might be the thought. Power to live the proper spiritual life. Paul prayed for it assuming that God would do it according to His riches. It seems to me that the proper Christian life would be rather an automatic thing if we have all this power to live it within our inner most being.

I guess those believers that don't live a proper life have their will surrounding their inner man so as to control it completely. Seems like a rather plain picture of what really seems to happen in the loose living believer.

Inner man is of interest to us for a moment. "Man" is that word that simply relates to our humanness, the term "inner" is the Greek word "eso" which means inner or interior inner man. It is used of going into a room, it is used of Peter going into the palace after Christ was arrested, and Paul uses the term of the inward man in Romans. Simply it means that inward part of man that relates to spiritual things - the spirit if you will. If the Spirit does this work in the spirit, how can we possibly thwart that work - only by our will to act differently on the outside.

A conscious effort to act against what we know God wants us to do - scary thing, yet so many believers live their life like this.

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

"Rooted" and "grounded" are perfect passive, thus telling us that we ARE rooted and grounded in love, but the power of God for the action is coming from without. On top of that we are rooted and grounded in a continuing manner until a final completion in the future - namely when we are glorified.

Now, we ARE rooted and grounded, thus we will always know all about love, and this is the self sacrificing love of the brethren. This is a fact of Scripture, however I know some are saying, but what about so and so, she is the most unloving person I have ever met? To this I would suggest that someone is not choosing to allow the Spirit to reign over their life so that this love can show through.

The key - if we walk with God this love will naturally flow forth - fact - it is up to us whether we are loving to the outside world or not. The possibility and ability are present in every believer. That is if you have allowed the first part of the verse - allowing Christ to dwell in your heart by faith. I am assuming this is salvation, since it is dependant on faith. The dwelling is an aorist tense thus a one time incident and would be indicative of salvation.

"Dwell" is not only just a living in, or a dweller, but it also can carry the thought of "pervade" or inhabit every part or area of the heart. Not just a passer through, but Christ is to be one that lives permanently in every part of your being.

In this course thus far, it is quite evident that the casual on again and off again Christian living is not the norm, nor the desired by God. In almost all we have seen we have noticed that these changes that come from salvation are far reaching, permanent and complete. I trust we are all acting in a manner consistent with that description.

With this strong emphasis on how we ought to appear on the outside, is why many wonder if the average loose living person in the pew is even saved. We certainly don't see this sort of Christian living in many churches. What we see are pew sitters that resemble the world rather than Christ. If we are really Christians, then one would expect a more Christ like life.

This is the second in a series of four desires of Paul for the believers.

Just read through Paul's words again. 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. 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.

Imagine yourself sitting in the church of Ephesus and hearing this letter read. How would those

few lines strike you as you contemplated them? This is the apostle Paul praying these things for me - it is his desire for me to be and know all of these things.

Excited - honored - impressed - humbled, are some of the words that come to my mind - wow - Paul wants all this for me and he barely knows me. Then to realize that these things are very real possibilities for the believer. If you didn't know these things, imagine the joy and excitement this would have generated in those people's lives.

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"May be able" is not just able, but fully able or imminently able to comprehend. The easy ability to comprehend. It might relate to the weight lifter coming along in the grocery store and his ability to pick up a ten-pound bag of sugar for an old lady that is struggling with it.

Paul wants them to easily comprehend this information, not to have to struggle with it, not to have to work at it and not to have to figure things out. They are to easily understand the love of Christ, indeed hasn't Paul set forth the ground work for their easily understanding it in the previous passages?

What is the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" rather well covers the "entirety" of the subject. Paul desires they easily understand the hugeness, the entirety, and the completeness of the subject. He doesn't want them to struggle to understand any portion, not even a small portion of the subject. The term breadth has with it the suggestion of great breadth.

Now, anyone that knows me knows that I am a consummate organizer. You probably also know I love to reorganize our home for the maximum use and convenience. If you were to ever get in on the beginning of one of these sessions you would probably see me sitting and looking at the furniture in a room and thinking. You might see me get up and measure an empty spot. You might see me get up and measure a piece of furniture or maybe even measure every piece in the room. You would see me sit down again and maybe even take a nap.

The point being, I want to comprehend the entire situation before I begin my planning. I want to know where I am headed before I begin. You would also know because of the smallness and the fullness of our house that within all this planning there is a planning of how to shuffle the furniture and in what order so as to move each piece a minimum amount of times and distance.

The point, I struggle at length to come to a decision and to a plan of action. Paul doesn't want them to have to go through this entire struggle, he wants them to EASILY comprehend the entirety of the subject.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I read this passage I notice, due to my organizational skills, that there is an added dimension that is not needed in moving furniture. You need to know

the height, depth and width of a subject but what does the breadth have to do with anything? Is it the overall enormity of the subject?

Webster suggests that it is the width of a subject, or how wide a table is from side to side while one is looking at it. "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" In this context the breadth cannot be the width if the other three terms are to be used. Length would be the longest measure, depth would be the narrower measure and the height would be the top to bottom measure. The depth and height must be two different things in this usage even though depth might be construed to be the top to bottom measurement.

In this construction/usage I would assume that breadth would be the overall extent rather than a measure. It would relate to my moving furniture if I said "This table's HUGENESS is really a problem because the table is so long, so wide, and so tall. It won't fit anywhere.

Indeed, it seems to be used this way in Rev. 20.9 "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." But to be forthright it is also used of width in Rev. 21.16 "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." It seems to be a general term that is defined by its context since these are the only three usages of the word in the Bible.

As to the subject of all these measurements there are some that suggest it is the cross of Christ, others the New Jerusalem, others the power and/or wisdom of God, others the completeness of salvation, while others suggest we look in the immediate context and find the object is the love of Christ. This seems the more sensible at this point to me.

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

By knowing Christ's love, we can be filled with the fulness of God. We can know all that God wants us to know of His presence. Just by knowing Christ's love for us.

I'm not sure we can completely know that love, for we seldom move toward knowing His love at all. We often view Christianity as a gimmy religion rather than a personal relationship with Christ. We get in for the correct reasons, faith in Christ, but we so often move right into what God can do for us mindsets. We pray in line for our own wants, we work toward our own goals and we seldom check with God as to what He would have us do.

We need to know how much Christ loved us - the cross that He suffered, the death He suffered, and the isolation He suffered. He did it for each of us as individuals. He loved us so much that He did all this for us.

"Which passeth knowledge" shows that we can never know that love completely, but we can know it enough to change our lives, to fill us with the fullness of God.

Just what is the "fullness of God?" We are to be filled with it, but what is it?

The term "fullness" is a different form of the word translated filled. "Filled" relates to full to the top so that nothing is lacking. God is also full to the top, nothing lacking. The fullness of God seems to be substantive because we are to be filled with it. We are left to assume that the "fullness of God" is the totality of who He is. Nothing less, and nothing more, we are to be filled with who He is, his total being, His presence, and His being. Contemplate that sometime.

We know we are indwelled by the Spirit, and by Christ, and here we seem to have clear indication that we are indwelled by the Father as well. We have within us the Godhead, the trinity, the entirety of the Godhead that set these decrees, the God that predestined us, the God that brought us to Himself. He is resident and we live as we live in our every day lives? Shame on us.

I suspect that as we understand the love of Christ, we will come to know the fullness of Him that is within. We are, at the point of salvation, indwelled by the Godhead, but we do not realize all that is within. As we learn of Christ's love, we will come to understand more completely that God that dwells within.

The question naturally comes, just how can we know the love of Christ? Obviously we need to get to know Christ and Who He is. When you meet the girl that you ultimately marry, you do not know her, you do not love her, you do not understand her, and you do not know the totality of who she is. As you get to know her, you gain insight into who she is, you gain knowledge of her feelings for you, and ultimately as love develops, you both begin to understand the whole of what is going on. As you marry and continue on through life, you continue to understand the completeness of the relationship. I think this is the way believers develop in their knowledge of Christ's love and from there the Godhead that indwells them.

Different man/woman relationships develop at different rates, and so does the relationship between the believer and God. Some get to know Christ early in their walk, while others never really get to know Him due to their lack of interest and walk. This is why Paul asks this for the Ephesian believers.

As church leaders we should attempt to help people develop this knowledge of Christ's love.

Still, this does not answer how we can know that love. Let's list some items of interest.

1. Prayer: As we pray and begin to understand that communication with God we will naturally see the love of Christ in the answered prayer, in the fellowship, and in the comfort we feel.

As a young believer I trusted the Lord to care for some financial needs as well as physical needs. I just knew in my mind He would take care of me and He did. The over riding thought was that He must really love me to do this for me even though I don't know what I can do for Him. I was untaught in the spiritual life, but I knew that there was a reciprocity that should exist in the relationship.

2. Reading the Word: As we read the Word we will learn of Christ, we will learn of His actions toward people and we will learn of the work of the cross. We will begin to see all that He did for people, and for us, and we will begin to understand that He loves people, including us.

3. Study of Christ: As we get deeper into the Word we will understand the ramifications of all that He did in His earthly life as well as in His death. We will learn of His activities in the Old Testament and His actions on the part of the Jews, which will illustrate His love for them as well.

As we begin to understand just who He really is - that He is God, that He is equal to and united with God - we can understand further the Love that He must have had to come down to earth as a human being.

As we know Him we will understand and know His love - not an option, but something we should certainly be doing, and certainly be encouraging others to do.

4. Good works will ultimately help us understand who He really is as well. As we allow Him to work through us in the lives of others we will witness the love He has for them shown through us and see that love develop in their lives.

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,

"Power that worketh in us" must relate to either God the indweller, or possibly to our own faith. This is a good point to contemplate.

He is able to do exceeding abundant things, over and above any of our prayers or even our needs that we don't know about. He can do things we can't even think of - this is impressive, we have a God that is above our own thoughts. How does that relate to those idols that WE create, how does that relate to those belief systems that WE create? He is above all that we can think and yet, bend to our need and request.

There is the reverse thought of this passage as well. He is able, but He may not do exceedingly abundant things. This is why one might surmise the power within is faith rather than the Spirit. His actions toward us and on our behalf are always dependent on our current walk with Him.

Further, the term "worketh" is a middle voice indicating the subject is involved in the action. This seems to mean that the action of the "power" is involved rather than the person. On the

surface it would seem that power would better relate to the Spirit, rather than to faith. He is powerful, and in the context it seems that God is the focus of the work, while we are the recipient or beneficiary.

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

"Glory in the church" not in the world. The world owes God nothing in the way of glory, for they understand Him not. Any glory that is going to come to God is going to come from the church or Himself via Christ and His work. This is to be the plan of action throughout the ages.

The proof of my comment about the world can be seen on practically any television broadcast. He is not upheld as God, He is not upheld as a supreme being, nor is he indeed upheld at all in most shows. If He is mentioned it is in a joking or derogatory manner at best.

Someone did a survey of the media's presentation of things religious and in the vast majority of cases the portrayal was negative. God's people are portrayed in a negative light as well. They are the perverts, they are the whackos, and they are the deranged. No, don't look for the world to glorify God in any way. If they do see Him in a positive light it is often for a profit in the end.

Next, we need to consider how He is glorified in the church. Or is He in our current day? Most would say that He is and I would probably agree, but I question how much glory He is finding there in recent days. The glory seems to be shared by the flashy dress, the technologically correct presentation, the accomplished musicians/instruments, and the flash of the current "worship" climate that is specifically designed to appeal to the flesh of the lost.

How can it relate to the glorification of God when we appeal to the flesh of lost man? How can satisfying the fleshly desires of Christians even glorify God. Many worship services are totally designed to reach the human side of man rather than to stir the spiritual side to consider God and His desires.

APPLICATION:

1. I would like to look at two things here.

a. Verses fourteen and fifteen speak of our relationship to the Father. I would suggest for your thinking and contemplation the fact that the single female parent family that is in our society, lacking a father image, is not. God the Father is our father. Any single female parent needs to understand this and apply it to their lives and their children's lives. Yes, a man in the house is great and needed but the Father can supply many of those things that the child will need. He is their support, He is their strength, and He is their comfort and all those fatherly items.

What is needed is for the child to be trained properly to understand God's purpose in their lives.

This passage totally speaks to this aspect of God having a plan and Him supplying that which is lacking in each of us to accomplish that plan - that goes for kids as well as seniors and all between.

b. The passage mentions, "the whole family in heaven and earth" and some relate this to not only humans, but also to the angelic host. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown mention that the angels are sons by creation and we by adoption. Whether the angels are included or not I am not entirely convinced. I don't know that it makes a lot of doctrinal difference either way, it is impressive enough to me that I am a brother same as Paul, same as Abraham, and the same as Moses. If you want to include Michael and the other archangels, I'm even more impressed that such as I can be in the same family as such as we have named.

2. It is of note that this whole section is full of doctrine and it leads to Paul's grand doxology in the final verses of the section. When is the last time doctrine moved you to praise and worship? Many pastors criticize doctrine as being to "super saintly" and a waste of time, but Paul found it vital and it brought him to great praise for the God that set all these doctrines into existence.

When you study doctrine, always take time to contemplate God and how it relates to Him and His glory. Doctrine is not and should not be treated like a four-letter word. It is the meat that the believer ought to be feeding on daily.

It is no wonder the church is full of screaming babies and problems, all they are getting is milk - they need meat so they can grow and be nourished into adulthood.

3. We mentioned that bowing if not prostrating one's self in prayer was preferable to other positions. This is due to the concentration of the mind on what we are doing. When sitting or standing our minds tend to wander off into oblivion, while kneeling or laying face down tends to remind us of what we are supposed to be doing.

Many there are that have joked about the fact that when fishing and hunting, they can worship God just as easily as when in church, but I have never seen a fisherman fish or hunter hunt kneeling or prone with his face to the ground.

HE IS OUR LIFE, NOT HIS CREATION! Is this not what Romans one is about - worshiping the creation rather than the creator? (Rom. 1.19-25)

Of course we can praise God without being in a building with a cross on top, but we seldom do if we are all really honest. Making a conscious effort to be with Him is the key.

4. In verses sixteen through nineteen we see, "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 fullness of God."

This seems to describe super saint in our day and age, that one that walks with God daily, moment by moment and the one that is always in the Lord's control to do what is right at every turn. It describes the one that is able to answer every question with Scripture and defend against every detractor with the Word.

However - note that he is not speaking to a few, or an individual, but he is speaking to every believer at the church at Ephesus. Today in our churches, we seem to have a few super saints, that are really those average saints that Paul is speaking about, and then we have a lot of superficial saints that are far from living up to this Scriptural standard. This is wrong. We all should be as those Paul is speaking of - filled with the love of Christ, empowered with strength for the spiritual battles before us.

"Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" - Does that really sound like the run of the mill Christian today that has every self help book ever published, the run of the mill Christian today that watches the Dr. Phil Show in the hope of finding strength to go on, or the run of the mill Christian today that attempts to live by the quack of the day advice on the television - those that can't get their life together enough to function in life.

God stands ready to strengthen each and every one to the task at hand if we will only walk with Him and allow Him to do the work He wants to do within us and around us. God desires a powerful church not a church that is poorly balanced on the brink of emotional collapse.

In nineteen eighties I was told by a friend that was part of the leadership in a fairly large church in one of our large cities that his church has a hard time keeping enough families emotionally healthy enough to minister to the unhealthy. He was speaking in the context of the many divorces, drug and drinking problems, and the child rearing problems. The churches entire emotional strength was being drained by those Christians that were unable to operate in the strength of the Lord.

It is wonderful that the church had healthy members to minister, but oh how sad that so few were there that could have the freedom to do the work of the Lord outside the church due to their total immersion in ministering in the church to faltering believers.

Where is the strength in the church today? Where is the power in the church today? These passages of Paul's are for us today as well as to the Ephesians - we need to be teaching these principles to our believers and getting them on track for use by God in His work inside and outside the church.

5. Verse nineteen states, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Filled with the "fullness of God." Does that sound

like the average believer today? Does the temper ridden believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the cheating believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the lying believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the swearing believer show forth the fullness of God?

I might ask whether the famous believer that commits adultery shows forth the fullness of God. Does the famous believer that swears on the sports field show forth the fullness of God? Does the famous believer that takes acting roles of immorality show forth the fullness of God? Does the famous believer that is in the political arena that uses the tactics of the world show forth the fullness of God?

One further question. Are you showing forth the fullness of God in your life?

Section six: 3.13-21

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

"Desire" is a word that has many shades of meaning. There is the desire to see someone, which can be mild to strong desire. The principals desire to see a student in need of discipline lacks somewhat when compared to the desire of a boy to see the girl he is engaged to.

The desire here seems to be a strong desire as in crave, beg or require. This is something that is very important to the apostle. This desire is also something that is partially from without. He is moved with this desire due to some outside force, namely the Spirit of God.

"Faint" has the thought of weary or tired out, someone that has really had it with something. When we were on deputation, I made a number of trips to the Midwest from the west coast. We did not have motel money so I always drove straight through both ways. When I arrived at my destination, I was weary to the point of exhaustion. I would faint at the thought of further driving. One commentary mentions the word "despirited" as an option for "faint" which really gives the thought of the word.

Paul does not want them to be deterred in any way by his tribulations. He wanted none of that.

Instead of fainting or being discouraged by his tribulation on their part, they are to glory in it. "Glory" is the word normally translated glory, and is the Greek word "doxa" from which we gain doxology. The Ephesians were to glory in the tribulation of Paul. Now, that is a statement that is going to need some explaining. Why should they glory or be proud of his tribulation - the tribulation that was caused because of them?

Some possibilities:

1. The text states more specifically that the tribulation is their glory. The tribulation is somehow a glory to them, a good mark for them in some manner.
2. Some suggest that God loved them so much that he gave His Son for them as well as allowed Paul to suffer on their behalf. This may be the thought of it, but if so I think to add the Son into it is to read a lot more into the verse than is there.
3. It would seem that Paul's tribulation is a glory to them in that Paul was willing to give his all for the propagation of the Gospel, which is a glory to all gentile believers. He was willing to do all for them, thus their worth in Paul's mind must have been great.

Now, I am going to meddle here and I am warning pastors right now. I have met many (pastors)

on internet forums that indicate that their parishioners are rather on the dumb side, often obnoxious, and seldom what the pastor wants of people he has to work with. I have seen a real "US" versus "THEM" mentality between pastors and their congregations.

I see pastors that think they are above apologizing to congregants when they are wrong. I have seen men that feel the people should overlook his flaws while he makes mountains of theirs.

Here, Paul says he has suffered imprisonment for their sakes. Pastors, please catch that vision - honor your people as co-heirs with you in Christ, for that is indeed what they are.

Now, go back and read the last three paragraphs and substitute your name where I mentioned pastor and substitute pastor where I indicated the congregation. We are all equal in the church, we are all co-heirs with Christ and we ought to value one another.

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

Ouch, if you are old and have damaged knees you know what the old apostle might have gone through. I'd guess with all the walking, all the cold damp nights and all the heavy work over the years that his knees are in about as bad a shape as mine and I hurt when I bow, yet Paul was still getting on his knees before the Lord.

It was my privilege to attend a Bible study prayer time with three other men. Three of us were in our sixties and on bended knees is how we prayed. I must admit there was a lot of shuffling during prayer to find a more comfortable spot, but I'm sure God could hear over the background noise. Not that we were super spiritual, just that four men on their knees before their God was quite a unifying factor amongst us.

It has surprised me that more prayer meetings aren't conducted on the knee. In all my years of church life, I have only been part of two churches where the men knelt for prayer times. If you study the term worship in the Bible, you will find that many of the references include the thought of being on one's face before God. It is placing ourselves in a position of waiting upon Him for His will, not our own.

Now, notice the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" and make a mental note to yourself to notice the words that are used with the term Jesus. You will find the majority of the time, outside of the time He spent on earth living as a man, that the name Jesus is also accompanied by either or both of the terms Lord and Christ. I have to wonder when people constantly use the term Jesus if they really understand that that is His earthly name, but his rightful office and position is Christ and Lord.

It seems to constantly use the name Jesus is to dwell upon His earthly ministry rather than all that He really is as Lord and Christ.

Barnes suggests the following texts for further information on prayer. "2Ch 6:13 Da 6:10; Lu 22:41 Ac 7:60, 9:40; Ac 20:36 21:5"

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

Which member of the trinity are we named after? It could be the whole human family, and we are called God's creation, or it could be that the family relates to the believers and we are named after the Son - CHRISTian. The verse limits the family to a group in heaven and earth, thus must relate to believers.

It may be that this should be more specific. Since Paul's comments prior to this verse are related to the church very specifically. If this relates to the church, and I believe that it does, then those that reject the thought of a universal church are proven incorrect with this verse. He names a group that is in heaven as well as here on earth, thus all believers, living and dead, thus a universal church would be the result.

I have no idea why these people reject the thought of a universal church for it makes no difference to their doctrine of the local church, unless they believe something more than what I have been able to discover about their belief.

We might apply this to the fact that we are, as Paul has taught, us co-heirs and equal to all others in the church - we are equal to Calvin, we are equal with Arminius, and we are equal to Augustine, we are equal to every other great saint that has gone on before. It does not mean we have accomplished what these men and women have accomplished, but it means we are equal heirs in the eternal state - we are all His children.

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;

Do we have two prayers, one relating to riches and one relating to power. Now, watch the charismatic use this verse. I'd bet it is one of the arsenal of the rich and powerful group that believes all should be rich in the church - not that the leaders don't get rich, but seldom does the congregation.

No, I believe there is one prayer here, that we will have power to live a proper life, and that life being, not one of riches, but one that is described in the following context.

Paul asks that out of His great riches, he might empower us to live a proper life. Bummer, no money, no cars, no jewels - oh well, might as well go eat worms as the children's song goes - the song we sing when we don't get our OWN way.

Now, put that on your prayer list for those you pray for and don't spend so much time on the material stuff that we often pray for.

There is an assumption that God has enough of this stuff to go around, and he also assumes that He is desirous of giving this stuff to believers. He further knows that it is the ministry of the Spirit that will do the giving.

Some things to note. First, this passage shows the subservient nature of the Spirit to the Father. The Father is being asked to do something, but it is the Spirit that will do the outworking, or inner working in this case :-)

All this is related to the Father's glory and its richness. His desire for all believers is for us to be empowered to live a godly life, and Paul is just asking that He assure this in the lives of the Ephesian believers.

Note, that the inner man is where the Spirit is to do the work, and it is the inner man that is to be strengthened - to live a proper life. I won't push the verse to say that the inner man is where the Spirit resides, but that is probably the case. The preposition used here is rather general and could mean this or it could only mean that the inner man is where the work is to be done.

At any rate the Spirit has access to our inner most central core. In medicine there is what is called the "core temperature" that temperature that is measured at the inner part of our body. The spirit of man is the inner most part of our being and glory to God, that is where God the Spirit works - it ought to show forth to the outside don't you think? Thus if the Spirit is really working, outward change would seem to be the result in the believer.

"Might" is that word "dunamis" which relates to explosive power - something to be reckoned with might be the thought. Power to live the proper spiritual life. Paul prayed for it assuming that God would do it according to His riches. It seems to me that the proper Christian life would be rather an automatic thing if we have all this power to live it within our inner most being.

I guess those believers that don't live a proper life have their will surrounding their inner man so as to control it completely. Seems like a rather plain picture of what really seems to happen in the loose living believer.

Inner man is of interest to us for a moment. "Man" is that word that simply relates to our humanness, the term "inner" is the Greek word "eso" which means inner or interior inner man. It is used of going into a room, it is used of Peter going into the palace after Christ was arrested, and Paul uses the term of the inward man in Romans. Simply it means that inward part of man that relates to spiritual things - the spirit if you will. If the Spirit does this work in the spirit, how can we possibly thwart that work - only by our will to act differently on the outside.

A conscious effort to act against what we know God wants us to do - scary thing, yet so many believers live their life like this.

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

"Rooted" and "grounded" are perfect passive, thus telling us that we ARE rooted and grounded in love, but the power of God for the action is coming from without. On top of that we are rooted and grounded in a continuing manner until a final completion in the future - namely when we are glorified.

Now, we ARE rooted and grounded, thus we will always know all about love, and this is the self sacrificing love of the brethren. This is a fact of Scripture, however I know some are saying, but what about so and so, she is the most unloving person I have ever met? To this I would suggest that someone is not choosing to allow the Spirit to reign over their life so that this love can show through.

The key - if we walk with God this love will naturally flow forth - fact - it is up to us whether we are loving to the outside world or not. The possibility and ability are present in every believer. That is if you have allowed the first part of the verse - allowing Christ to dwell in your heart by faith. I am assuming this is salvation, since it is dependant on faith. The dwelling is an aorist tense thus a one time incident and would be indicative of salvation.

"Dwell" is not only just a living in, or a dweller, but it also can carry the thought of "pervade" or inhabit every part or area of the heart. Not just a passer through, but Christ is to be one that lives permanently in every part of your being.

In this course thus far, it is quite evident that the casual on again and off again Christian living is not the norm, nor the desired by God. In almost all we have seen we have noticed that these changes that come from salvation are far reaching, permanent and complete. I trust we are all acting in a manner consistent with that description.

With this strong emphasis on how we ought to appear on the outside, is why many wonder if the average loose living person in the pew is even saved. We certainly don't see this sort of Christian living in many churches. What we see are pew sitters that resemble the world rather than Christ. If we are really Christians, then one would expect a more Christ like life.

This is the second in a series of four desires of Paul for the believers.

Just read through Paul's words again. 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. 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.

Imagine yourself sitting in the church of Ephesus and hearing this letter read. How would those

few lines strike you as you contemplated them? This is the apostle Paul praying these things for me - it is his desire for me to be and know all of these things.

Excited - honored - impressed - humbled, are some of the words that come to my mind - wow - Paul wants all this for me and he barely knows me. Then to realize that these things are very real possibilities for the believer. If you didn't know these things, imagine the joy and excitement this would have generated in those people's lives.

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"May be able" is not just able, but fully able or imminently able to comprehend. The easy ability to comprehend. It might relate to the weight lifter coming along in the grocery store and his ability to pick up a ten-pound bag of sugar for an old lady that is struggling with it.

Paul wants them to easily comprehend this information, not to have to struggle with it, not to have to work at it and not to have to figure things out. They are to easily understand the love of Christ, indeed hasn't Paul set forth the ground work for their easily understanding it in the previous passages?

What is the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" rather well covers the "entirety" of the subject. Paul desires they easily understand the hugeness, the entirety, and the completeness of the subject. He doesn't want them to struggle to understand any portion, not even a small portion of the subject. The term breadth has with it the suggestion of great breadth.

Now, anyone that knows me knows that I am a consummate organizer. You probably also know I love to reorganize our home for the maximum use and convenience. If you were to ever get in on the beginning of one of these sessions you would probably see me sitting and looking at the furniture in a room and thinking. You might see me get up and measure an empty spot. You might see me get up and measure a piece of furniture or maybe even measure every piece in the room. You would see me sit down again and maybe even take a nap.

The point being, I want to comprehend the entire situation before I begin my planning. I want to know where I am headed before I begin. You would also know because of the smallness and the fullness of our house that within all this planning there is a planning of how to shuffle the furniture and in what order so as to move each piece a minimum amount of times and distance.

The point, I struggle at length to come to a decision and to a plan of action. Paul doesn't want them to have to go through this entire struggle, he wants them to EASILY comprehend the entirety of the subject.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I read this passage I notice, due to my organizational skills, that there is an added dimension that is not needed in moving furniture. You need to know

the height, depth and width of a subject but what does the breadth have to do with anything? Is it the overall enormity of the subject?

Webster suggests that it is the width of a subject, or how wide a table is from side to side while one is looking at it. "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" In this context the breadth cannot be the width if the other three terms are to be used. Length would be the longest measure, depth would be the narrower measure and the height would be the top to bottom measure. The depth and height must be two different things in this usage even though depth might be construed to be the top to bottom measurement.

In this construction/usage I would assume that breadth would be the overall extent rather than a measure. It would relate to my moving furniture if I said "This table's HUGENESS is really a problem because the table is so long, so wide, and so tall. It won't fit anywhere.

Indeed, it seems to be used this way in Rev. 20.9 "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." But to be forthright it is also used of width in Rev. 21.16 "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." It seems to be a general term that is defined by its context since these are the only three usages of the word in the Bible.

As to the subject of all these measurements there are some that suggest it is the cross of Christ, others the New Jerusalem, others the power and/or wisdom of God, others the completeness of salvation, while others suggest we look in the immediate context and find the object is the love of Christ. This seems the more sensible at this point to me.

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

By knowing Christ's love, we can be filled with the fulness of God. We can know all that God wants us to know of His presence. Just by knowing Christ's love for us.

I'm not sure we can completely know that love, for we seldom move toward knowing His love at all. We often view Christianity as a gimmy religion rather than a personal relationship with Christ. We get in for the correct reasons, faith in Christ, but we so often move right into what God can do for us mindsets. We pray in line for our own wants, we work toward our own goals and we seldom check with God as to what He would have us do.

We need to know how much Christ loved us - the cross that He suffered, the death He suffered, and the isolation He suffered. He did it for each of us as individuals. He loved us so much that He did all this for us.

"Which passeth knowledge" shows that we can never know that love completely, but we can know it enough to change our lives, to fill us with the fullness of God.

Just what is the "fullness of God?" We are to be filled with it, but what is it?

The term "fullness" is a different form of the word translated filled. "Filled" relates to full to the top so that nothing is lacking. God is also full to the top, nothing lacking. The fullness of God seems to be substantive because we are to be filled with it. We are left to assume that the "fullness of God" is the totality of who He is. Nothing less, and nothing more, we are to be filled with who He is, his total being, His presence, and His being. Contemplate that sometime.

We know we are indwelled by the Spirit, and by Christ, and here we seem to have clear indication that we are indwelled by the Father as well. We have within us the Godhead, the trinity, the entirety of the Godhead that set these decrees, the God that predestined us, the God that brought us to Himself. He is resident and we live as we live in our every day lives? Shame on us.

I suspect that as we understand the love of Christ, we will come to know the fullness of Him that is within. We are, at the point of salvation, indwelled by the Godhead, but we do not realize all that is within. As we learn of Christ's love, we will come to understand more completely that God that dwells within.

The question naturally comes, just how can we know the love of Christ? Obviously we need to get to know Christ and Who He is. When you meet the girl that you ultimately marry, you do not know her, you do not love her, you do not understand her, and you do not know the totality of who she is. As you get to know her, you gain insight into who she is, you gain knowledge of her feelings for you, and ultimately as love develops, you both begin to understand the whole of what is going on. As you marry and continue on through life, you continue to understand the completeness of the relationship. I think this is the way believers develop in their knowledge of Christ's love and from there the Godhead that indwells them.

Different man/woman relationships develop at different rates, and so does the relationship between the believer and God. Some get to know Christ early in their walk, while others never really get to know Him due to their lack of interest and walk. This is why Paul asks this for the Ephesian believers.

As church leaders we should attempt to help people develop this knowledge of Christ's love.

Still, this does not answer how we can know that love. Let's list some items of interest.

1. Prayer: As we pray and begin to understand that communication with God we will naturally see the love of Christ in the answered prayer, in the fellowship, and in the comfort we feel.

As a young believer I trusted the Lord to care for some financial needs as well as physical needs. I just knew in my mind He would take care of me and He did. The over riding thought was that He must really love me to do this for me even though I don't know what I can do for Him. I was untaught in the spiritual life, but I knew that there was a reciprocity that should exist in the relationship.

2. Reading the Word: As we read the Word we will learn of Christ, we will learn of His actions toward people and we will learn of the work of the cross. We will begin to see all that He did for people, and for us, and we will begin to understand that He loves people, including us.

3. Study of Christ: As we get deeper into the Word we will understand the ramifications of all that He did in His earthly life as well as in His death. We will learn of His activities in the Old Testament and His actions on the part of the Jews, which will illustrate His love for them as well.

As we begin to understand just who He really is - that He is God, that He is equal to and united with God - we can understand further the Love that He must have had to come down to earth as a human being.

As we know Him we will understand and know His love - not an option, but something we should certainly be doing, and certainly be encouraging others to do.

4. Good works will ultimately help us understand who He really is as well. As we allow Him to work through us in the lives of others we will witness the love He has for them shown through us and see that love develop in their lives.

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,

"Power that worketh in us" must relate to either God the indweller, or possibly to our own faith. This is a good point to contemplate.

He is able to do exceeding abundant things, over and above any of our prayers or even our needs that we don't know about. He can do things we can't even think of - this is impressive, we have a God that is above our own thoughts. How does that relate to those idols that WE create, how does that relate to those belief systems that WE create? He is above all that we can think and yet, bend to our need and request.

There is the reverse thought of this passage as well. He is able, but He may not do exceedingly abundant things. This is why one might surmise the power within is faith rather than the Spirit. His actions toward us and on our behalf are always dependent on our current walk with Him.

Further, the term "worketh" is a middle voice indicating the subject is involved in the action. This seems to mean that the action of the "power" is involved rather than the person. On the

surface it would seem that power would better relate to the Spirit, rather than to faith. He is powerful, and in the context it seems that God is the focus of the work, while we are the recipient or beneficiary.

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

"Glory in the church" not in the world. The world owes God nothing in the way of glory, for they understand Him not. Any glory that is going to come to God is going to come from the church or Himself via Christ and His work. This is to be the plan of action throughout the ages.

The proof of my comment about the world can be seen on practically any television broadcast. He is not upheld as God, He is not upheld as a supreme being, nor is he indeed upheld at all in most shows. If He is mentioned it is in a joking or derogatory manner at best.

Someone did a survey of the media's presentation of things religious and in the vast majority of cases the portrayal was negative. God's people are portrayed in a negative light as well. They are the perverts, they are the whackos, and they are the deranged. No, don't look for the world to glorify God in any way. If they do see Him in a positive light it is often for a profit in the end.

Next, we need to consider how He is glorified in the church. Or is He in our current day? Most would say that He is and I would probably agree, but I question how much glory He is finding there in recent days. The glory seems to be shared by the flashy dress, the technologically correct presentation, the accomplished musicians/instruments, and the flash of the current "worship" climate that is specifically designed to appeal to the flesh of the lost.

How can it relate to the glorification of God when we appeal to the flesh of lost man? How can satisfying the fleshly desires of Christians even glorify God. Many worship services are totally designed to reach the human side of man rather than to stir the spiritual side to consider God and His desires.

APPLICATION:

1. I would like to look at two things here.

a. Verses fourteen and fifteen speak of our relationship to the Father. I would suggest for your thinking and contemplation the fact that the single female parent family that is in our society, lacking a father image, is not. God the Father is our father. Any single female parent needs to understand this and apply it to their lives and their children's lives. Yes, a man in the house is great and needed but the Father can supply many of those things that the child will need. He is their support, He is their strength, and He is their comfort and all those fatherly items.

What is needed is for the child to be trained properly to understand God's purpose in their lives.

This passage totally speaks to this aspect of God having a plan and Him supplying that which is lacking in each of us to accomplish that plan - that goes for kids as well as seniors and all between.

b. The passage mentions, "the whole family in heaven and earth" and some relate this to not only humans, but also to the angelic host. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown mention that the angels are sons by creation and we by adoption. Whether the angels are included or not I am not entirely convinced. I don't know that it makes a lot of doctrinal difference either way, it is impressive enough to me that I am a brother same as Paul, same as Abraham, and the same as Moses. If you want to include Michael and the other archangels, I'm even more impressed that such as I can be in the same family as such as we have named.

2. It is of note that this whole section is full of doctrine and it leads to Paul's grand doxology in the final verses of the section. When is the last time doctrine moved you to praise and worship? Many pastors criticize doctrine as being to "super saintly" and a waste of time, but Paul found it vital and it brought him to great praise for the God that set all these doctrines into existence.

When you study doctrine, always take time to contemplate God and how it relates to Him and His glory. Doctrine is not and should not be treated like a four-letter word. It is the meat that the believer ought to be feeding on daily.

It is no wonder the church is full of screaming babies and problems, all they are getting is milk - they need meat so they can grow and be nourished into adulthood.

3. We mentioned that bowing if not prostrating one's self in prayer was preferable to other positions. This is due to the concentration of the mind on what we are doing. When sitting or standing our minds tend to wander off into oblivion, while kneeling or laying face down tends to remind us of what we are supposed to be doing.

Many there are that have joked about the fact that when fishing and hunting, they can worship God just as easily as when in church, but I have never seen a fisherman fish or hunter hunt kneeling or prone with his face to the ground.

HE IS OUR LIFE, NOT HIS CREATION! Is this not what Romans one is about - worshiping the creation rather than the creator? (Rom. 1.19-25)

Of course we can praise God without being in a building with a cross on top, but we seldom do if we are all really honest. Making a conscious effort to be with Him is the key.

4. In verses sixteen through nineteen we see, "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 fullness of God."

This seems to describe super saint in our day and age, that one that walks with God daily, moment by moment and the one that is always in the Lord's control to do what is right at every turn. It describes the one that is able to answer every question with Scripture and defend against every detractor with the Word.

However - note that he is not speaking to a few, or an individual, but he is speaking to every believer at the church at Ephesus. Today in our churches, we seem to have a few super saints, that are really those average saints that Paul is speaking about, and then we have a lot of superficial saints that are far from living up to this Scriptural standard. This is wrong. We all should be as those Paul is speaking of - filled with the love of Christ, empowered with strength for the spiritual battles before us.

"Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" - Does that really sound like the run of the mill Christian today that has every self help book ever published, the run of the mill Christian today that watches the Dr. Phil Show in the hope of finding strength to go on, or the run of the mill Christian today that attempts to live by the quack of the day advice on the television - those that can't get their life together enough to function in life.

God stands ready to strengthen each and every one to the task at hand if we will only walk with Him and allow Him to do the work He wants to do within us and around us. God desires a powerful church not a church that is poorly balanced on the brink of emotional collapse.

In nineteen eighties I was told by a friend that was part of the leadership in a fairly large church in one of our large cities that his church has a hard time keeping enough families emotionally healthy enough to minister to the unhealthy. He was speaking in the context of the many divorces, drug and drinking problems, and the child rearing problems. The churches entire emotional strength was being drained by those Christians that were unable to operate in the strength of the Lord.

It is wonderful that the church had healthy members to minister, but oh how sad that so few were there that could have the freedom to do the work of the Lord outside the church due to their total immersion in ministering in the church to faltering believers.

Where is the strength in the church today? Where is the power in the church today? These passages of Paul's are for us today as well as to the Ephesians - we need to be teaching these principles to our believers and getting them on track for use by God in His work inside and outside the church.

5. Verse nineteen states, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Filled with the "fullness of God." Does that sound

like the average believer today? Does the temper ridden believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the cheating believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the lying believer show forth the fullness of God? Does the swearing believer show forth the fullness of God?

I might ask whether the famous believer that commits adultery shows forth the fullness of God. Does the famous believer that swears on the sports field show forth the fullness of God? Does the famous believer that takes acting roles of immorality show forth the fullness of God? Does the famous believer that is in the political arena that uses the tactics of the world show forth the fullness of God?

One further question. Are you showing forth the fullness of God in your life?

Section eight: 4.17-32

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

Paul again calls the believer to walk - not as the lost Gentiles walk - and goes into the lost's perverted mindset and lifestyle. We are a different breed, with a different purpose and a different mind than the lost.

The lost walk in the vanity of their mind. Now, that is sooooo true. What ever vanity they can conceive they will make a part of their lifestyle. We won't take time here to talk about the fact that within a year or two the Christians of America will adopt the same vanity and call it godliness.

The term vanity can relate to "void of truth and appropriateness" or "perverseness," "depravity," or "want of vigor." Vanity of their mind would describe the want of truth or the depravity of the mind. The inability of that mind to discern truth or that which is appropriate.

If this is truly the lost mind, then the things that mind dreams up to be good and fun, ought surely not be related to the Christian mind or action. Just because the world gives us filthy lyriced rap, does not mean that Christians should imitate it. It came from a polluted mind not one that was transformed by the power of God.

Believers ought to gauge their activities and actions to their creator not the fallen created, to their transformed mind not the depraved mind of the lost.

I would challenge you to name something that the vain mind has come up with in the last century that the "Christian" church has not adapted to its own walk. We have taken on and surpassed the losts use of divorce, we now have homosexual churches, we have everything Christian that the world has worldly - yes, we often clean it up a little, but not all that much - we wouldn't want to loose the vanity of it.

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

The lost's understanding is darkened. Darkened is a perfect passive verb meaning that the understanding is darkened and always will be darkened, unless of course Christ intercedes. It also means that it is darkened from some force from without - namely sin in general and specifically may relate to the hardening of the heart by God.

Darkened can be translated devoid of light. When I was in the Navy, we had what was called darken ship condition. When at war any light from a ship could make that ship a nice target for the guns of the enemy, so all port holes and hatches are closed and there is no light on the

exterior of the ship.

One night I was up late and was going down to get some sleep. I decided I would go out on deck and walk forward to a hatch that led down to my sleeping area. I closed the hatch, turned to walk forward and the black was like a thick blanket cast over my head. I immediately had no sense of direction, no sense of what was ahead of me, and no sense that, indeed, there was anything ahead of me like a deck to walk on. I felt if I took one step it could be off the side of the ship.

I had walked that path dozens of times, yet one step into it and I was totally unaware of any familiar item of sight. I immediately dropped to my hands and knees and began to feel my way forward - reaching out for that which was familiar to guide me. I finally found the hatch, but vowed never to go on deck when we were under a darken ship condition again.

Imagine the understanding of the lost. Do you get a hint of why they don't understand you when you take a Biblical stand on something, do you get a hint of the total frustration of their minds, and do you get a hint of why we are not to walk as if our understanding is darkened?

Their understanding has no guide, thus they understand whatever seems right to them - rather sounds like humanism to me - no wonder that system of thought and life developed - it developed from a non-understanding mind. It should be obvious to the believer that humanism is not a system of life that a believer should follow, yet humanistic thinking is totally prevalent in Christian thinking today.

Not only is their understanding darkened, but they are "alienated from the life of God." They can't live the life of godliness; they are alienated or shut out from this type of life. It is beyond what they are capable of - so why are we surprised at the sinfulness of mankind? So, why do Christian's like to pattern their lives after lost people that can't live godly, and can't understand Biblical standards?

They can't understand, and they can't live like God wants them to live - rather plain to me - they are incapable of it - impossible - they don't know God, they can't understand God and they can't live a life that is pleasing to God - no surprise when you understand this passage.

They can't walk after God because of the "ignorance that is in them," - ignorance is not a negative disparagement of the lost mind, but rather a description of their condition. They are without moral guidance; they lack the knowledge that is required.

Their lack of knowledge stems from their blindness, their callousness to truth, their continued disregard for truth and/or help from God.

This passage reminds me of Pharaoh and the continued opportunities he had to respond to

God and His messenger, but he just kept rejecting truth and the callousness just got worse with

each step of his mind. Ex. 14.4 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I [am] the LORD. And they did so." This thought is repeated in Rom. 9.17 "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

The lost person that turns his back on the Gospel may get another chance, but then again he may not. God is not obligated to reveal Himself more than once - indeed, he has done that in nature already and most lost people reject that revelation.

Recently a school district in the south has been considering adding a theory of creation based on "design" rather than evolution. This system was to be taught along side evolution in the schools. The lost of the community reject this as non-scientific and mixing church and state, when it is actually an argument from logic rather than Scripture. They reject it because they reject God. They don't care that it comes from the sciences, they don't care that it may even seem like a possible alternative to evolution, and they just reject it because Christians have extended it as a possibility.

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

"Past feeling" or incapable of feeling further pain. They are insensitive to pain, unable to sustain further pain. The indications are that they have suffered pain, but now are beyond it and/or its effects. This is the only use of the term in the Bible.

"Lasciviousness" can be translated "filthy" "wanton" or "shamelessness" thus giving a very negative connotation to the term. Mark 7.20 lists it among some pretty nasty items of the inner man. 20 "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." In Rom. 13.13 it is translated "wantonness" and in Gal. 5.19ff it is contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit as one of the works of the flesh. "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." It is also used of Lot being vexed by the "filthy" conversation of those around him in Sodom in II Pet. 2.7. (See also II Pet. 2.18 and Jude 1.4.)

Because they are beyond feeling they have made a conscious decision to give themselves over to this despicable way of life.

"To work all uncleanness with greediness." They make this decision and then move on to do all

things unclean with greediness - fulfilling every filthy desire might be the thought.

By way of application we might wonder who these people are. Paul is describing lost people folks - not the total perverts of society but all lost people that have rejected God - anyone that has consciously considered God and rejected the simple Gospel.

This passage is similar to Romans 1.21-32 Take a moment to read it and note toward the last their end. "21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 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;

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

What a sad and pointed passage. A passage that is totally overlooked in the perversion discussions of our day. I am sure that they can explain away all these things that God has so clearly revealed to us, but they can't change or pervert God's mind. His Word represents His mind and His mind seems quite made up on the likes of these, no matter how nice and fuzzy the media likes to paint them.

We have churches in America that cater to the homosexual community and see nothing wrong with that perversion. The "lifestyle" is totally accepted and honored in these churches no matter what God has declared in His very clear Word.

One might wonder at the leaders of these churches. Leaders that will be held accountable for their actions and decisions. Notice in the Romans text - they have pleasure in doing what is so totally wrong. Talk about a complete rejection of God.

By way of application, I can see a great reason here for witnessing to those folks that you meet

each day. Many of them have not made that decision that will head them down this evil trail, but if someone does not intercede with the Good News they may well make that final decision against God and begin their destructive path.

I could be wrong, but this Romans passage seems to speak of people that have unequivocally rejected God and all that He has revealed. These are what our prisons are filled with, these are those that enjoy the pain of their victims, these are those that enjoy anything that gives them pleasure no matter the cost to others.

I further believe that those that have not totally rejected God will not travel this road necessarily, though it is wide open to them. I believe that until they have ejected God they have opportunity to accept Him and avoid this horrible end. Peace is only a decision away for the lost, yet those that have decided no have no hope, their heart is hardened and their destruction is sure.

It seems appropriate to view Paul's comments in Ephesians to apply to the lost in general while the Romans passage seems to be a passage related to those that have truly rejected God by a decision of their mind.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

Wow, what a relief! The believer has not learned this perversion of truth. Glory to God that He has protected us from the likes of those that have rejected Him so completely. It is not that we don't know of these things, it is that we are not involved in them. We are free of such corruption due to the work of Christ. If not Christ, then we would be in danger of the same peril.

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

He has really blasted the lost so you should be at ease, but beware for Paul seldom blasts without purpose. He is setting up the Christian for a little blast of their own. He now is talking about what the believer has learned, what the believer has been taught and what the believer should believe - TRUTH that is found in Christ.

The thought of the text is that you don't live that corrupt life that he has just described if indeed they have learned of Christ properly, have been taught of Christ properly and accepted truth properly.

Look out, here it comes, if you aren't to live that way then he must be going to tell us how we ought to live and this isn't going to be pretty for some believers.

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.

There is the blast and we will see a little later as well. Now, let's look at those verses' one at a time.

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Now, follow closely. "Put off the former conversation the old man" This is an aorist middle which means it is a one time act (aorist) and it is something that we are actively involved with when it occurs. It seems that we as believers at some time put off things related to the old man, or the old nature. The when of this occurrence is not yet in view. ("Conversation" relates to behavior or manner of life.)

"Is corrupt" happens to be a present passive which tells us that the old man or the lost man is in a continuing state of corruptness and that the action of corruptness is from without - it is a state that continues not by our own accord, but by God - not to say that He had, in any way, anything to do with us becoming corrupt - that we accomplished all by our lonesome by being born into the Adamic - fallen race.

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

The thought here is that we need to be, indeed, are renewed - a present activity that is accomplished from without WHEN WE

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We put on the new man - a one time act that is accomplished by our own action. This results in God taking action, that "created in righteousness" or if you will the rebirth of salvation.

Let's recap. We are corrupt but we can put off that old man, and we can put on the new man, but it is God that does the rest. When we accept Christ, we reject the old and put on the new by a conscious decision and from their God recreates our worthless beings into something that He can use and we can live with - literally live with eternally.

Now, the ramifications of this: Remember all of these actions are aorist, or one time acts, not a continuing action. We put it off, we put it on and God recreates - done deals everyone. Remember that when you start to consider the teaching that says we have a struggle going on between the old man and the new creation - these facts of Paul's don't seem to fit into that teaching very well - please reconsider that teaching if you hold to it.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

And now some practical application - stop lying to one another and speak truth to your neighbor or the ones that are near you because we are members one of another - we are equal, we are unified, we are one, and we are the body of Christ.

"Lying" is the translation of the Greek word we gain pseudo from - falsehood, a willful knowledgeable telling that which is not true.

If you work in most workplaces you know what I am talking about - the lie is the norm, why tell the truth when a lie will work. In fact why tell the truth when a lie will work even if the truth would result in a better result.

The lie is the basis of our society. The misleading is the norm. The half truth is to be expected. I have even known Christians that carry on this way, but Paul calls them to a better standard - speak truth.

The term "members" literally relates to a part of the human body. We are an integrated part of the body of Christ, so why would we lie and mislead with falsehood? We are in essence lying to the head, Christ, in that any communication between members of the body must go through the head. The right hand can't get assistance from the left without the head sending a request to the left that will result in the desired effect.

I think this relates to "How are you doing today?" "Oh, I'm pretty good." when the pretty good might be better stated, I have not felt good for weeks and the doctor is concerned about what it is. We need to be honest with one another. We can't minister to one another unless we know that something is needed.

This relates in being up front in all things especially financial. A church congregation should have access to the books, to what is being paid out, what is being done with the Lord's money. I recently asked a young minister what his senior pastor received from the church. He did not know. I asked if it wasn't in the yearly financial statement. He replied that only a lump "Payroll" sum was listed for the congregation to see. While this is not a lie, it certainly isn't the spirit of this verse either.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Ahhhhhhhh one of my favorite verses. Paul tells us to be angry, just don't let the sun set on your anger. Isn't that refreshing? NOT! Read that as a rhetorical question, "Be ye angry?" If so, sin not and take care of it before sundown.

There are two points to the matter of the anger. First it is a passive meaning that the anger is coming as a result of outside forces. Secondly, the word for angry used here is usually related to something that is from the inward or the cause of anger. In short this is anger that is generated because of something external that has happened. It is anger that your spouse causes in you

because of something they said or did. It is anger that your congregant caused to well up within you. It is the anger that your pastor caused to be stirred within you.

If you have this sort of anger, deal with it before sundown. That would cure a heap of problems. Since this is the context of the church body, I wonder how much more peaceful churches might be if sundown was the extent of any anger/problem. Normally in churches we put up with this anger and it just dwells within and consumes our thoughts, our emotions and our time. Days often go by until the anger wells up and comes out at someone unrelated to the problem. Often we just bottle up this anger and never deal with it thus hindering ourselves and our usefulness within a church body.

Note that to be angry doesn't seem to be the sin, but the not dealing with the anger is the sin. If this is in the context of the pastor irritating you, it is you that sins, it is you that will be suffering, and it is you that must correct the problem. Often these "church" problems are one sided. The offending party seldom knows that there is a problem.

"Exasperation" is another meaning of the word translated wrath, so it may not be just anger, it could simply be that you are really upset or up tight about a situation.

27 Neither give place to the devil.

"Devil" is the term "diablos" and often relates to the Devil himself, but can simply mean slanderer or one who slanders or falsely accuses. This might be one that seems to take the Devil's side by slandering someone. Every translation I checked uses the term "devil" but in the context we are discussing the church body and the member's relation to one another. I would not want to go against so many translations but wonder if this might be better seen as give no place for slanderers.

Though almost all uses of the term are translated devil, I Timothy 3.11 uses it as slander. "11 Even so [must their] wives [be] grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." It is also translated false accusers in II Timothy 3.3 "Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good," (Also see Titus 2.3) It is also of note that Paul is the only one of the New Testament writers that uses the word in this manner, thus one would feel free to see slander or false accusation in this context as most fitting.

Even if you don't feel that this is true, it is certainly a good application - don't give place in the church body for slander to arise. The body is no place for it.

How might we set a condition so that slander and false accusation is not easily proffered?

- a. Create a loving body - all people showing love one for another.
- b. Stop anyone that wants to begin to slander or bring accusation before they begin.

c. When you know it is in the body, name it as sin and confront it at its source immediately.

d. If you can't stop someone from doing it, then walk away and ignore that person when they begin their sin.

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.

A definite call to honest work for a living as opposed to the easy way of life. The text speaks of stealing, but there are today, some that make a living in a manner that is not far from stealing, yet it is legal. The point is that we are to labor with our hands - do actual work for a living, not live off other people's labor.

There are many today on the welfare system that are living off the kindnesses of those that work for a living. I don't want to deny those in need what they can gain, but if the gain was not there, many more would be working for a living. Those that are able to work and do not work are a continual drag on society and should be corrected in their life style.

The last part of the verse is of interest - working is not only for gaining a living but for helping those in need. Today, we have the panhandlers that are making more than any of us working folks and they don't even pay taxes I would guess, since what they receive is a gift.

Churches are inundated with people wanting a handout. Many of them know the system and claim to be Christians, some even find out the pastors names in neighboring towns in the fellowship of the churches they are hitting up so that they sound more legitimate. Churches have a very hard time knowing who is really in need and who is conning them.

Many have simply stopped helping anyone and refer everyone to the social services in their area - not an unwise idea to me. It is suggested that we help those in our own assembly that are in need - we can hold them accountable, we can know their need is legitimate and we can see the good our assistance is doing.

Some today will not work if the work is hard. This word translated labor carries the thought of fatigue with it, or the idea of working hard, working and toiling, or working till you are fatigued - not a concept for our easy lifestyle day is it? Today if we have to toil, we look for another job - we can't hinder ourselves like that is the thought. We must find a place to put in our time so that we can gather a pay check - forget that WORK stuff!

I think this verse presents a principle that most of us have experienced. The reward of hard work and having extra money to share with others is a real blessing.

I "retired" a couple years ago and this is one thing that has bothered me. There is no reward for sitting and watching television or drinking coffee at the local fast food joint. Those days when I

find a lot of things to do around the house and maybe running errands are a real boost to me because I feel I am accomplishing something. If I weren't able to write, I most definitely would be back in the work force if I could find a job.

Many on our welfare system have never known that joy and the system is not about to allow them to. The system is self perpetuating so they must keep people on the roles so that they have a reason to exist. Some states have started requiring people to work for their check. You can tell the free loaders very easily. They are the ones that are upset about having to work for something that is "owed" them, while those honest people that are in the system due to no fault of their own are overjoyed at having something to do and being productive.

I have often wondered about people that lived on crime. It must be a frustrating thing to have to be constantly planning and scheming to find enough money to live on. They can't just go and put in their eight hours and then enjoy the rest of the day, they have to be thinking ahead about how they are going to get their next fix, or their next hit so that they can continue on. Seems a job would be an easier option.

One other application. This seems to be an absolute. Don't steal, but go to work. That isn't a multiple choice, it is an absolute - do it this way, not the other way. So many today have been educated in humanism which tells them they don't have to do what they don't want to do, they only have to do what they feel like doing - there are no absolutes, just what you want for your life. This verse proves the basic premise of humanism incorrect - there are absolutes that ought to be followed.

It is also of note that Paul places stealing as a part of the lost person, while specifying that the believer is to work for a living. That ought to tell us something in and of itself.

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.

Oh, Paul has left giving Biblical advice and gone to meddling as the old timers used to say. What a nasty thing to say to Christians. Why would he ever say such a thing, implying that a believer would ever say anything wrong? Well, he probably was a time traveler and knows what Christians were like in the two thousands. Not that believers of all ages didn't need this admonition.

We are a righteous, saved, purified bunch but our tongues can ruin lives and seem to be straight out of the gutters. When in the Navy I took on a rather colorful way of talking, and into my early married life it came. In retrospect I have to wonder why my dear wife put up with my language - why she didn't put a sock or a dozen in my mouth I will never know.

Now, from the non-swearing perspective I wonder how people can stand to listen to themselves. In our neighborhood we have people that stand in the middle of the street using gutter language

to try to level one another out verbally. They pay no mind to children walking by or neighbors that can hear every word inside their homes.

This not only relates to swearing but relates to anything that ought not come out of your mouth, lies, gossip, backbiting and even base language. Base language would relate to things that aren't discussed in normal society it is the language that is slowly being worked into the television commercials ever so "innocently." All are un-natural to the believer that has the Spirit of God within to assist them in Christian living.

On the contrary we are to edify with our mouths - build up rather than tear down - a novel concept! We are to build up one another not make others feel inadequate, unwanted and worthless.

Looking back on some of our "fellowship" over the years, much has bordered on the corrupt side of this verse. Church members getting together to complain about the teacher, the pastor, the deacon board etc. while few, it is very sad to say, border on the "edifying" side of the passage.

We did have some edification from student get togethers while in college. One couple in particular stands out in my mind. They were neighbors and one summer we started getting together in the evenings for snacks and talk. Normally the conversation turned rather quickly to things of the Lord and we would spend hours talking of spiritual things. The most special part of these times was the fact that we were challenged by the discussions to better spiritual lives - at least my wife and I felt that way - we were built up in the faith, challenged to live a more pure life, and encouraged to be more open with our faith.

This is what the idea of "fellowship" is, rather than the usual talk believers involve themselves in - the news, weather, and sports. Years ago I preached a sermon on fellowship and mentioned the usual news, weather, and sports. It was in a little cow town just off the interstate in a church full of ranchers. After the message one woman came to me, grabbed my hand, and told me that I was right on in my message, but I really had one thing wrong, in that little church it was news, weather, and bulls. The point - spiritual things should enter into our fellowship so that we are built up in the Lord.

The news, weather and sports will take care of themselves, but spiritual growth requires other topics for furtherance.

We are to do this so that your conversation is giving grace or good to the hearer, rather than negativity, venom and trash.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The reason for this call to purity of speech is so that we don't grieve the Holy Spirit. He is within us to assist, teach and guide, and if we don't live as a Christian ought we grieve Him - we ignore

Him - we thumb our nose at Him. Not a great situation to be in Christian.

It is the Holy Spirit which seals us in our salvation. We are guaranteed by His seal. Why would a believer ever go against the Spirit, yet we often do just that.

Redemption is the thought of purchase back or buy back - to pay a price for something. We are sealed unto the day of redemption when we are finally, completely removed from this life and world and transferred to the next. We are sealed or guaranteed to that last day - nothing is going to change that destination. Why would we ever want to grieve the One that is responsible for doing this great thing for us spiritually? Sin is the choice and we all too often make it.

Often, on internet forums I see questions about whether a certain act is grieving the Holy Spirit. The strict context here is the misuse of the tongue and those things just preceding the verse, but I suspect the Spirit is grieved anytime we step away from His assistance and leading. He is there to minister to us, so anytime we remove ourselves from His influence we are in essence turning our backs on Him.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And another blast from Paul on the use of the tongue and mind. They are not for the gutter and world; they are for kindness toward one another. The use of "and" between each word seems to have a certain amount of force to it. He is making it very clear that each and every one of these things is to be put away, and put away with malice.

"Bitterness" comes from the idea of a bitter root that brings forth bitterness of fruit. Something that is sharp and very distasteful, something that spreads as it grows.

"Wrath" is that which boils up within and all too often explodes before subsiding. That which takes a serious toll on both the exploder and the explodee - nobody wins when wrath rules a Christian get together.

"Anger" seems to be the action of wrath. The wrath wells up and explodes into the anger that says, does, or doesn't do something that will injure someone else. It is that which keeps the anger going.

I suspect that wrath can be a somewhat natural reaction to things external, but it should be controlled and stopped before it explodes. It should never find action.

"Clamour" is to cry out or an outcry. Again, this may relate to wrath and anger - that verbal explosion that often comes with anger.

"Evil speaking" is the word we gain blaspheme from. It is that which is evil speaking, or

something that injures another. Again, this may relate to the wrath, anger and clamor. It may relate more to the content of the outcry - those cutting and injurious words that go so deep when they strike the one they are aimed at.

"Malice" is malicious, or malignant, a vicious eating thing.

PUT IT ALL AWAY - STUFF IT - PUT A SOCK IN IT if you want a more up to date term or two, though there are probably more modern terms.

These things should not be a part of any Christian's life, nor should it be a part of any Christian gathering, be it two or three or the entire congregation.

"Put away" is of interest. It is an aorist, thus indicating a one time act; however it is also passive indicating that the putting away is accomplished by some force acting upon us. The Holy Spirit is the one that will accomplish this within us as we allow him complete control. The one time nature of this has some serious applications to us.

It would indicate that this is accomplished and that it should never need to be accomplished again - think of that - we should never allow wrath to produce anything without. It may well up within us for a moment, but it should never seep out to others. We may have been explosive in our old nature, but not now, not now that we are His.

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

No! We can't lie to one another, we can't mean mouth one another, and now he wants us to be kind to one another - where will this madness end? Where did Paul gain his education, it certainly wasn't meant for the two thousands!

Paul continues with the marks of a believer and they aren't the marks of many Christians today. We are to be:

"Kind one to another" means simply to be kind. One meaning of the word is to be useful. Be useful to one another and be available for the use of others. Treat them as you like to be treated. A kind word, a kind deed, a kind smile - well not one, but that should be our lifestyle - kind words, kind acts, and kind facial features.

In our "If you see them signaling speed up" society this idea of kindness may be something we need to cultivate - something we have to consciously decide to do and then practice it daily for awhile till it becomes our way of life.

"Tenderhearted" is translated pitiful in I Peter 3.8 "Finally, [be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous:" It can indicate "strong

bowels" according to the Lexicons. Having guts would be our version of the word.

How does tenderhearted and having guts relate to one another is the question? In our "Men don't cry." mindset, it would take guts to be tenderhearted. I suspect it relates to the thought that to be tenderhearted and to put up with the emotions/feelings of helping those that are in need will take some strong character and fortitude.

Working with one that is on their death bed takes some real emotional investment and cost when the person finally dies. Working with someone in the throws of divorce will take time and emotion as well, and may well end in the gut wrenching end of divorce.

Being tenderhearted would be to be open to hurt with others, open to assist others, and open to share the cost with others. The women that provide a dinner for families at a funeral are tenderhearted. The people that visit the sick in the hospital are tenderhearted (unless they are doing it because they think they are supposed to do it.). The person that helps the lost child find their parent is tenderhearted.

If all believers began treating other believers with a tender heart we would have a church that is ministering to one another rather than a church full of bickering, confusion and turmoil.

"Forgiving one another" is a costly position to be in, but it is the place for every believer. Christ suggested forgiving seventy times seven times, thus this is an ongoing item of life. Any disrespect, any short word, any nasty look, and any wrong should be forgiven.

This isn't all that easy to accomplish when there are so many wrongs that are never righted. Righting a wrong isn't your purpose in life however your purpose is to forgive. God will deal with those that wrong us.

The forgiving of the believer is the same word used of God forgiving us, with the minor exception that when God forgave us it was a permanent one time act of forgiveness, while we are called upon to forgive on a continuing basis. God yet forgives us for our personal ongoing sin, but this forgiveness speaks to his salvation forgiveness.

The use of the same word speaks to the completeness of our forgiveness of one another - a hard saying, but one which we are called to accomplish in our lives.

"For Christ's sake" indicates that because Christ did the work and because He loved us God forgave us. That is true in a sense, but God's forgiveness was not based on this need/desire of Christ, but rather was founded squarely on His decrees, and His predestination of us. The term "for" and the term "sake" are general prepositions that can be translated a number of ways so the text does not really indicate what the English seems to. The ASV translates it this way: "and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Darby and Young also follow a similar translation.

And to top it off we are to forgive as God has forgiven us - not forgive with a grudge to satisfy us till we get over it - complete - on the spot - forgiveness.

APPLICATION:

1. Some might suggest that I have been unduly hard on Christians and the church in this section. This may be true, but this week alone - and it is only Wednesday - I have heard on the news of a pastor that has given false reports to the police about being attacked by homeless people, a Christian choir member dentist of murdering his estranged wife, and a Sunday school teacher up on sexually abusing children.

The norm? No, but that is three too many believers in the news. These are men from "evangelical" churches, not the Roman church where we know they have their own problems.

No, Christians aren't perfect, but they ought to act better than they do.

2. Relating to the sins that might grieve the Spirit, Barnes becomes quite clear in what he thinks. I would like to quote a few points that he makes.

"There is a course of conduct which will drive that Spirit from the mind as if he were grieved and pained--as a course of ingratitude and sin would pain the heart of an earthly friend, and cause him to leave you." If asked what that conduct is, we may reply,

"(1.) Open and gross sins. They are particularly referred to here; and the meaning of Paul is, that theft, falsehood, anger, and kindred vices, would grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him to depart. [I am not sure he really means depart here, or rather, cease to function as He wishes. I am not aware that Barnes thought the Spirit would come and go in the New Testament but do not know for sure.]

"(2.) Anger, in all its forms. Nothing is more fitted to drive away all serious and tender impressions from the mind than the indulgence of anger.

"(3.) Licentious thoughts and desires. The Spirit of God is pure, and he dwells not in a soul that is filled with corrupt imaginings.

"(4.) Ingratitude. We feel ingratitude more than almost anything else; and why should we suppose that the Holy Spirit would not feel it also?

"(5.) Neglect. The Spirit of God is grieved by that. Often he prompts us to pray; he disposes the mind to seriousness, to the perusal of the Bible, to tenderness and penitence. We neglect those favored moments of our piety, and lose those happy seasons for becoming like God.

"(6.) Resistance. Christians often resist the Holy Ghost. He would lead them to be dead to the

world; yet they drive on their plans of gain. He would teach them the folly of fashion and vanity; yet they deck themselves in the gayest apparel. He would keep them from the splendid party, the theatre, and the ballroom; yet they go there. All that is needful for a Christian to do, in order to be eminent in piety, is to yield to the gentle influences which would draw him to prayer and to heaven."

3. The lie - something to consider. Just what is a lie? It is the lack of truth, or the misrepresentation of truth. Truth is basic to life, without it we have a hard time functioning. Truth is slowly being whittled from our society. The politicians slaughter it, the media ignores it or now and then bends it for their own advantage.

Humanism would have us believe that there is no truth, that all is relative. Whatever you believe is then truth for you, but it may differ drastically from what the next person believes.

Truth is the basis of our lives. We must know the truth of the Word and live our lives based upon it.

In the work place one is often challenged to break truth - just a little - just a little white lie - just a little less than the full truth. Telling a customer that the boss is out when he is in, telling a visitor that mom is sick when she is not, or telling the insurance man that you are healthy when you know better.

Oh, we can justify all these things if we want, but it makes us liars if we do. John 8.44 tells us that the Devil is the father of the lie, and we honor him when we fall away from the truth in our relations with others.

There is a story that was attributed to an Irish mother but the same story is attributed to Mohammed in a commentary I recently read - now I don't know how we sort that out in comments about the lie :-)) but anyway, either a Muslim man or a son of an Irish woman came and asked how they could right their telling a lie about another person. Mohammed or the Irish mother told the Muslim or the Irish child to place a feather on every door step in town. Then the next day the man or son was to go around town and retrieve every feather. The protest was that the wind would have carried them all away. This account relates just how hard it is to right the wrong of a lie.

Now, since I have been to Ireland and since I have read of the desert, I can't say either account is wrong for there is certainly wind in both lands. Maybe just another example of the lack of truth in our society today.

I like Gill's comment on the lie, "a lie is a voluntary disagreement of the mind and speech...."

4. This idea of anger needs to be considered in our day. We see what is being called "road rage" where people go ballistic because someone does something they don't like while driving.

Aristotle once said, "Anyone can become angry, but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way-this is not easy." Anger isn't wrong, but uncontrolled anger is wrong. The balance is the key.

Anger seems to be a rampant thing in the two thousands. I have a few pet ideas of why it seems to be at such an aggravated level. First, there is the key thought that there are more lost people than ever before. The population is growing rapidly and the Christian element of society is shrinking almost as rapidly. This is why America is going in such a corrupt way - there are fewer Christian voices, and some of them are so far into the liberal camp that they blend in with the lost.

Secondly, there is little to look forward to. Jobs are scarce. Jobs are disappearing. Jobs are not secure. People used to be able to work for the same company until retirement and retire on the benefits of the company. Not so today. Your job may be outsourced or contracted out and you are left in your declining years with no job and ten years till retirement. If you do make it to retirement, the company that you trusted is likely to spend your retirement fund for new equipment and tell you that they are sorry but that they needed the money.

Thirdly, there is no hope. The items mentioned above, and add to that the lostness of the lost - they have nothing to look forward to as far as a next life, so this is it and many of them have lost out on the pot of gold so have nothing to look forward to. Even if they have the pot of gold they look for a bigger pot.

Without any eternal items to look forward to, this life is it. If they are in their declining years and have not made their pot of gold, then they have little chance to do so.

Fourthly, and lastly, I believe our government is creating so many laws and so many requirements that a law abiding person tends to drive themselves crazy trying to obey all of them - those he can remember anyway. There are laws that we have not even heard of. Every time I hear of someone being charged with an accident I hear a new law or two that I had not heard of. A cab driver recently had an accident on a freeway. He was charged with not controlling his vehicle, with not keeping his vehicle in his lane and one other charge. Who knew? It used to be covered under reckless driving.

There are not only many laws, but many not so intelligent laws. The state of Oregon passed a law that school zones would be twenty miles per hour at all times of the day and all days of the week. When the law was finally implemented, it was the above, but only in normally thirty miles an hour speed zones. In thirty-five miles per hour zones the law does not apply.

When the public outcry was heard in the legislature, they determined that this was not what they meant when they passed the bill. One astute voter asked, "Well, didn't you read it before you passed it?"

Add to the above the fast pace, the cell phones, the pocket computers and the anger of others that is often vented upon the calm person and it is no wonder that the country is on a hair trigger to blow up.

The lostness of the world also closely relates. The more lost people there are the more anger and nastiness to go around. What a reason for believers to live as if Christ were their Savior - it can only bring good into a few peoples lives. However, I might suggest when you are nice to a person for the first time, duck because they will probably blow up at you for being religious.

5. Work was mentioned in this study. There is little "good" work ethic in our world today. In my book Mr. D's Notes on Lots of Other Stuff there is a study on "work" that might be of interest to you.

6. The crux of this passage to me is the stark contrast between the lost and the believer. The two are most complete opposites. You cannot find anyway in which they are not opposite. One is evil, one is good, one is corrupt, one is pure, one is godless and the other Godly.

Consider - the corruptness and evilness of the lost, then think of the most opposite living creature that you can and you have what the believer should be. Good in every respect and devoid of evil or corruptness.

The believer is to be a little Christ in this life - not that we won't sin, but that we sin little and walk as if Christ were in our every word, movement, and thought. The believer is charged with this life style and is equipped with the indwelling Spirit so that he can live it.

It isn't a maybe, it isn't a multiple choice, it is an imperative from God Himself - He asks us to be like His Son, He asks us to live as if we are redeemed, rather than like we had never heard of Christ and His Gospel.

Again, imagine what the church - the world would be like if all believers started living as they ought. What an impact the church would have on the world around them if this were to occur.

7. The vain mind is, according to the commentaries, empty minded or "empty headed" - not that we should go around telling the lost that they are mindless, or empty headed, but that is what they are in relation to God. They are totally devoid of God in their minds and lives.

Gill states of the vain mind of the lost, "every natural man walks in a vain show; the mind of man is vain, and whoever walk according to the dictates of it, must walk vainly: the phrase is expressive of the emptiness of the mind; it being naturally destitute of God, of the knowledge, fear, and grace of God; and of Jesus Christ, of the knowledge of him, faith in him, and love to him; and of the Spirit and his graces; and it also points at the instability and changeableness of the human mind, in which sense man at his best estate was altogether vanity; as also the folly, falsehood, and wickedness of it in his fallen state: and the mind discovers its vanity in its

thoughts and imaginations, which are vain and foolish; in the happiness it proposes to itself, which lies in vain things, as worldly riches, honours, &c. and in the ways and means it takes to obtain it, and in words and actions; and the Gentiles showed the vanity of their minds in their vain philosophy and curious inquiries into things, and in their polytheism and idolatry: to walk herein, is to act according to the dictates of a vain and carnal mind; and it denotes a continued series of sinning, or a vain conversation maintained, a progress and obstinate persisting therein with pleasure: now God's elect before conversion walked as others do, but when they are converted their walk and conversation is not, at least it ought not to be, like that of others:"

Section nine: 5.1-16

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

"Be ye therefore" - in light of what I have been saying, be followers of God - not followers of the Devil, of the world or of yourselves, would be the implication. If you are followers of God then you will be acting as such and will be living a morally pure life.

"Be" is an imperative and a present tense - we are told to "BE" followers of God. Not multiple choice, not an option, a command and on top of that with continuing action at all times.

"Follower" can be translated "imitator" as well. We are to look at God in the Word and then we are to imitate Him, not the life we see around us. Imitate His goodness, imitate His love, and imitate all those other attributes that we know He has. All too often, however, we imitate what we see around us in the world, we imitate what we see in the politicians, we imitate what we see in the media - not our object of affection.

A simple, yet so complicated and hard plan of action. It takes the Spirit of God within us to assist us in this effort, but it is an effort that can and should be the norm, not the exception. Today we often lift up a very few as being moral and godly people when it should be every single one of us that are moral and godly.

I must wonder if this mindset of only a few being proper Christians didn't arise out of the paid pastor. He is paid to be the spiritual leader and that seems to let the rest of us off the hook. He is the moralizer, he is the pure one, he is the witnesser, and he is the one with the perfect family, thus we must be a lesser product and we don't have to come up to his high standard.

Then add to that the many paid leaders that fall into moral corruption of one sort or another and we can see why the normal Christian doesn't have high moral standards on his radar screen.

No, it is not the pastor's fault, just the system that we have adopted and the few that falter in that system. The system is in place because the run of the mill believer doesn't want to be doing the work of the Lord that he is gifted to do.

"As dear children" indicates we are to follow as children - dear children - obedient and loving children. This is the same word God used of His Son at Christ's baptism in Matthew 3.17, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is not only someone that is loved, but someone that is worthy of love. God can love someone, even the lost corrupt sinner, but in this case He loves the one that is worthy of that love.

That should give "follower" a little more emphasis in your mind.

"Children" is a general term for offspring, but can also relate to the strong and intimate bond

between any two that have a very close relationship. We are to not only be offspring, but we are to be in a close relationship with Him as we follow Him.

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 sweet-smelling savour.

Not only are we to follow Him but we are to "walk in love" - that same self-sacrificing love that Christ walked to the cross in - that love that caused Him to give His life for us and all those in the future that would believe.

Let's think of this love for a moment.

- a. It was given without thought of reciprocation.
- b. It was given to very nasty unloving people.
- c. It was unconditional love.
- d. It was directed love - toward the past and future believer.
- e. It was a sufficient love - sufficient to do the job at hand.
- f. It was a pure love.
- g. It was a love that sought no gain.
- h. It was a love that was not sought.

You can take each of these items and relate it to your spouse, to your child, and to that nasty terrible church goer that you tend to avoid on Sunday morning.

Walk seems to be related to our English word "perpetual" - continued walk or course of life. It is a present tense so you need to keep at it all your life, not just through this one terrible person - all terrible persons deserve the same walk on your part.

I don't know that it matters, but the term translated "God" here is actually a general pronoun rather than the normal "Theos" which is God. Specifically it is a sacrifice offered to God, but it is not only a sweetsmelling savor to God, but to us as well that have benefitted from that sacrifice. It is a sweet fragrance for all that are involved in the sacrifice, both God and the recipients.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

"Fornication" is a general word for anything that is wrong in the sexual area, from adultery to bestiality - some would wonder just why Paul would put this in the Word of God, but he knew the people of his time as well as our time.

These improper sexual activities are in the church today, not as a major problem for the most part but I'd guess you could find all forms of sexual impropriety within the church. We know from the news that we have adultery, homosexuality, and child abuse, so why would anything else be left out of the perversion of some within the church.

Yes, many of these people are not true believers, but then some of them probably are. We know that Christians commit adultery so we can assume the other perversions of Gods' wonderful gift to a couple - that is one man and one woman, are happening within the church.

The adultery problem in the church is spreading and in need of being stopped, but you hear very few messages concerning personal and marital purity, you don't hear very many messages telling the congregation that adultery is wrong, and there is little else in a Christian's life that will counter what they view in the home (Television and videos)- so why should we be surprised if adultery is a problem to believers.

The normal Christian thinks nothing of filling their minds with the sex and violence and terrible gutter language that is on the small screen, so why would they not go to the theater and get their fix directly. I call it a fix, because it can be a habit, to hear and see those things that excite and stir your mind.

I was moved to an outburst of laughter when I heard of a church in the southwest that had a very conservative pastor. The pastor did a series on the pitfalls of the television and called on the membership to give up the evil machine. He, of course needed one in his home to keep up on what is going on in the world, but all others need to get rid of the box.

The response was great and many people committed themselves to a life without the perversion -- of course they didn't want to loose their investment so they sold their televisions to other church members on the church bulletin board!

Not the methodology that works - church purity comes from ALL getting rid of the problem causers in their lives.

This is the Greek term we gain pornography from - not the normal Christian pass time - well, it shouldn't be.

The term "uncleanness" is the other side of "porneia" - it is the mental side of an improper life. "Fornication" is the outward physical act of perversion, while "uncleanness" is the term that describes the mental, the lust, and the impurity of thought. It is the uncleanness that normally leads to the fornication.

Paul says this mental/outward activity is not to be mentioned as being proper for the believer. Well, duh would be the normal response, but are we not there today. Not in mainstream churches, but the churches that cater to homosexuals are certainly present in this passage.

Many churches, by their non-responsiveness to adultery in their midst are in essence saying that it is a right and proper activity for the saint. There are churches that know their people are in adultery and they do nothing - fear of law suits in some cases, but normally, just a fear of loosing some membership and bucks.

I worked for a man years ago that asked his church board to step into his wife's marital affairs and they refused - why, both of the couples entire families were members and they didn't want to cause problems between the two families.

Add to this the third item Paul mentions, covetousness and you have background for my comments about "bucks" being part of the problem. A church budget must be met, so we must keep those bucks rolling into the plates - don't upset the masses, they might tighten their grip on the dollars.

Think about the fact that Paul groups greed with sexual perversion - tells you something about greed doesn't it. Greed is just as much an enemy of the Christian as impure thoughts - both are devoid of any good in the Christian life.

Not ONCE is Paul's command, not one time should it be mentioned that any of these things be viewed as right and proper Christian living. Think about greed and the church here. Is greed not an integrated part of some of the churches today? Aren't preachers telling their people that God wants them rich, that God wants to bless their socks off financially? Yes and the poor believers that don't get rich automatically feel they are failures as God's children because they aren't spiritual enough to gain God's favor and riches.

This is a terrible weight to place on the shoulders of an already down trodden person that is already overly hard on themselves for their seeming failure in life.

God wants us to be content where we are, be it rich or poor or in between. Contentment is the key, not a financial rating to wear to church so others can see.

Even in churches that aren't preaching the prosperity perversion, the bottom line is often the key to the topics of sermons and lessons. We want to keep that money flowing, so we can step on toes now and then, but don't you ever do it two Sundays in a row, and don't you dare increase the pressure on those toes more than to a light touch.

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Paul isn't done yet. He continues on with a few other items of interest. Don't allow fornication, lust, or greed to be marked as good, but don't let filthiness, foolish talking or jesting be garnered as good characteristics for the church.

"Filthiness" would be well described by the fornication and uncleanness, but Paul has something else in mind here or he wouldn't have mentioned it. Just what he had in mind here is not clear, but if we can consider bestiality under fornication, this filthiness must be along the lines of an overindulgence in any of the items of fornication. I would include here pornography and all that goes with that. Adultery is more of a personal activity, while pornography is the circulation of perversion for the perverts that consume it.

Some would ask what is wrong with pornography. I would leave the full ramifications of it to the psychologists of the world, but off the top, it leads to overt acts against women, it leads to overt acts against children, and I would guess in some cases overt acts against men.

It consumes time and money that should be committed to your spouse if you are married, it saps the time from the work place - if not looking at it, certainly day dreaming about it and gaining it later in the day etc.

It pollutes your mind against normal, healthy sexual relationships with your spouse. It is in essence a form of adultery if it is coming between you and your spouse.

That is enough to warn believers from the problems, but there are tons of further detail that could add weight to what has already been mentioned.

"Foolish talking" is a term that is used only here, so we need to contextualize it a little. Just what does it mean? The idea of jesting seems to be a negative joking, and from the context a jesting about things of a sexual or greedy nature. Joking that tends to make the item more acceptable.

I have heard people talking of some of the homosexual community as being nice, as being funny, as being this or that, well they may be, but they are still homosexual and pushing their "sexual preference" upon our children. This jesting might follow along in relation to some of the television we are seeing that use humor to make homosexuality more palatable to the average person - which includes believers.

The problem at Sodom was not that all were homosexual, but all were accepting of homosexual perversion - they saw it as an alternate lifestyle if you will. There were none speaking out against it. Television is making the sin more and more acceptable, and quite often it is done through humorous sitcoms and talk shows.

Now, back to the "foolish talking" which is centered between filth and humor about filth. We should understand foolish talking as relating to this select area of discussion. Talking foolishly about filth in the context of the church.

Now, I don't think we should be hateful and divisive in our condemnation of homosexuality, but we do need to take a stand against sin of any shade or stripe. I bring this topic up because brothers in Christ are being brought to court in other lands for speaking out about the homosexual problem.

A group of men were in court in Australia recently for charges relating to hate crimes. We have a move in our own country as well as all across the world to make taking a stand against homosexuality as a hate crime. Now that is not the way they put it but that is the result in the lawyers/judges minds.

The laws talk generally about the fact that you cannot speak out against or negatively about any group. The same laws would make it illegal to speak out against burglars if you want to apply it as they apply it to Christians and their telling people homosexuality is wrong.

So, what specifically is "foolish talking?" I would suggest any conversation that uplifts or makes more acceptable, the filth of pornography, or if you include the context, adultery, homosexuality or any other sexual perversion - remembering that greed is also in this context, thus a lot of prosperity preaching would probably be included.

Do you get a little of the feeling of how disdainful greed is to God, to put it in the middle of such perversion? Then again, is it not true that greed is spiritual adultery? We are told that we cannot serve God and mammon, so serving mammon would be turning against God our Father, Maker, and Christ our Groom. I hope that puts a different ring on your overwhelming desire for a new pair of designer jeans, or that new car, that new stereo, that new Ipod, or that new whatever you are coveting.

It is of interest that three of the words Paul uses in this verse are used only in this verse. "Filthiness, foolish talking and jesting" never appear elsewhere in the Bible. We must assume, since Paul used the terms, that he knew the Ephesian believers would know what he was talking about. I would further assume that these were some terms that described well the life they had before being saved. I see Paul as hitting them between the eyes with these terms - look you know you used to be this way in your past life but no more - that is over - these things have no place in the church.

I have to wonder if these terms and actions weren't part of the heathen worship in the temple of Diana that some of them may have participated in, or at least knew of in their past life.

To apply that one, it isn't wrong to confront believers in our day with the practices of the past that they might want to bring with them into the church. Our past life is past and it has no place in the presence of other believers - purity is the key to a proper church life, not the pagan practices of our lost life.

A little direct application might run along the lines of bringing slang and base phrases from the

world into church services. I won't repeat the phrases, but have more than once heard men use worldly base phrases as though they were right and proper language for the pulpit. I had opportunity to explain what one of the phrases meant and where it came from to a pastor that often used it. He looked at me, said "I have never heard that." and proceeded through time to continue using the phrase - thus indicating he did not believe me or that he did not care that he was bringing the baseness of the world into his "ministry."

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.

Now, let's be very clear on this, Paul is saying none of those listed will have any inheritance in the kingdom of God. It has been made clear so far that the redeemed do have an inheritance, thus any in this list must not be truly redeemed. Some serious implications for the covetous person don't you think?

Barnes says of this verse, "The object here is, to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved."

The term "no" is that word we have looked at before. It is used as all, but not all inclusive. As in "all Judea" went to be baptized by John the Baptist, it does not mean that every single one in Judea went out. Thus, the thought is that there may be some redeemed in this list of people but not many. It is the norm that most will not have an inheritance in the Kingdom.

Some might suggest also, that they might be in the kingdom, but just not have an inheritance as in blessings and rewards. In the context of the book I think this would be a dangerous assumption especially if you are a whoremonger, unclean, covetous or an idolater.

It may be that the "idolater" is a modifier of the three - in other words a person that is a whoremonger and an idolater would not have an inheritance etc. The net Bible seems to put application to the text that these wrongs are actually idolatry. "...no person who is immoral, impure, or greedy (such a person is an idolater) has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

There is an emphasis on the knowing - it is something that we definitely know. It is a sure thing. None of these will have an inheritance.

"No whoremonger" is that Greek word " pornos " and relates to improper sexual activity. It includes male prostitution or as the lexicon puts it "lust for hire" but also relates to any improper activity. It would be obvious that his mind is set in the world and not on God, thus he would naturally be an idolater - one having other gods before Almighty God. His god would be his appetite for gratification and/or money.

"Nor unclean person" relates to either spiritual or physical filthiness. This person is not of a

proper nature before God due to his spiritual condition and lifestyle. Again, an idolater - one that is putting all above God and His desires.

"Nor covetous man" is not only the desire for more, it is also strongly related to the wanting of more that belongs to others. Not only does it cover wanting a new car, but it may well relate to wanting the one in the driveway across the street.

This relates to anything in the physical realm that one might desire; be it vehicles, toys, appliances, houses, cabins, boats, or even persons. It would cover the desire for someone else's spouse or physical attributes.

"Who is an idolater" is simply the worship of another god. Setting God aside for false gods. The lexicon points out correctly that this is a plague that can come upon a believer, thus we may have some information upon which to make a proper interpretation.

If a Christian can be involved in these, it would seem that the general sense of it is that if anyone has these problems in their lives, then their inheritance is not going to happen, though if they are believers they may have entrance into the eternal state.

They make it in but there will certainly be embarrassment about their life here on earth, and there will probably be sorrow over lost reward.

This seems to be the thought of the text, though one that is in fornication, is unclean, or is covetous might want to take a second look at their position before God, because these are not normal for the believer, and these are counter to the Spirit of God that lives within the Christian. If these are present, one must wonder if He is present.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

I would guess that Paul knew someone was coming to them with these false values of Christianity and he wanted to warn them. Today there are many that are giving false values from the pulpit and from the lectern as well as through the Christian media.

Base your values on the Bible and nothing else. If you can see it clearly expressed in the Word then it is so. If someone has to use tricks of the Greek/Hebrew to show that a verse tells you to do or not to do something seek other passages that would support this line of thought. Beware anything that is not clearly expressed.

The Word is God's message to us and we don't need someone with vain words explaining it to us. The pastor is to teach, explain, and encourage acceptance of that which we can plainly read.

Just don't listen if the speaker's words are vain or empty as the Greek word implies. Words that

have no content, words that sound good but have little meaning. I crack up at some of the language you hear on talk shows, but I crack up further at those that revel in these empty meaningless words.

Gibberish is spouted over the stage and it is accepted as something that soothes the soul when indeed it can do nothing for the soul or the mind.

The term translated "disobedience" is translated this way a couple of other times and it is clearly speaking of lost people. The word is also translated several times "unbelief" which also clearly indicates the lost person that has no belief in God.

The wrath of God is upon the lost and this verse indicates it is due to the vain words of those that teach them. What a terrible responsibility those teachers have for what they have done.

It might be suggested that this verse shows the previous verses are speaking of the lost, but this is not necessarily true. It can also speak to the believer that is living incorrectly. Paul is just saying that it is these things - that long list of sins - that bring the wrath of God down upon the unbelievers. The point being, avoid these things, they are for the ungodly and never for the believer.

To the point of application, you might want to remind those believers that are tied up in ungodly acts that these things are what bring judgment upon the lost, and that they should not be involved in such things.

Some suggest we should not use negatives when giving the gospel - why would be my question? Why would we not use the negative to show how positive Christ is? If we were to speak of only the salvation, they would not know what they are deciding against.

If you saw a house on fire would you run through the house yelling about how nice the weather is outside, or would you be yelling "FIRE?"

Paul used negatives via the moving of the Spirit, so I would think we would be in good stead to do the same. Tell those people you witness to about hell and judgment - it is coming and they can avoid it. Fear isn't the prime reason for accepting Christ but it surely doesn't hurt. Hell and judgment are certainly to be feared.

I fear the church has been duped into much sin because of the vain words from the pulpits of America. How else could we have the same divorce rate as the world? How else could we have the same teen problems as the world? How else could we have the same family problems as the world? We have been sold a bill of goods - that by the way requires responsibility on our part because we bought the goods as well. Both messenger and recipient are responsible and both will be held accountable in the end.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

Simple statement, they can preach their vain tales, but you don't have to listen, you don't have to believe, you don't have to be sucked into their lies.

Recently a man in Southern Oregon was on the internet trying to talk women into committing suicide with him on Valentine's Day. He invited many to his place where he had a large beam upon which he thought they all could die together.

Thankfully no one decided to become partakers with him in his madness, indeed the police found out about the plot and arrested him before he could commit the act - if indeed, he would have taken that final step.

It is simple, if you take in false teaching, you are responsible. You can point the finger at the false teacher, but it is you that are responsible before God for your belief system.

We once knew a man that held to a very conservative view of divorce and remarriage. He taught that view quite extensively to his congregation. That is until he found a girl friend, then he began teaching that divorce was all right and that God would bless a remarriage.

From what we heard the congregation accepted this "new" teaching because they accepted the divorced and remarried pastor. They became partakers in his sin and disbelief.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

"Sometimes" is rather misleading here since the lost condition is not a sometime sort of thing; it is a permanent condition until Christ makes a change. It is possible that Paul is speaking of their post salvation condition, and if that is the case sometime would be acceptable. The term is translated "in times past" and that translation more than it is translated sometimes, but it would be the context that would tell which was appropriate.

Whether "sometimes," or "in times past" the result of salvation is a NOW condition of light rather than darkness. Light is our condition and we ought to walk like it rather than blending into the crowd as so many believers do.

I recently saw a Barna report that over three million believers in America are unchurched. I would suggest there are three million people that can't find a Biblical church to attend, but that would be negative so I won't. The interpretation of the church leadership that was asked about it was that this is diminishing the witnessing of the church and that it is a detriment to the church.

I might suggest, that the assumption that all non-churched believers are non-practicing Christians is about as arrogant an assumption as I have heard in years. Why would that assumption be made - especially in light of the fact that most "churched" believers don't witness.

If I were a church leader I would question what the problem might be as to why the people are unchurched. Is it the church, is it the way we do church, is it the lack of teaching, is it the lack of fellowship, or is it the lack of spirituality in the leadership - I can find a number of possibilities that do not relate to the unchurched peoples lives at all.

Darkness is the lack of light or the ignorance of divine/spiritual requirements and personal duty. This looks forward to the associated ungodliness and immoral living as well as hell, according to the lexicon I have - darkness leads to eternity in hell and light leads to eternity with God.

We mentioned using hell and judgment in our witnessing. What a passage to point out the differences that our choice will make.

"Walk" relates to progression, to making one's way, or as one of the lexicon's meanings which I really like "to make due use of opportunities." I really like that - making full use of Godly opportunities of life as well as making due use of all opportunities for witness, for ministry and for assisting others.

That is the life we ought to desire, it is the life that God desires for us, and it is the life we ought to desire for our spouses and children.

"Light" is of interest to us. We are in the light when we walk in the daytime or in our home when the lights are on. We live in a high crime neighborhood and have had problems with car break in, graffiti etc. so I have enveloped our home/property in light. We have three lights on the house, one on the garage and then two motion detecting spotlights around the car.

Now, in the day time the house is in the light, but at night it emits light. It lights up our yard, and the yards surrounding. This is the idea of this Greek term from which we gain our term phosphorous. (phos) "Light" means light emitting, thus we are not to be walking in light but we are to be walking lights. We should be broadcasting light everywhere we go and always be lighting up those around us.

Take a few hours to contemplate that in relation to your everyday life. Who have you enlightened, who have you illuminated of late? Are you walking in the light of others, or are you phosphorous and showing off others via your light?

As with our home, light deters wrong, it makes everything quite visible so others don't want to show themselves for what they really are. Your light will in fact limit sin at times. If people know you do not like nasty stories, they will not come to you with them - usually - rather depends on where they are in the darkness :-)

We had a salesman years ago that loved dirty stories and every week he would come to the shop and tell the same story to everyone. The first time he told me one I just stared at him. He found out quickly that his stories had no place within my ear's space. After that one time, he always

came to me with a "clean" story after he had made the rounds with the dirt.

We need to be dampers of sin, not enablers. We need to extinguish, not fan the flame.

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

The "fruit of the Spirit" is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, but here it is characterized in generality, where as in Galatians, it is characterized in some specifics. "Fruit" relates to the product of a plant. The plant grows and works toward the natural end of producing fruit. The term is used of one's offspring or child. We, as humans, grow and mature and children are the natural product of that process, unless something interrupts that process.

The Spirit of God is living within us to the natural extent that we would produce fruit. Notice "fruit" is not listed as being the one and only fruit there is to some preachers - soul winning. It is anything that produces goodness, righteousness and truth. In Galatians five we see a more specific listing, 5.22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

The fruit of the Spirit may include soul winning, but it does not exclude everything else but soul winning. All our good works are a result of the Spirit's work within us and this is all fruit or progeny of the Spirit.

What is good, righteous and truth - a tall order for the Christian in this century of the church. What a challenge to the churches in our day that use The Simpsons, television shows Harry Potter and the like in Sunday school to liven up the class. Sure there may be some little truth hidden away in those shows, but to watch the rest of the garbage that is its wrapper is not feeding your mind with what is good - we think on things that are in our minds, thus if you watch these shows and others on television that is what you are thinking about rather than the good, the righteous, and the truth.

I would guess that you could find some small truth in a pornography film, but to get at it you would have to watch a lot of filth. I would not doubt that some Sunday school teacher somewhere will adapt porn to their lessons if they are using the Simpsons and Potter.

We aren't adapting the world's ways any more in the church; we are the world in many aspects. I would guess that in some ways we are worse than the world. I can't imagine any lost person using The Simpsons to attempt to teach moral truth, though we do.

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

"Proving" is used of scrutinizing metals, to see if they are pure. It is the checking, studying, and examining of a thing to see if it is genuine. "Acceptable" is also translated "well pleasing" thus we might say that we are to determine carefully what is well pleasing to the Lord.

When you are out in the world and that temptation comes along, instead of jumping right in, why don't you take a moment or two and "PROVE" to yourself that it is well pleasing to the Lord.

If someone offered to sell you a three hundred-dollar gold coin for fifty dollars, wouldn't you make sure that the gold coin was indeed gold, and that it was indeed worth three hundred dollars? Why, when you find the world offering you riches at a low low price, do you so willingly succumb to the world's effort to side track you from what is acceptable to God?

We settle for what the world has to offer because we have been sold a bill of goods - the media, the advertisers and our own lust and greed have us ready to buy that which will make us happy, rather than examine those things to be sure that God is pleased with them. The only thing we are proving in our lifestyles is that the Devil has control of our minds and desires. Well, one other thing it proves - that we are not interested in pleasing God.

The context of finding that which pleases God is in the context of the fruit of the Spirit. May well relate, do ya think?

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them].

Fellowship or participation with is the thought - don't have a part in the unfruitful works of darkness. "Unfruitful" is the negative of the fruit of the Spirit we saw a few verses back. In this case rather than the progeny of someone, it is the lack of a progeny or barren.

My wife grows violets now and then, and she has little success in growing them where we live right now. She seldom can get one of them to bloom; they are unfruitful or barren of that which they naturally produce. The problem is that they are too often in the darkness, or they are lacking light.

Why in the world would a believer get involved in works that produce no fruit, especially when it is works of darkness - REMEMBER we are the light emitters, why would we cloud that light by involving ourselves with darkness? Yes, indeed we would shed light, but why would we shed light in a place that despises the light, rejects the light and works against the light?

It is of note also, that the text says "have NO" fellowship, not have a little fellowship, or dabble in fellowship or whatever rationalization might come along - "have NO fellowship" is the standard set by God and that is the standard we will be expected to meet.

We aren't to have a part in these works, but on the other hand we are to reprove them - we are to make the truth known, we are to expose these works of darkness for what they are. When you see a work of darkness, be sure to have your say, be sure to convey clearly the wrongness of that work, and be sure to stand against darkness when you see it. Don't allow it to go unchallenged.

In today's work place this may be hard; indeed it may be a little dangerous for your job. My wife works for a governmental entity and in the course of her normal Christian life in the work place; she has been accused of being religious. This is an accusation she has denied by clarifying that she has a relationship with Christ.

The point is that because she says no to some things of the world and speaks her mind on the wrongs of the world, she is "religious" and as such someone to be avoided and marked so others aren't contaminated.

In years past employers wanted believers in their workplace so that they could trust those that worked for them, but today the honest forthright person is the one to be black balled, the one to be avoided, and the one you seek to get rid of. Yes, persecution is coming to the church and we had better prepare our children for it lest they be caught unawares.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

"It is a shame even to speak of those things" - kind of relates to the television and movies and concerts of our day doesn't it. Yet, believers are caught up in the goings on of the world rather than concentrating on the Master's business.

The "in secret" doesn't really relate today because the lost are doing everything that used to be in the secret out in the open on television and the big screen. The lost have no concept of secret or privacy; they just do their thing wherever and whenever they feel like it.

I am told that you cannot go to a public park in San Francisco with any thought of not seeing overt indecency.

Yet, we have, as mentioned, people using some of the world's trash in Sunday school classes because there is a little tad of spiritual truth in the show. There is a little spiritual truth if they include a cross in pornography, but it should never be in the Sunday school classroom, nor in the Christian home.

I was on a Christian web forum and someone asked for prayer for his porn problem, it was from a pastor. The shocker was that there were a number of other pastors that posted with the same problem and another bunch of recovering porn viewers. The church is sick and we have the Great Physician, but he is standing on the outside wondering what has gone wrong.

Nothing in being a porn viewer relates to "blameless" in the qualifications for elder in my book, nor does it relate well to some of the other qualifications. Some would say, well it is only sin, that it is the same as a lie, well in one aspect you would be correct - it is only sin, but on the other hand, many porn viewers become perverted in other perversion that is against other people - not to mention that they are supporting the porn industry and they are hindering their relationship to their wife.

In my opinion any pastor or church leader that is into porn out to set himself aside as totally unqualified for the position. What's more, they ought not be allowed back into leadership until they have gone through a proper program, and proven themselves free of their addiction for quite some time.

DON'T EVEN TALK OF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS. Not that we shouldn't preach against them, but to discuss them and rediscuss them in gatherings is not right.

13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

This relates back to verse eleven where we are to reprove the works of darkness. The verbs in this verse are passive, thus the action is not from you specifically but as a result of the light. We have discussed this before, that we are light emitters, and that light can bring change to those around us. Our being light will reveal the works of darkness and thus they will be reproved.

I get the feeling from the construction here that our being light is all that is needed, we don't have to speak out all the time - the fact that we are there and standing with God, will; see to it that the sin will be manifested and rebuked for what it is.

The problem is that our light is often so well disguised that sin can be sitting next to us and no one would know. In fact many lost are in our churches and because believers are so much like the world we can't tell the lost from the saved.

When living in a small town there was a very strict holiness church that believed in sinless perfection. The people stood out like a sore thumb in the community. They had doctrinal problems, and they had their own sin problems, but they appeared as fairly holy people and in a world of sinners they were easy to pick out from a crowd.

We, all as believers, should be distinguishable from the crowd without a lot of digging and scrapping and wondering about our spiritual condition. We are the light of the world and we need to be known for the same.

I hadn't realized that Paul had a direct knowledge of the church in our day, but he must have to say what he does in the following verse.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Years ago I was traveling along the interstate through Nebraska very late at night. I finally stopped at a rest area for a little nap. It was totally dark when I dropped off to sleep, and the next thing I knew I had awakened to a brightness that was near blinding. The sun was just above the horizon and deep red and orange shining directly into the car and when I turned to see the sun it

was near blinding.

As I drove on down the interstate watching the colors develop I wondered at the brightness and the beauty of a simple sunrise. Christ will give us the light that we need to view our way through life.

A call to the lost or a call to dead saints? The context is strictly saints and how they should live, though he uses the lost as a bad example. This seems to be dead or sleeping saints - wake up and come alive is the call to the saint of God.

Note should be taken that there is a calling to the senses of the saint - it is something that we must do and then He will give light. We must take that first step to walk with Him and then He will respond to our action.

We are light according to previous verses, but here we are given light. What is in view here?

The lexicon suggests that He will give us light for life - He will light our way along the path of life, be they good times or bad times - His light can guide us through anything that comes along.

The word translated "give" and the word "light" is actually one word. Christ gives light - it is kind of the nature of things. We need to wake up and enjoy that light in our lives.

Barnes agrees that this relates to the church though, he suggests others relate it to the lost.

There seems to be much controversy as to who said this. Some suggest a couple of Old Testament passages, though the passages have little to do with this verse. Barnes suggests that it may have been from some book that was popular in the area at the time that we do not have now. It could also have been a saying from the Lord or one of the disciples.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

The term "fool" and the term "wise" are the same Greek word except that the term translated "fool" has a prefix - one letter away from wise is the fool. "Wise" is the thought of learned or cultivated - someone that has some smarts and knows how to use them correctly. "Fool" is the opposite of wise.

Do not live your life as a fool, but as one that walks perfectly, exactly, or accurately. The obvious is that the fool walks through life imperfectly, sloppily and inaccurately. If your life is a mess, you might want to consider how you walk spiritually.

To expand on walking circumspectly, how can you consider a life of cheating or a life full of lies to be "circumspect?" How can you consider a life of sin to be a life that is "circumspect?" How can you run a business life that is a shambles and call it "circumspect?"

The believer has received so much from the master, but we often give so little back to Him. We are called to walk honorably - how are you doing today?

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

The reason for our circumspect walk is that we are to redeem the time left. The days are evil - well duuhhh might be the thought of one living in this century. You don't have to be a brilliant person to know that the days are evil. Paul was speaking of his time - he thought his days were evil! My what he would say if he could experience downtown any city in this country today.

Evil is at every turn of the corner, at many song listened to, and most conversations overheard. Today I went to the neighbor's home to retrieve a tree saw he had borrowed. While he went to the back of the house to get it I stood on the walk outside and was showered with some of the most filthy language I've heard in a long time. This coming from a living room where two small children were playing.

Yes, evil abounds, but we are here to be light in this evil generation and we had better get to work soon. We are to confront the wickedness of our generation and do what we can for the Lord that will direct our path.

I believe that you could sit down and write down every wickedness, and every type of evil that you can think of, call in your friends and have them add all they could to the list, and then watch television and find other items to list. The media is filling our minds and the minds of our families with the trash of the world and we allow it.

As you watch the news reports you must wonder if the world can get any more evil, and then they report something new that you would have to list.

Redeem - buy back the time is an interesting concept. The word implies that we can purchase something, in this case time. How can we purchase back time? How can we redeem the time?

I suspect this relates to what we have mentioned before in this study - being the light that we ought to be and by being light, we are driving back the darkness to some small extent. We can, and should be fighting and confronting evil to the point that it is stopped or at least slowed in its progress in the world.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned as "convicting of sin" and this would be a part of that - He, through us can convict the world of sin and slow the wicked effects of the world. I must admit if we don't get busy in the process we are going to be steam rolled by evil. (John 16.8 "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:")

On the good side of this, how wonderful is it that the Spirit and the Father want us involved in the massive work of hindering the progress of sin. We aren't called on to overcome sin, we aren't

called on to eliminate sin from the world, but we are called to take a stand against it every chance we get. We are privileged to speak for Him, to act for Him and walk with Him - all for His glory and not our own.

It has been a pet theory of mine that each dispensation ends when mankind is totally against God and He moves onto some other method of governing. This is fairly clear in the Word. When Adam and Eve sinned, all mankind was against God even if there were only two. At Babel all had joined in against God. At the end of Noah's economy all but Noah's family had turned against God. At the end of Promise all but Moses was seemingly against God - even his own people were making an idol. At the end of the Law all mankind was against God including His people. God had left the temple due to their sin and corruption. It seems to me that the world is nearing a time when all of mankind is nearing the same point. We have areas of the world where there are Christians living for Him, but those areas seem to be on the decline.

One is left to wonder if Christ's return is near. Might He soon return to set up that last glorious economy when He will rule mankind Himself.

APPLICATION:

1. We have mentioned that we are to be imitators of God. One of the first things that came to my mind was His holiness. He is holy so if we are to imitate him we must be holy also. In fact the Word mentions this specifically. (I Peter 1.16 "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.")

Peter understood this - God is holy so we must also be holy if we are to be an imitator of Him. Not an option, it is fact; to imitate Him we must be holy.

The back side of that is this - if you aren't holy then you are not imitating Him, nor are you a follower of Him - you may be His child by rebirth, but you are far from where you ought to be in your walk.

God is many other things, and all those things should be part of our life to the best of our ability. Love, compassion, forgiveness, concern, uplifting etc. aren't just His territory, but ours as well.

As much as I dislike the WWJD jewelry, it carries a grand message - when we have a decision in life, we are to imitate Him - thus if we can figure out what He would do in this situation we can do what is right.

2. In verse two we are told to walk in love. A very needed item of business for the church today. Christ spoke of love to His disciples in John. John 15.12 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

We talk of love in the church so often, yet we drive people away because they don't believe the

same one thousand one hundred and fifty-seven doctrines that we believe in. We have the attitude in some of our churches that all must fit into our cookie cutter or they are less than we, or less spiritual.

There must be a general consensus of belief on the major doctrines, but there must be latitude given in the minors lest we isolate ourselves from the brethren. I see this all too often on the internet forums. Many of the forums are restricted to only people of a like denomination. If you happen in unaware and do not believe as they, you will soon find yourself blasted if not completely banned from the area.

I was on one such forum for a time before I became aware that if you didn't believe totally one of two reformed confessions to which they held that you were not allowed on the board. I had wondered why I kept coming under attack for general statements - I weren't one o dem!

I have often wondered how it would have been to fellowship in one of the pioneer churches of the west, when people of all shade of belief gathered on Sunday for worship of their mutual God and Father, without the sectarianism of our day. To go knowing that you or your beliefs weren't going to be attacked and demeaned and that you would be able to call your mind to the Lord rather than to the upset of inner turmoil caused by the one in the pulpit.

We went to visit a church we had never been to before. The pastor started in at the first of his message and spent about fifteen minutes spelling out what the spiritual person would believe, and how the unspiritual person would reject such Biblical and correct doctrines. Some of the items he mentioned were definitely keeper beliefs, but some of them were so far toward the fringe of importance that they should not have been on his agenda. He made it quite clear that anyone that did not follow his entire line of thought was unscriptural, unspiritual and unqualified to be a part of his church. Guess one trip was enough to his church because we knew we would never be spiritual enough to feel comfortable there.

3. Barnes speaks well to the point of the covetous being listed with the perversions of verse three.

"Do we not feel that there is a great difference between a covetous man and a man of impure and licentious life? Why is this? Because

"(1.) it is so common;

"(2.) because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion;

"(3.) because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and

"(4.) because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and groveling character of the sin. Yet is not the view of Paul the right view? Who is a covetous man? A man

who, in the pursuit of gold, neglects his soul, his intellect, and his heart. A man who, in this insatiable pursuit, is regardless of justice, truth, charity, faith, prayer, peace, comfort, usefulness, conscience; and who shall say that there is any vice more debasing or degrading than this? The time may come, therefore, when the covetous man will be regarded as deserving the same rank in the public estimation with the most vicious, and when TO COVET will be considered as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. When that time shall come, the world's conversion will probably be not a distant event."

Is Barnes not correct? Isn't the one that covets much more acceptable in the church than an adulterer? We would not accept one living in adultery into church membership (well we do when we accept divorced/remarried people into the membership.) - one that is married and seeing someone on the side, but we give no thought to accepting one that is full of greed. Tell me, what is the difference between one that covets a woman that he is not married to and one that covets gain, or gold or things?

It is a matter of perspective. When you put adultery into the proper perspective of being greed, covetous etc. then we see why one that covets is no better than the adulterer - they are indeed the same, they just covet different things and satisfy themselves at the table of their respective desires.

Really, now think about it - someone that wants to have intimate relations with someone not their spouse is the same as one that desires a car like his neighbor's, or a home entertainment center like the one at the store. Sexual perversion is the same as coveting - realize it and change your life accordingly. No, don't adopt sexual perversion because it is now a lesser sin, but realize that your greed is as serious as sexual impropriety. They are both despicable in the eyes of God.

We need to consider all forms of sexual wrong-doing, as well as all sorts of covetousness when we are accepting people into our membership. I am not suggesting that we investigate a person's personal life, but at the same time we maybe ought to be sure we know them before opening our arms of fellowship to them. Take time in the membership process, get to know the person, get to know their lifestyle and get to know their family - what is this person like, are they living the life of a true believer or maybe just that of a professor.

4. Let's consider the words of Matthew 12.36 in relation to verse four when it says that we are to avoid foolish talking, and jesting. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Surely, you have been in fellowship situation that have fit into the foolish talking and the jesting rather in the thanksgiving, rather than that which is edifying, and rather than that which is godly. Years ago we were in a church where one of the major American evangelists was having meetings. The pastor asked us over to his home for dinner after the Sunday meetings. We accepted and when we arrived we found that we were only part of the guest population. The evangelist and his wife and two of the deacons and their wives were also invited.

Being a quiet person, I seldom jump into conversations, but normally just listen and observe. Since I was a lowly Bible college student I didn't feel that I would have anything too important to add to the conversation. My observation was quite shocking. Here was the pastor of a large church, two of his leadership and a nationally known evangelist sitting around the living room having foolish talk with jesting. Not once in the entire day was the Lord's name mentioned, except when praying before the meal, nor was anything spiritual brought up.

I mentioned this to my wife on the way home and she told me that her observation of the women's conversation was the same.

I would challenge you to not be like myself at that point in time - jump in there and try to swing things into the spiritual realm. Not that the conversation will stay there, but at least you will have tried.

I fear the modern believer dwells on the foolish and idle words because God is doing so little in their life that they have nothing spiritual to talk about - no, not that God is idle, but that the believer today keeps God idle in their lives.

5. Barnes draws a number of truths from verse five when it states that some will not be a part of the kingdom. I would like to just quote it and allow you to consider it for yourselves.

"(1.) that heaven will be pure.

"(2.) That it will be a desirable place--for who would wish to live always with the licentious and the impure?

"(3.) It is right to reprove these vices, and to preach against them. Shall we not be allowed to preach against those sins which will certainly exclude men from heaven?

"(4.) A large part of the world is exposed to the wrath of God. What numbers are covetous! What multitudes are licentious! In how many places is licentiousness openly and unblushingly practiced! In how many more places in secret! And in how many more is the heart polluted, while the external conduct is moral; the soul corrupt, while the individual moves in respectable society!

"(5.) What a world of shame will hell be! How dishonourable and disgraceful to be damned for ever, and to linger on in eternal fires, because the man was TOO POLLUTED to be admitted into pure society! Here, perhaps, he moved in fashionable life, and was rich, and honoured, and flattered; there he will be sent down to hell because his whole soul was corrupt, and because God would not suffer heaven to be contaminated by his presence!

"(6.) What a doom awaits the covetous man! He, like the sensualist, is to be excluded from the kingdom of God. And what is to be his doom? Will he have a place apart from the common

damned--a golden palace and a bed of down in hell? No. It will be no small part of his aggravation that he will be doomed to spend an eternity with those in comparison with whom on earth, perhaps, he thought himself to be pure as an angel of light.

"(7.) With this multitude of the licentious mad the covetous, will sink to hell all who are not renewed and sanctified. What a prospect for the gay, the fashionable, the moral, the amiable, and the lovely, who have no religion! For all the impenitent and the unbelieving, there is but one home in eternity. Hell is less terrible from its penal fires and its smoke of torment, than from its being made up of the profane, the sensual, and the vile; and its supremest horrors arise from its being the place where shall be gathered all the corrupt and unholy dwellers in a fallen world; all who are so impure that they cannot be admitted into heaven. Why, then, will the refined, the moral, and the amiable not be persuaded to seek the society of a pure heaven? to be prepared for the world where holy beings dwell?"

6. There is a strong case for separation from the sinfulness of the world in these verses. We are to have no part in them, those that do will not be in the kingdom etc. On the other side of this, why in the world would any right living Christian want to be a part of these vile and terrible things when they know they are an offence to God? How can a believer want to associate on a continuing basis with those that live like this? We are to be pure, and to remain pure we must be strong against temptation.

7. Barnes suggests some items that tend to distract us from redeeming the time. I will include those at the end of this point, but now, let us consider how we might redeem the time most appropriately in our own day.

a. Just the making of a livelihood for yourself and your family is a good portion of redeeming the time. This is a good and natural consumer of our time, it is ordained of God and anyone that is doing it is doing the will of God.

b. Taking time for study of the Word and prayer are never a waste of time.

c. Doing good works are always appropriate.

d. Barnes suggests the reading of novels as a waste of time. If it is a thing of relaxation, I would suggest that it might be a good thing; however the wasting of hours and hours on reading novels would be a terrible waste of God's time for you here on earth.

When I first saw the "Christian Novels" I wondered at the waste of time as well as money on the speculative nature of something that might have been in the life of Bible characters. If God had wanted us to know of these things He would have delivered the Word in a one hundred volume set.

The same is true of any endeavor that takes up a lot of our time for our own pleasure.

e. Spending time with the lost in the thought of witnessing can never be unprofitable for the kingdom.

f. I know I mention the spiritual gifts that are sidelined by the thousands in our churches today, be it intentional sidelining by the church leaders, or the lazy sidelining of believers that don't want to take the time to do that which the Spirit has gifted them to do. All have a gift or two and all should be using that gift in the benefit and edification of the church body.

g. Raising your family properly will be a grand use of your time. A godly family life when your offspring are small will result in more godly families in the future.

Just as an example, I have often thought that the family my wife and I raised may well have been the primary purpose in our lives. We had three children which resulted in three families with a possibility of nine more families. Now, assuming all involved raise their families correctly God will have produced nine more godly families with children to bring the Gospel to the coming generation as well as the original parents and three families from offspring.

Don't you just love multiplication? I don't want to uplift the Mormon Church nor their false doctrine but a man in a small town in Nevada told me that he had carefully watched the Mormon Church in his town over the years. It started out small, but when we were talking it was very large. The man informed me that he did not know of one town person that had joined the church after the church was established by families moving into town. He said the entire growth of the group came from Mormons having families, and if you know their teaching, large families are the better choice.

h. Spending of our money can affect the time we have to offer to God. If we spend unwisely, we will probably work more to make more money to replace what we have spent.

Now, for Barnes comments:

"There are evil influences abroad; allurements and vices that would waste time, and from which we should endeavour to rescue it. There are evil influences tending to waste time

"(1.) in the allurements to pleasure and amusement in every place, and especially in cities;

"(2.) in the temptations to novel-reading, consuming the precious hours of probation to no valuable purpose;

"(3.) in the temptations of ambition, most of the time spent for which is wholly thrown away, for few gain the prize, and when gained, it is all a bauble, not worth the effort;

"(4.) in dissipation--for who can estimate the amount of valuable time that is worse than thrown away in the places of revelry and dissipation?"

"(5.) in wild and visionary plans--temptations to which abound in all lands, and pre-eminently in our own;

"(6.) and in luxurious indulgence--in dressing, and eating, and drinking."

8. Let's give some thought to the idea that we are to be a light, or a dampening force on sin. In today's society we are called upon to be Politically correct. Why? No one else is being politically correct about Christians.

Supposedly being politically correct is to assure that you do not say something that will hurt anyone else's feelings, or put them in a bad light, yet on national television one of the "comedians stated that Christians or other religious people were neurologically impaired and that they could not think - ruff quote - now that does not put people of faith in a good light any way you interpret it, but If I were to call him a religious bigot I would be politically incorrect and viewed by the liberals as an arrogant trouble maker.

So, if we are already being disparaged in the media and often in the work place, why should we worry about being disparaged by being the light that we are supposed to be? We are on the outside of the lost world, so we might as well act like it. We are going to be looked down upon if they know we are a Christian, so we might as well give them reason for looking down upon us - we can make them into honest bigots by being who God wants us to be. Let that light shine, and be salt in their wounds.

9. Constable and others relate this business of not even talking of these terrible deeds of the dark to the thought that if we talk about them we glorify them and uplift them to the level of becoming attractive to others, thus tempting them with those things we are not to be associated with.

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."

Note the progression of this problem - sin - temptation, lust, enticement and finally sin. Paul does not even want us to start this process by talking about these things of darkness lest someone be tempted to consider it.

Example: Pornography is a large problem even in the church today. We need to warn of it, we need to teach of the error of it, but to dwell on it may well induce someone to wonder what it is like and be tempted to take a peek which will probably move the person in deeper to the lust side of sin and all will be lost in that area of the person's life, just because we "dwelled" on the subject in the church or in fellowship.

On the other hand if we dwell on spiritual things it will move others into digging deeper into the spiritual life rather than the life of evil.

Consider the churches of today, what are they dwelling on. Are they dwelling on spiritual things or are they dwelling on things physical. What is fellowship based on? Is it a getting together to talk of spiritual things or getting together for pizza, bowling and whatever? What is the worship service bringing us to? Are we finding God amongst the self uplifting singers/performers? Are we finding a moving of the spirit from hymns of the faith or finding a tapping foot to the beat of the drum? It used to be "swing and sway with Sammy Kaye" in the world but today it is "whoop and whirl with worship group."

Are the messages stirring the heart or the mind? Are they moving us closer to God, or closer to the preacher's pet peeve and reaction to it? Are they challenging our complacency in Christian living or moving us into an even more complacent place where we can relax and enjoy Christianity as a lazy man's religion?

10. We are to be like God, we are to imitate God, we are to be the example that our Father would have us to be. Matt. 5.48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

That is the standard for Christian living. How do you stand up to the standard? When I was in the service we had some electronic equipment that had to be aligned exactly as the standard or it would absolutely not function properly.

To align this equipment we had another piece of equipment that existed only to generate the standard so that we could know what the standard was. We would have to look to the standard and then with the adjustment of various controls and adjustments we were to adjust the first piece of equipment to match the standard set. When we did that the equipment would work properly and we would gain the information that we wanted. We had about ten different pieces of equipment that all had an associated "STANDARD" piece of equipment to align the equipment we used.

The interesting part of the equipment however was that when the above procedure was accomplished on several different units, then I would have to go up to another area of the ship and open up another piece of equipment and align it in a totally different manner. It was aligned so that we could get the broadest range of signals to pass through it. The pattern was not so important but that the pattern was as wide as possible. Through the use of many coils and controls the adjustments were made to make this very wide pattern.

So it is with God and the believer. We must meet the standard set, but this is not the completion, we must then affect the widest range of people that we can if we are to accomplish the task at hand.

Had I aligned the first equipment and left the final piece unaligned, we could not have gained the vital information we needed. Both the matching of the pattern and the widening of the pattern were vital. So with becoming like our Father, we must grow to be like the pattern, but we also

must spread that good to as wide a base as possible.

This section of Ephesians should be a starting point for many believers, they ought to evaluate where they are in relation to the standard - God rather than how they measure up to the world.

Section ten: 5.17-33

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord [is].

If you want to be wise, understand the will of God. Period - nothing to question - fact, if you want to be wise, you would want to understand the will of God.

Now, the context is sin and the lost and the fact that believers are not to be like the lost, and he wants us to understand the will of God - would seem that not sinning and not living like a lost person is the specific will of God - that isn't hard to understand, yet believers strain and groan to know the will of God.

A young couple a few years ago related that they felt God was leading them to live together (Not married in case you did not catch my drift). Now, I don't know what god they were praying to but it certainly isn't the God of the Bible. Others declare that it is God's will for all believers to be rich. Guess they would teach that any poor person cannot be a child of God.

"Unwise" can mean stupid or foolish. Not the term a Christian should wish to find himself being called. It can also be translated without intelligence. This is the contrast to knowing the will of the Lord, thus it behooves the believer to seek the will of God early on in their life.

Why, would a believer end up on the unwise end of this verse? By following what they want rather than what God wants. By consciously stepping into sin. By rejecting the life of a believer in any way.

Guess, God's way or the highway is the way of things for the person as they relate to God. Matthew 7.13 may relate, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad [is] the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:" The way to ungodliness is an easy one, but the way to godliness is narrow. Matthew 7.14 may relate also "Because strait [is] the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

We might also relate this to the church - a wise church leadership will conclude that a wise move would be to lead their church into purity and righteousness rather than concentrating on the music and all the other peripherals that seem to be dividing the church today.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Now, to that age old question as to whether the wine of the Bible was mind impairing. Many declare unequivocally that it was not, but this verse tends to make them out to be fools in their statements.

Our pastor asked us over for dinner one Sunday. His grandmother and brother's family were there

as well. The topic of the alcoholic nature of wine in the Bible came up and the brothers were discussing it. I was sitting next to their grandmother, a friend of ours, and she started in to explain to them that they were really wrong on this one, that her Lord would not make booze, nor drink it.

She turned to me and glared asking, "Do you think the Lord turned water into alcohol?" and before my answer was formed in my mind she slapped my arm quite sharply and exhorted me "Well, yours might but mine wouldn't!" Friends we remained and as grandma she was still loved.

Don't be drunk or controlled by wine but be filled or controlled by the Spirit. The two are contrasted thus the control seems to be the thought of filled. "Filled" relates to completeness of a thing. In a cup of water it relates to that complete filling to the point just before the surface tension that allows the water to pile up above the rim of the cup breaks and allows the water to drain down the side.

Combine the thought of being pure, with the thought of being totally controlled by the Spirit should be an awesome duo for your mind to muddle around in. This is God's desire and nothing less is the standard of living for the saint.

The obvious application is that saints should not be out boozing it up, but in the other end of the passage, we should never be controlled by anything but the Spirit - not anger, not lust, not desire, not work, not toys, not homes, not any material thing and certainly not any other person or philosophy.

Our life focus should be on maintaining a pure heart and committing ourselves to following the Spirit to the works that He would have us involved with. A side application of this might be that if you are living the best life you can and if you are seeking the Lord's leading in your life, then you can be assured that you are squarely planted in the place/ministry/job situation that He wants you in.

There is no need for you to be squirming and straining to get on to the next phase, just be used where you are.

I visit a "pastors" board on the internet and one of the recent questions was "When should I start to think about moving on?" The man had been in his present pastorate less than two years and was already looking for an excuse to move on. The sad part wasn't only that he was ready to move, but several of the answers seemed to support his beginning to look. They seemed to feel that the average pastor only remaining in a church for eighteen months was a good thing.

I would suggest you don't even know your congregation yet at eighteen months, so how can you think you have done all you can do there? We are called to train and disciple. Christ even took three years to train His disciples, so why should a pastor think he can do it in a lesser time?

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Ah, the catch all proof text for any sort of carrying on that you want to have in your worship services. I've heard this used to back up most anything in the service. It mentions "speaking" and "singing" and that is the length to which the passage will stretch.

There is no way you can imagine Paul had in mind the lengths to which this "singing" has been taken - to include rock bands, punk bands and heavy metal all of which are a bit far fetched.

Note the context of the verse is not chaos; it is being filled with the Spirit - controlled by the Spirit - and being thankful. It seems to be related to the opposite of drunken.

Pastors seem to think they are in power to do as they wish, as they deem it necessary to do to pastor the church. We were visiting what we knew to be a very conservative church that had called a new pastor a few months before. During the message, he told the congregation that he wanted drums on the stage during worship services, but that he knew that they would not accept it, but further he mentioned that they should be forewarned because there would be drums on the stage in the future.

How arrogant does it get? I know what is best for you, I will dictate what and how we will worship God. I am in charge. So much for the redefining of congregational form of government.

We have a number of items that ought to be included in our times together. Indeed, this is not specific to the worship service, but any gathering of the saints.

"Psalms" is a transliteration of the word "psalmos" which can relate to strumming of strings or pious songs. This would relate to the Psalms of the Old Testament collected into the book by that name.

"Hymns" also is a transliteration of the word "humnos" and is a song sung to conquerors as they enter their new city, or a sacred song.

"Spiritual songs" are odes or songs that relate to the spiritual, more specifically to the Spirit - songs that bring one to think of God and those things spiritual. Again, the context of this verse is "being controlled by the Spirit" not being drunk to excess. These descriptions are key to properly understanding the words used in this verse.

Gill takes the position, and he may be correct that all three speak of Biblical information. The Psalms being the book of Psalms, and hymns being another word for the Psalms. He mentions the hymn that Christ sang with the apostles after the last supper. (Matt. 26.30 "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.")

"Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This seems to be an internal item that the individual is responsible for, not the "worship leader" not the pastor or anyone else - the individual doing something internally. This does not allow for outbursts of pleasure, nor outbursts of anything else - internal. I might interject once more the previous context mentions don't be drunk with wine - and I would suggest that acting like you are drunk with wine is not an acceptable item either.

Some observations:

a. This verse is within the context of the entire Bible, thus it must be understood within the context of other verses that relate to worship. It is not the sum and substance of our teaching on worship of the Lord. Indeed, many of the passages on worship in the Bible relate to personal actions and also the worship is often done in a prone position, not standing and dancing around.

A couple of items - standing for the entire song service - why? Old people have trouble doing this and you alienate them from their worship by requiring it. Secondly, some state that we must rise for the reading of the Scripture - to show our honor of the Bible. Uhhhhhhh, does that mean I must stand to read my Bible at home? Does that mean I must get out of my car and stand beside it to read my Bible? Does that mean I must stand in the break room while I read my Bible? Does that not mean that every time the pastor reads a reference as part of his message that we should have stood?

Please, we need to think about the things we say and do and be sure that they are logical. I am sure these pastors want to honor the Bible, they just don't think about what they do and say. Do I not want to stand to read the Bible in the worship service? That isn't the point. I don't mind standing for the reading of the Word, in fact I rather like it, but to say it is something we do every time we read it - to honor the Word - is inconsistent with reality.

Now, to what this singing relates to. Does it relate to punk rock in the worship service? Not in my mind. Does it relate to hard rock in the worship service? Not in my mind. Does it relate to the myriad of contemporary songs in the worship service? Not in my mind.

If contemporary songs are chosen for their God honoring values, as well as their theological correctness, I don't mind them being in the service, but the repetitive, near mantra like so-called chorus that remind one of children's tunes have no place in the worship service. This is God, he understands more than two or three words at a time and we certainly don't have to repeat those same words to him three dozen times for Him to get it.

We went to a church one Sunday and the congregation of about three hundred was belting out the projected "songs" while standing. When I realized they were pleading with God not to take His Holy Spirit from them I almost laughed out loud. Here is a well taught congregation that knows the Spirit is within for all time, yet they are pleading with God not to take Him away from them. How ludicrous is that? Not one protested the singing of this tripe and the next time around, the

verse was sung with even more gusto.

Guess they wanted to be sure God got the message that they didn't want Him to do what He can't do, and they really meant it.

Inappropriate to use a psalm in the worship service, never - just don't use inappropriate Psalms in the worship service. In short - think!

It would be suggested that the contemporary music fad is beginning to find the supporters diminishing somewhat. I have seen indication that some have been rethinking their participation in such things.

I have always questioned why the fundamentalist that holds the charismatic movement as false teachers would want to help finance their movement by buying their music, licenses and the like. Further, why would a fundamentalist want to invite their false doctrine into his church to start indoctrinating his congregation? But then logic escapes many of us from time to time.

Paul mentioned some other characteristics of worship when he wrote to the Colossians. Col. 3.16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Let the Word dwell richly - teaching - admonishing - there is more to worship than warm fuzzy feeling songs that allow your mind to wander from the one you are to be concentrating on.

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Giving thanks always rather seems to be an indication that our thanksgiving is to be a normal part of our lives. This includes when we are down, when we are poor, when we are rich, when we are sick and when we are healthy. I didn't say that it was an easy task, but it is the normal life of the believer. We can do this because we know that all that we go through is meant to allow us to honor God in every conceivable way. It is, of course our choice, we don't have to be thankful, but that is the standard that God wishes us to follow.

For all things - everything, every situation, every opportunity should be an occasion for thanksgiving, not to our own accomplishments, but to God through the name of Christ.

This is, by the way, a good proof text for the way many pray when they close "In Jesus Name." Or "In Christ's name we pray." We should give acknowledgment that we have access to the Father and opportunity to pray only because of Christ's work on our behalf.

By way of application, we need to understand this even when we have bad news - there is always something to be thankful for. This morning I received word that a friend has an aggressive,

serious form of cancer and is undergoing therapy. It is a sad thing for anyone to have to go through this and it is a sad time for the spouse as well, yet we can be thankful that the medical community has advanced so far in their procedures to allow us to reach the ages some of us are reaching with such good health. We can be thankful that there are therapies that can help with some of these terrible illnesses. We can be thankful for the support of friends and relatives, especially in this age when dozens of people can be informed of the need of prayer in a moment through email. (Note: As I am editing this work a few months later, we have had news that the cancer is in remission and the friend is doing very well. :-)

Again, it is not always an easy task, but it is a task that God would approve of in His children.

Specifically, in this context we might understand that the thanksgiving is for our walk in godliness, and the fact that we have fellow believers to surround and support us.

I recently heard of a church where some of the youth had gotten into sinful difficulties. The pastor/leadership had worked with them and they were asked to go before the church to confess their sin. The sin had evidently had an impact on the church as a whole, thus the church needed to be apprised of the outcome. These youth might not see the grandness of going through this, but they can be thankful for the leaders that were willing to assist them through their error to a conclusion that would be satisfactory for the church. They should also be thankful for their parents and fellow church members that were willing to stand by them and accept them and to support them in their coming lives within the church.

In the every day work-a-day world we can be thankful for the job that we have, for the opportunity to use it to God's glory by doing an excellent job at the place of employment. We can be thankful for the everyday contacts we have with people that we might be able to witness to.

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

This thought of submission is not an exclusive thought with Paul. Peter mentions it as well. I Pet. 5.5 "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Most older manuscripts show this as "fear of Christ." The American Standard Version, Darby and the Net Bible show the fear of Christ, while Young and the King James use "fear of God."

This relates directly to the youth just mentioned. They had the option of going their own way, but they submitted to the wisdom and spiritual leadership of their elders to find completion in their problems. Their own way might have resulted in even more problems because they would probably not have gone before the Lord for correction and forgiveness.

Not that we are scared of retribution, though that is a possibility in some cases, but submit

knowing that God loves us and that He requires of us a righteous life.

This is not to say that there are to be people over others in a domineering way, but that all submit to all others as we walk through our lives and we do it with a righteous understanding of God and the ramifications of walking our own way rather than God's.

When someone is not attending church, many go directly to a passage that relates to not assembling together, but I think this verse is much more to the point. If you aren't in church, you cannot submit to one another. This requires presence in an assembly.

In those times when I have been outside of church due to speaking often, or to looking for a church to attend, this is one of the things I miss - having others for support and others to watch and hold me accountable to the Lord and His Word. Sometimes believers can wonder from what is right and correct when not surrounded by other believers.

Of interest is the fact that the submitting that we are to do is a passive verb which would indicate that our submission comes from some outside stimulation. The context is speaking, singing, and praying, thus it would seem that as we do these things in the local assembly we will naturally come under the submission to others that is desired. As we hear Godly sermons/lessons, as we worship God and as we commit ourselves together to prayer, we just naturally commit ourselves to a serving relationship with others in the assembly.

Now, this doesn't speak well for the unsubmitive wife, church member or child that is in a church. This would indicate that the church ministry to those non-submitting people is either deficient or the people are not committing themselves to the ministry of the Word and the Lord.

Is it any wonder church life is so important? Is it any wonder that the leaders are going to be held responsible for their actions and ministry? Is it any wonder we ought to listen when we are in church instead of watching the birds in the tree outside the window, or counting the ceiling tiles above, or commenting to others about Mrs. Jones ugly hat?

Paul goes on to expand this thought of submitting to one another to show what he is getting at.

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Wives submit - submit comes from a combination of two words "sub" meaning below, and "mit" meaning clenched hand ---- JOKE!

This is the outworking of part of the curse mentioned in Genesis. Gen. 3.16 "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

I might mention that the word desire is also used in Gen. 4.7 "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be

accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee [shall be] his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." You will see that the desire has the context of ruling over - sound like the natural side of womanhood? I suspect that this is part of that curse that was thrust upon the woman - submittal in light of a strong desire to dominate.

Do it to your husband as unto the Lord. If you submit to your husband you submit to Christ, if you don't you don't. Simple. If you aren't submitting to your husband you are not a godly woman - simple as that.

This is the same term used in the previous verse for "submit." It has the thought of being under or under the control of another; to submit or obey, to order in ranks as in military usage.

This is not a call of the husband to dictatorship, it is a call to lead, and it is a call to be the head of the house.

Oh, how many times I've heard women say; well he won't be the head so somebody has to be, so God told me to take over - NOT! God tells you to submit, not take over.

Note, it is submit to your OWN husband. Not to someone else's husband but to your own. There are women that take the word of a pastor to be superior to their own husband in terms of life, of living etc. The husband is the head of the house and the leader. He is the one to be followed. If the woman thinks the preacher is so great have the husband consider his words and talk it over with the wife. The husband is the spiritual leader of the house as well as mental, emotional and physical leader.

Now, guys if that doesn't get your worry juices flowing I don't know what will - you have a tremendous responsibility in a marriage and you'd better be doing it - AND getting it right.

If every Christian woman would hold to this doctrine there would be no more cases of adultery in the church. Think on that one folks. Adultery is the breaking of some of the most basic of teachings, yet Christian men and women continue to do it anyway. There is no way that a woman can commit adultery while submitting to their own husband.

"Unto the Lord" relates to that daily commitment to walk with Him. To walk with Him you must walk with your husband properly. A heavy responsibility in this liberated society we call America. This teaching flies in the face of just about everything that girls/young women are taught today, especially if they are in public schools. They are taught that they are individuals and that they make their own way doing what they want to do.

The media is teaching our families that the man is the dunderhead that can do nothing correctly, and that the woman knows it all. If men were the dunces they are portrayed to be, why are they more prevalent in the work place, why are they filling the Home Depots across the country. Men are intelligent capable beings that can do most anything they set their minds to - even though they

are depicted in so many commercials as unable to do anything correctly, and certainly nothing which takes any intelligence. It seems if it can't be done with a gun or bomb the man of today can't do it according to the media.

Christian's get your lifestyle information from God, not the humanism taught in the school system, or the media.

So, why is the wife to be subject to the husband? Glad you asked - Paul has the answer to that in the next verse.

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.

We need to see another statement of the apostle when he wrote to the Corinthians. I Cor. 11.3 "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

Simple explanation, the husband is the head of the wife. This is the idea of the head controls the body and the body is subject to the head. I'm told that in the old days when they cut off a person's head for a crime, that the brain continues to function for a few short seconds after the head is separated from the body. Now, the head may continue to function for a few moments, but that body can't just up and decide to go fishing after its head is removed - it just won't!

To illustrate this Paul mentions that Christ is the head of the church - this same relationship exists within the marriage, or at least should exist.

He goes further and explains that the church is subject to Christ and so the wives should be subject to their own husbands - not in just the small things but in all things.

Now if churches and couples really worked this way in life, we would have a completely different church and there would be drastically less divorce in our churches. Consider this ladies and gentlemen, we have this responsibility before God and we will be held accountable for it.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in every thing.

In case you don't know it, we are in the middle of a very important passage relating to marriage - a passage that is little taught to our youth and our church.

You might note again that Paul mentions "OWN" husband for the second time. One must wonder what was going on at Ephesus that needed this emphasis. Were the wives in error in the way they related to their husbands? Were the husbands erring in how they related to their wives? I would assume one of these would be the case. Indeed, true Biblical marriage was probably far from the

concept of their day.

We might take a moment or two and consider how all this headship and submission work out in a marriage. First of all I don't know that there is any hard and fast way to accomplish this in a relationship and that the relationship may change drastically over the years. Marriages change and people change, so the submission/headship may also change.

I'm sure that in some cases in old age the man might be unable to take the headship as he should and the wife may have to take on more responsibility, but as long as the husband is able, he should be the head.

It seems to work well if the wife is asked to give her opinion on things, such as money, future, home etc. There should be a discussion and then the husband would make the final decision. Personally, I have found that if my wife has reservations about something that there ultimately is good reason to think seriously about the final decision.

The wife can be a valuable resource of opinion, knowledge and wisdom. She is not totally ignorant because she is submissive; she is a part of the union and should be given her say.

I might note that any headship/submission discussion take place after both parties read Proverbs 31.10 which has a lot of information for the husband to understand about a submissive wife.

I would like to take the next few verses as a unit. They paint a very interesting picture. Many expositors go to great lengths to show how giving, and self depriving a good husband should be to uplift their wives onto a pedestal with all the goodies and toys that they could ever want.

I don't get that picture at all. I don't see that the man is to do these things to uplift his wife, nor to make her feel better about herself, nor to give her a good self image, nor to do any of these usual items.

Let's read: 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.

Husbands do it as Christ did it for the church. Husbands, give of yourself to the max for your wife. Why? That she might be a sanctified and pure child of God. The text tells of the great lengths Christ went to assure a glorious church without spot, wrinkle etc. Holy without blemish.

So, husbands love your wives enough to assure that they are the godly, holy women that they ought to be. Not for yourself, but for your Father in Heaven.

This does not preclude our doing in the physical realm for our wives, and helping them, and

encouraging them, but this passage is clearly looking to the SPIRITUAL nurture that a husband should give to that one he has committed his life to. This includes finding a good church to attend, this includes listening to every sermon and lesson to assure that it is correct and taking steps to point out any deficiencies that might have been present.

This includes guiding the television viewing, the book reading, the magazine reading, and the spare time associations she might form with other women.

This includes helping her to understand the Word as you live your lives together.

This includes spending time with her to know what she is thinking and experiencing in life. It is helping her understand how to handle life's situations as they come along.

It will include taking a lot of time to assure that she becomes the woman that she can and should be for God. It might include encouraging her to participate in ministries that she is excited about. She is gifted by the Spirit so should be involved in some sort of ministry within the church.

AND - all this is to be done in a proper manner that is not irritating, nor abrasive, nor dictatorial. It is to be done in humility and meekness, as the Lord did all of His work on our behalf. It probably will also be costly for the husband, not in dollars and cents, but in time, effort, thought, and emotion.

It is to be a giving of the husband for the woman's godly state.

Now, that we have taken care of the marriage relationship we need to look at the passage again and pick out the characteristics of the Church that we are given here.

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.

The church is to be all of the following things, because it is the desire of Christ. He died on the cross that the church might exist in this condition. I shudder to consider whether the church really exists in this condition today, for I fear it does not - probably in some churches and in some countries, but I doubt many in America would measure to this standard.

"Sanctified" is the process by which something is made into something else - holy. It is a related word to the word normally translated saint. He wants us holy, and He has done the work on the cross so that we can become holy and He wants to make the church holy.

A man I know that is a pastor found that his son and the son's fiancé had made some very poor adult decisions and had sinned. The pastor counseled them and they went before the church to

confess their sin. What a testimony to others that might have been contemplating that same sin. This church's leaders seek to hold people accountable and to help maintain the church purity.

"Cleansed" relates to the action of cleaning something. Washing the dishes would come under this classification, or in our case cleaning up our lives - making them clean.

The young couple mentioned above took this step before the Lord, by confessing and seeking forgiveness.

Now we have a point that gives some a little difficulty. Washing to many automatically relates to baptism, thus we see that baptism washes away our sin - NOT. Let's look at this a little closer.

"Washed by water by the word" is specifically tied to the Word, not the water. The word translated "word" means the content of something said. It is that message, that information conveyed by the spoken word. It is an understandable message.

Young translates this verse as follows: " that he might sanctify it, having cleansed [it] with the bathing of the water in the saying," This follows other translations and indicates that the water is in the saying or in the words, thus indicating the saying is doing the action, and the water is the medium within the word that the word uses.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown declare that the outward rite of baptism cleanses the church. "He speaks of baptism according to its high ideal and design, as if the inward grace accompanied the outward rite; hence he asserts of outward baptism whatever is involved in a believing appropriation of the divine truths it symbolizes, and says that Christ, by baptism, has purified the Church"

Now, I would suggest another alternative theory. Baptism is the ordinance that brings the person into the church in most churches. If you are baptized, you are automatically members of that church. Baptism was such in the book of Acts as well. The two were closely related.

Could this passage not relate to the fact that by baptism the church is purified? Note that the context is the church, not the individual, thus the requirement of baptism for church membership automatically purifies the church - not that unsaved don't get in unaware - but generally speaking if a church requires believer baptism, the church will naturally be pure.

"To be presented" to Himself. This is a one time event not an ongoing process of people being purified by the waters of baptism, but rather a one time presentation that He has or will make to Himself. The two choices would be at the cross/resurrection when He took possession of the Old Testament saints and set into motion the church, or at some future date yet to be revealed when all is done and the church is completed.

There is no indication as to the time of this event in the text, but I would suggest that it is yet

future because the church is yet to be completed. It would seem most logical that the church would be complete at the presentation.

"Glorious" or something that is full of glory, something Christ can be proud of throughout all eternity.

"Without spot" is the goal, pure, no sin, nothing sullied, or clean as a whistle.

"Without wrinkle" is an old term that Paul used, he did not have the knowledge that we have, of wrinkle free materials - wash and wear, if you like the term. The church is to be without any of these moral hindrances, it is to be pure and ready for service without any encumbrance from the world.

"Without any such thing" or nothing is to be keeping us from what God wants us to be as an assembly or as an individual. Sin detracts from all that we can be, we ought to seek to avoid sin at every opportunity, or if we stumble we should seek immediate forgiveness so that the sin holds us back from the work of the Lord.

"Holy" is related to the word translated saints. Pure people of God.

"Without blemish" is very similar to holy in that both indicate without sin, or holy. The difference however is that holy relates to our acts or lack thereof, while "without blemish" is speaking of how others view us. We are to be without blame, without fault or with no blemish.

Barnes takes a slightly different tack after he uses the common thought of the husband giving his all for the wife and her physical enjoyment, and relates the whole to the salvation of the wife. I might point out that the unequally yoked concept would negate his thoughts, but if a husband finds his wife to be lost then Barnes note is appropriate.

"And gave himself for it. Gave himself to die to redeem it. The meaning here is, that husbands are to imitate the Redeemer in this respect. As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her wants; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness; to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her. Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself? But there may be more implied in this than that a man is to toil, and even to lay down his life for the welfare of his wife. Christ laid down his life to save the church; and a husband should feel that it should be one great object of his life to promote the salvation of his wife. He is bound so to live as not to interfere with her salvation, but so as to promote it in every way possible. He is to furnish her all the facilities that she may need, to enable her to attend on the worship of God; and to throw no obstacles in her way. He is to set her the example; to counsel her if she needs

counsel; and to make the path of salvation as easy for her as possible. If a husband has the spirit and self-denial of the Saviour, he will regard no sacrifice too great if he may promote the salvation of his family."

See also 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:" and Col. 1.22 "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:"

Paul isn't done with the husbands yet for he continues.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

This is two separate statements. We, husbands, ought to love our wives as our own bodies - that is one statement and if we love our wife we will love ourselves. I have always been taught the verse as a unit, as relating to one idea - love wife as you love your body.

It almost seems to me that the second statement may be external to the first statement as well as the next verse.

We "OUGHT" to love our wife as our own body. Doesn't say we have to ---- well, that is most likely implied in the statement :-) The next question is how does a husband love his own body, so that we can know how he is to love his wife?

I am not sure that I can say I have ever loved my body in the sense that the world uses this phrase. I have always been a little less than exercised, and there has never been anything for me to be pleased with much less in love with - so what is meant here? Are we to exercise till we can like what we see in the mirror? Are we all to be running around looking like male models?

The term used here is the normal term for body or the flesh of a man so there is little help there. In that not all men naturally love their bodies, and since one that does love their body as the world uses this terminology, would be vain and proud, then we must find some other concept in this verse to relate to.

I would suggest that this love relates to the general taking care of ones body, that care that keeps one's self from injury. The wearing of gloves to avoid blisters the wearing of safety glasses to protect the eyes, etc. The love of continuing on with a body that is whole and generally useful as opposed to one that is limited and maimed.

In this aspect we should love our wife by taking as good care of her as we can. Protecting her from danger to the best of our ability, keeping her fed, clothed and protected from the elements. No, I am not suggesting that we are required to house her in a \$250,000 home with three cars to protect her feet from blisters, but the basics of life would be the minimum that we should attempt to provide.

Does that mean that the man in Africa that has no money nor food that can't feed his wife is unspiritual, no - he is doing all that he can.

In general we should love or care for our wife as well as we care for ourselves. This requires that we provide the best that we can and not spend that which we have upon our own enjoyment and pleasure.

Secondly, there seems a bit of a promise here. If we love our wife we will love ourselves. If we care for her properly we will be at peace with what we have done. Many are the men that have regretted deeply the poor care that they have shown their families. It is a deep guilt about setting themselves over their family.

If we care for the wife properly, we will find satisfaction in ourselves and in how we have lived our lives.

This might run along the line that Barnes takes it, in that the husband is to make his wife as comfortable as he is - that same care for her as for him - they are one rather than two since they are joined in marriage thus he should take care of her as himself.

One minor point that we might take note of while we are speaking of marriage. On one of the internet boards where I read the question arose as to the churches "BIBLICAL" place in marriage, or should the church perform marriage ceremonies. I replied that there is no Bible text to show that we are unless it is where Christ was at the wedding and turned water into wine. I suggested that if this were a Biblical basis for churches doing weddings then it was also a passage for drinking in the church.

One defender of the faith suggested a few passages relating to marriage, but that had nothing to do with the church being involved in that marriage. He and his comments were correctly dismissed as not relevant. The line of thought was that God instituted marriage and spoke much about it in His Word, but that the church is not commanded to be involved. Indeed, much of the marriage of the Old Testament was simply a person to person commitment and a joining of the two intimately.

Should the church perform ceremonies? Not by the command of God, but if they want to I don't see anything in Scripture to forbid it, however because of the church involvement does not mean there is any special blessing, nor certainly no grace extended to the union.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

I think this verse adds weight to my suggestion. A man naturally seeks to nourish himself, and seeks to take care of himself, so they should nourish and care for the wife. The illustration of the Lord continues; He has done everything possible to take care of his bride, the church - the prime

example of how the husband should love his wife.

Speaking in these terms makes it very hard to understand how a Christian man could seek to divorce his wife. How can you possibly misconstrue the truth of divorce into something good and profitable for the wife? Divorce tears her up completely - this IS NOT the love, the care, or the cherishing that this passage speaks of - no man can read this passage and suggest that divorce is ever acceptable. Nor, does this passage allow for the myriad of other things husbands put their wives through in our day. Having a mistress, gambling, drinking, going out with the boys and all that is not a proper loving of the wife.

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

As the Lord cherishes and cares for the church, which we men are an integrated part of, we should care for our wives so that they are as healthy as we within the body of Christ. Seems to complete that thought that the man is to see to the spiritual upbringing and nourishment of his own wife.

This may have some relation to what Adam said in Genesis. 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."

The relationship is as one - divorce has no place in the Christian man's mind.

Barnes goes on to describe the relationship between the believer and Christ - a relationship I am not sure most modern Christians could agree with. "The Scriptures make use of language which is stronger than that employed to describe any other connexion; and there is no union of affection so powerful as that which binds the Christian to the Saviour. So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands, and dwell among barbarians, to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as men may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love than that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel, rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a Divine origin?"

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.

If, indeed, the man loves his wife properly, they are one flesh - they are both cared for, they are both healthy parts of the church.

We won't go into all the implications of one flesh, but let it suffice, if the two become one, they

can't become two. If you graft two trees together, you cannot ungraft them without doing serious damage. Divorce does not fit into this statement of Scripture. The two become one - period.

I recently saw a medical program that spoke of a convict that had donated his body to science. When he was dead, his body was frozen. Now, if you are squeamish or don't like a little gore, please skip the rest of this paragraph. After being frozen, his body was cut crosswise into thin slices. These slices were then scanned into a computer and computer people then reconstructed his body in digital format so that the different systems of the body, the bones, the muscles, the flesh etc. could be examined separately or with other systems in place. Any given level of the body could be studied in great detail.

The result of the show was that the human body is one of nature's greatest machines. We won't go into the discussion whether it was evolved from muck or created by God. I will hope that this item of thought has been settled in your mind - settled in such a way that you know humankind came from a direct creative act of God. The television show recognized the super complexity of this thing we call a body, and the complex interactions between the different systems.

This verse points out that the wife is to be an integrated system with the man, not just an added appendage to do his bidding.

Many are the men that fail to understand this concept. They are the men that command the wife, they are the men that set forth duties, jobs, and responsibilities - usually those things they don't want to do.

This integration seems to dismiss the concept that some have of marriage where the man speaks and the wife acts. It seems more of an integrated system where both are working toward the same goal with the man as the head. Both are working toward the correct raising of the family with the husband guiding the entire process. Both are working toward the good home for protection, with both assisting in all aspects with the husband as the guidance of the activities.

I might add that in the human body the head directs things, but the hands and other limbs give signals and input back to the head so that the head can make proper judgments and commands for activity. For example if the head tells the hand to pick up an item, the hand as it nears the item may sense heat and warn the brain that there may be danger, thus the brain will issue command to test for danger. You might say that the hand, at times, will slap the head to get its attention - no wives, don't try it, this is only a symbolic way of speaking :-) but husbands consider the input that your wife gives, it may be very good information that you need for a proper decision.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

I think this is Paul speaking of the fact that he is teaching two truths at the same time, and showing that both are quite similar in nature. The next verse adds to this clarification. He is speaking of Christ and the church and he is speaking of the man and his wife.

The mystery relates only to the church and Christ relationship and should not be extended to the husband wife relationship. There is little mystery there. Barnes mentions that many seem to go wild with the allegorizations of the husband wife relationship due to this verse. He also mentions that there is nothing in the passage to indicate the Roman, or "Papist" as he calls it, doctrine that marriage is a sacrament and a means of grace.

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.

It is of note that the husband is to love the wife, but the text does not tell the wife to love the man. She is to submit and she is to reverence him and that is where Scripture stops. It is of note in Titus 2.4 that this distinction is mentioned. The older women are to teach the younger women to love their husbands. "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,"

I might submit that if you want to teach a woman to love her husband teach her to submit to him and to reverence him. It would seem that the love will follow. How else, might the young woman be taught to learn to love her husband? I might mention this love is not the goofy, fuzzy love of today, it is the true love that should be in every marriage.

a. Seeing what he really is within. Understanding how he feels, how he loves, how he functions day to day.

b. Listening to him, taking an interest in him, and being one flesh.

c. Supporting him in his desire to care for you, to cherish you. It is hard to cherish one that is always in his face about something that he hasn't done, or that he should have done. I am appalled at the attitude of some women in our day.

I have seen many women on television making fun of the presents their husbands have purchased for them. Example, a new appliance. The man sees it as something that will make life nicer for his wife, but she derides it as extra work and not appropriate when she was expecting jewelry or perfume.

A gift is usually something the giver has thought out and has decided on as something they really want to do for the other and to see the other deride you for his choice leads to less cherish.

d. Understand and enjoy this relationship that God has set forth for the marriage. The husband is charged with the care and nurture of the wife, so there is much to be gained by the wife if she allows her spouse to do so.

For further on the wife, see Peter's comments. I 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. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 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:" Note that he mentions the "own husband" idea as well.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse nineteen we are told to speak to one another. I have noticed from time to time that the Roman church has things within its tradition/practices that are really based in Scripture. This is one of those items. The antiphonal chants that were so popular in years gone by were the application of this phrase.

I suspect that we have missed out on some of the greatness of the worship that we could have had by rejecting, out of hand, all of the Roman system. I suspect that the Roman Catholic gains much more from their worship service than many Protestants. The design of the cathedrals was in part to draw ones attention to God, something we tend to miss in our church structures.

They also treat their meeting place with God as a meeting place with God rather than a gym for the kids to run and scream in. Yes, it is just a building, but it is also where we are supposed to meet God as a congregation.

When I was growing up in a "Christian" church the one important item I remember is that when I entered the sanctuary my mouth was shut and you could feel the quiet. Not many of us can find a quiet place before the Lord anymore in our society. I find that no matter how secluded I find myself there is always some distraction or person wanting attention.

May we as believers seek to find ways to corporately meet with God without drawing attention away from Him to ourselves.

2. Verse twenty mentions giving thanks for all things. This often is related to all that God does, and then we list some of those things, but one must wonder if we shouldn't be thankful for those things which we have no knowledge of - the things God and His angels do for us when we are totally unaware.

Years ago we were supposed to leave for a visit of our parents over Christmas. I left work, got into the car and it would not run. It would start but then immediately die. I found if I pumped the gas it would run so off I went on the twenty mile drive home. I stopped at a gas station and they changed the fuel filter and it seemed to work so off I went but within blocks I was back to pumping like mad to keep the car moving down the road. When I arrived home I was very frustrated, we were running late and still had a very long trip ahead of us.

I tore into the car and pulled the carburetor top off. I looked into the bowl and found a piece of rag floating near the bottom. I pulled it out, reassembled the carb and started the car - it ran fine so we loaded the kids and off to the grandparents we went.

As we neared the exit from one interstate to another we were shocked to see a gas tanker truck overturned and in flames. My first thought was, what if the car hadn't given trouble? Would we have been in that flaming mess? Then I started to think of all the things that had happened. We had owned the car a couple of years and had never had any trouble with it. Why that evening would that piece of rag that had been floating around for months, decide to plug up the fuel line to the engine?

My conclusion was that God had been at work that evening, not only to maybe save our lives, but to make me a little more patient as well as help me realize that He is busy behind the scenes of my life. There are myriads of things going on that we never know about and we should certainly be thankful to the Lord for these unknowns as well as the knowns.

3. Do you get the idea that all of us, no matter what our age or what our position is to submit to someone. The child to the parent, the wife to the husband, the husband to God. It is what is called in the Armed Forces, chain of command.

The chain of command in the service is very important. All are required to adhere strictly to that chain of command. The lowly seaman answers to the third class petty officer and he to the second class petty officer and he to the first class petty officer and on up the ranks to the top officer in the command. Then that officer is under officers in the higher up command.

The structure is there to serve a purpose. The top dog, or in this case the president of the United States, does not need to know that Seaman Derickson needs to go to sick bay for two aspirins, but the man over him does need to know where he is.

We as human beings need to know the structure that is over us so that we can relate properly to those above us. The child needs to know what is required of him in the family as does the wife. The husband in turn must answer to God for what has gone on in that family that has been raised under his headship.

We need to know that this sort of structure is probably going to be with us in every area of life for most of our lives. There are times when teachers are over us, there are times when police are over us, there are times when bosses are over us, and most importantly, all the time God is over us.

We must learn to respond properly to any and all of these situations in a proper manner so that we can honor Christ in our lives.

4. Barnes mentions of the eighteenth verse where Paul contrasts drunkenness with worship, "It is

not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus, or to the festivals celebrated in honour of that heathen god. He was "the god of wine," and, during those festivals, men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast with the wild and dissolute habits of the heathen. Plato says, that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man."

I could recount many occasions in my younger life that would illustrate the drunken stupor one can attain when drinking to excess. These accounts would not be pretty coming from one that was supposed to be a Christian. I will not tell of these times, except to say that there was utterly no mindful control after a certain point in the drinking. It was no longer my mind that was in control, but the alcohol that was calling the shots - pun intended.

This is not the type of actions that the believer is to be involved in. We, on the other hand, are to be controlled by the Spirit, but we are also to be ministering to one another. This is totally difficult when one is drunk. Usually, the drunk is being helped along by others that can assist him along in his stupor.

The obvious differences between these two states of man are that one is out of control the other is in control. The one is controlled by his drink; the other is controlled by his God. The one is tearing himself down; the other is building others up. Rather obvious where we should be in life.

The obvious application of this text is what we call worship today. I watched a Spanish charismatic song time on television recently. They had the usual song leader belting out the song while his backup was flailing their hands in the air and adding to the volume. It was of note that the leaders on the platform did not know the words to the song, and they were just standing around talking to one another.

I fathom not the significance of this near chaos. What are we attempting to do in our worship services? People put a lot of time into these times of song and pictures and big screens and projectors, but are we really bringing the man and woman in the pew to a point where their thoughts are on the Lord and how wonderful He is? Are we really worshiping in this church situation?

I suggest that we spend our time, not on setting up projectors, pictures, videos, and noise but that we spend our time planning our entire worship service around one central thought that will move the worshiper along from start to finish to think of their God and contemplate what He has done for them in their lives.

I'm not saying that this can't be done with contemporary music, but I seldom see it being done in the churches. Most are bringing attention to the equipment, the process and the people involved

in setting it up. As to those that do the singing, I guess it just seems all that hair swingin, rear wiggling, and thigh slappin is drawin tention tu de performer not the creator.

One last comment on current modes of worship. Drunkenness leads to lack of inhibitions, control and normal action of the person. Sound like some modern worship? The Spirit does not lead to drunkenness, nor to chaos. Those that worship in all shades of shedding themselves of self control are giving over to what they deem spiritual, and most would agree, it just depends on the source of that "spiritualness" whether it be the Spirit or Satan.

5. The early verse mentions us singing etc. Maybe some principles would be of interest. Barnes makes note that the Psalms are to be used, because they were in Biblical times, however I think they should be limited to the same principles as other music.

These principles relate to both the Psalms and other music you might want to use.

- a. Draws attention to God rather than our own body - to beat, lyrics, and feeling.
- b. Is clearly doctrinally correct for this dispensation. I have mentioned the congregation belting out the words to a Psalm that relates in no way to this dispensation.
- c. Lyrics that center on God and His Word and the resulting work of God in our lives.
- d. Brings one's thoughts to God rather than dinner, dancing, and the like.
- e. Purposeful. Something that will keep the worshipers attention on the subject of the mornings worship.
- f. Appropriate to the purpose at hand. Just because you like the world's music it is not necessary to bring it into the church. Barnes makes the point that because the world's music is often related to the things of the world, and pagan music was related to idolatry, that Christian music should of necessity be different from that realm of paganism. Christian music should not be patterned after the world's music to draw people in; it should be patterned after God and spiritual things.

We have churches attempting to reach the world with the world's things. We have people using Harry Potter books to draw people in; some are using "Mature" rated video games to draw people into churches so they can witness to them. Not only is it wrong to be using "Mature" games, but in the old days they called that sort of thing bushwhackin - drawing in with something pleasant to hit them over the head to rob them. Churches have no intention of robbing, but certainly they are using worldly items for inappropriate purposes - that of tricking people in so they can be witnessed to.

g. Music that is acceptable to most of the congregation. We have pastors pushing contemporary music onto congregations that feel it is wrong. The "pastor, being the superior intellect, knows

what is best for the church syndrome" in action.

A friend in a church in the Midwest told me that the pastor and deacons put together a music policy and set up the usual trappings for contemporary music and started it without even announcing it to the congregation, much less asking for congregational input. There were a number of upset members that asked for a meeting to discuss the issue. The meeting was composed of the pastor telling them the policy was in and that if they didn't like it leaving was the option.

Splitting a church to get your own way doesn't seem like the Christian thing to do, yet there seems to be that mind set in our country right now. Contemporary music is named quite appropriately, Contemp-t, for all that disagree with it; contempt seems to be the response to opposition. Rather impressive if you think of it in light of all the love and unity that the contemporary music talks about.

6. In verse twenty we are told to give thanks for all things. Some commentaries include in "all things" "all men" which is quite fitting. All men, not just the ones you agree with. It crossed my mind if the pastor and deacons mentioned just previously had prayed for those that were in disagreement - honestly prayed for them - and vice versa, if something couldn't have been worked out rather than running the founding members of the church off like so many unwanted sheep.

"All men" includes those you disagree with, those you dislike, and those you might despise. If we are praying for them the disagreement may not have such a sharp edge and you might begin to like them rather than hate them.

If you seek God honestly for someone, there is little room for negative feelings, but if you dwell on the negative feelings that you have, further negativity is sure to come along.

This thought of prayer for all men is reiterated in I Timothy 2:1 "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men;" Not much clearer can the case be made.

I have been considering all the bumper stickers and magnet signs I see on cars in our fair city. They constantly are asking for God to bless America or the USA. I would like to make a sticker that would state, "God HAS blessed America but now we are kicking Him out of our classrooms, our court rooms, our public lives and our personal lives - GO FIGURE!"

As we pray for mankind, we will realize more and more just how much man has to be thankful for - God has blessed man in spite of all of his sin and failings - God is more than bountiful to man and He should surely be thanked for it.

7. I would like to include a lengthy quote from Barnes that might choke some in the women's

movement so be forewarned and do not read if you don't like to swallow - if this were a film it might be rated Sexist. I include it to give the women of our time something to consider and contemplate.

"While Christianity designed to elevate the character of the wife, and to make her a fit companion of an intelligent and pious husband, it did not intend to destroy all subordination and authority. Man, by the fact that he was first created; that the woman was taken from him; that he is better qualified for ruling than she is, is evidently designed to be at the head of the little community that constitutes a family. In many other things woman may be his equal; in loveliness, and grace, and beauty, and tenderness, and gentleness, she is far his superior; but these are not the qualities adapted for government. Their place is in another sphere; and there, man should be as cautious about invading her prerogative, or abridging her liberty, as she should be about invading the prerogative that belongs to him. In every family there should be a head--some one who is to be looked up to as the counselor and the ruler; someone to whom all should be subordinate. God has given that prerogative to man; and no family prospers where that arrangement is violated. Within proper metes and limits, therefore, it is the duty of the wife to obey, or to submit herself to her husband. Those limits are such as the following:

"1. In domestic arrangements, the husband is to be regarded as the head of the family; and he has a right to direct as to the style of living, the expenses of the family, the clothing, etc.

"2. In regard to the laws which are to regulate the family, he is the head. It is his to say what is to be done; in what way the children are to employ themselves, and to give directions in regard to their education, etc.

"3. In business matters, the wife is to submit to the husband. She may counsel with him, if he chooses; but the affairs of business and property are under his control, and must be left at his disposal.

"4. In everything, except that which relates to conscience and religion, he has authority. But there his authority ceases. He has no right to require her to commit an act of dishonesty, to connive at wrong-doing, to visit a place of amusement which her conscience tells her is wrong, nor has he a right to interfere with the proper discharge of her religious duties. He has no right to forbid her to go to church at the proper and usual time, or to make a profession of religion when she pleases. He has no right to forbid her endeavouring to exercise a religious influence over her children, or to endeavour to lead them to God. She is bound to obey God, rather than any man, and when even a husband interferes in such cases, and attempts to control her, he steps beyond his proper bounds, and invades the prerogative of God, and his authority ceases to be binding. It ought to be said, however, that in order to justify her acting independently in such a case, the following things are proper:

"(1.) It should be really a case of conscience--a case where the Lord has plainly required her to do what she proposes to do--and not a mere matter of whim, fancy, or caprice.

"(2.) When a husband makes opposition to the course which a wife wishes to pursue in religious duties, it should lead her to re-examine the matter, to pray much over it, and to see whether she cannot, with a good conscience, comply with his wishes.

"(3.) If she is convinced that she is right, she should still endeavour to see whether it is not possible to win him to her views, and to persuade him to accord with her, see 1Pe 3:1. It is possible that, if she does right, he may be persuaded to do right also.

"(4.) If she is constrained, however, to differ from him, it should be with mildness and gentleness. There should be no reproach, and no contention. She should simply state her reasons, and leave the event to God.

"(5.) She should, after this, be a better wife, and put forth more and more effort to make her husband and family happy. She should show that the effect of her religion has been to make her love her husband and children more; to make her more and more attentive to her domestic duties, and more and more kind in affliction. By a life of pure religion, she should aim to secure what she could not by her entreaties--his consent that she should live as she thinks she ought to, and walk to heaven in the path in which she believes that her Lord calls her. While, however, it is to be conceded that the husband has authority over the wife, and a right to command in all cases that do not pertain to the conscience, it should be remarked,

"(1.) that his command should be reasonable and proper.

"(2.) He has no right to require anything wrong, or contrary to the will of God.

"(3.) WHERE COMMANDS BEGIN in this relation, HAPPINESS USUALLY ENDS; and the moment a husband requires a wife to do anything, it is usually a signal of departing or departed affection and peace. When there are proper feelings in both parties in this relation, there will be no occasion either to command or to obey. There should be such mutual love and confidence, that the known wish of the husband should be a law to the wife; and that the known desires of the wife should be the rule which he would approve. A perfect government is that where the known wish of the lawgiver is a sufficient rule to the subject. Such is the government of heaven; and a family on earth should approximate as nearly as possible to that.

"As unto the Lord. As you would to the Lord, because the Lord requires it, and has given to the husband this authority."

8. I would like to set some examples relating to the wife fearing or honoring the husband. These are for the most part derived from Barnes Notes.

a. Barnes suggests that she should never MAKE him command her or reprimand her. If she knows his wish she should never do anything against that wish unless for Biblical/conscience sake. If she knows that he does not want the family involved with cards, she should never use

cards unknown to him or known to him. She should respect the wishes.

If he desires that the family have a certain discipline policy toward the children then that is the policy she should follow.

If there is a desired music/television viewing standard then it should be met whether he is there or not.

She should never choose to challenge these things before the family, and only with respect of giving an opinion in private.

For the wife to force the husband to command or reprimand will cause serious disharmony to the relationship and home.

b. The Biblical marriage relationship should set the standard for the world, yet the church has allowed the world's standard to become the example for the church. When I was growing up my folks had a woman that they coffeeed with now and then. She was a divorcee and they were taking a chance with their social standing in the community by associating with her. She was nearly an outcast of society in Mid Nebraska in the fifties.

My how the standards have shifted. The world started divorcing and remarrying and the church wanted the same so off they went to follow the world. This is not the Biblical example that Paul desires.

c. The woman's relationship to her husband is the Biblical standard. Avoid that standard and substitute your own and you will not have the blessing of God. Ramifications will certainly come to those that set aside God's standard.

d. Barnes makes the following point and I will just quote him so that those that find it aggravating can attach him rather than the messenger. "Wives should manifest such a character as to be worthy of love. They owe this to their husbands. They demand the confidence and affection of man; and they should show that they are worthy of that confidence and affection. It is not possible to love that which is unlovely, nor to force affection where it is undeserved; and, as a wife expects that a husband will love her more than he does any other earthly being, it is but right that she should evince such a spirit as shall make that proper. A wife may easily alienate the affections of her partner in life. If she is irritable and fault-finding; if none of his ways please her; if she takes no interest in his plans, and in what he does; if she forsakes her home when she should be there, and seeks happiness abroad; or, if at home, she never greets him with a smile; if she is wasteful of his earnings, and extravagant in her habits, it will be impossible to prevent the effects of such a course of life on his mind. And when a wife perceives the slightest evidence of alienated affection in her husband, she should inquire at once whether she has not given occasion for it, and exhibited such a spirit as tended inevitably to produce such a result."

I will close this point with a counter point that Barnes does not suggest. There is a great responsibility upon the husband as well to not become the dictator that seems to lurk within the hearts of all of us. He must first set the Biblical Christ like example and then He can expect the proper responses of the wife. NOW, this is not to say that the wife does not have to do her part if he doesn't do his. It is the wife's responsibility to do right. It is the husband's responsibility to do right. As both do right the harmony of the home will increase.

A wife doing what is right might well bring an erring husband to doing right when he naturally responds to her Christ like being and behavior.

9. Wiersbe makes the proper point that when we are saved and baptized into the body of Christ we become part of the body, while when we are filled with the Spirit we give our body to Him. This is why the charismatic errs in their definition of the baptism of the Spirit - they relate the baptism as the Spirit coming over and controlling the body and they also call this the being full of the spirit. The two are different things - one occurring only at salvation to make us part of the church and the other as an ongoing action of the Spirit's control so that we act like we are part of the church.

Constable points out that the being filled is a present tense, something we are to be doing all the time, but that it is a passive thing thus we just allow it to occur and He will do the rest.

Now, if this be true, then perfection of the saints is quite easy and should be fairly common. The only way that the filling relationship can change is for us to take control or allow sin to break that control. Our mind and our desires are the only thing between us and a perfect spiritual life. That is simplistic, but that is the teaching of the Word of God.

Those that suggest there is a struggle between two natures hide the simplicity of God's plan for our lives. Those that suggest this struggle cause so much misery and guilt in people's lives. When they sin they, because of this teaching of a struggle, see their failure as just that - total failure in the spiritual life, when in fact it was only a rotten choice of the mind. They see their failure and failing to struggle and fight to the win as the fact that they have totally failed and lost the battle only to have to face the same struggle and fight again later that day when they fall into sin again.

Not a battle, not a fight, not a struggle, but a decision of the mind to say, "Okay, Lord, I'm taking over, you aren't doing it right - I'll handle this." First, this is sin, second it is against God's will and in the final analysis it is about as arrogant an act as man can be involved in. ALMIGHTY GOD IS CONTROLLING YOUR LIFE AND YOU TAKE CONTROL - is that not arrogant? Is that not plain foolish? Yet, we all do it way to often in our own lives.

10. The idea of a submissive wife is always a problem to women. I think we have covered it fairly well thus far except for one point that I would like to mention. Most women that work are in submissive relationships to others at work and they get along fine with those over them - their superiors by power, by authority, and by corporate command, yet when they get home they so

often fail to merely submit to their husband who is given his position from the highest authority, that has the most power of any in the universe, and the one that has the ability to command.

Why can a woman submit to corporate authority so easily and yet go home and raise cane with the one she supposedly loves, the one that she has supposedly committed her life to and the one that almighty God has given the most appropriate of relationships to - so many women fail in the lesser of the relationship areas of life - why? First of all it is a personal choice to reject the husband as her head, second it is a personal choice to continue rejecting him as head, and thirdly it is a personal choice to reject God's best for her life as well as for her marriage.

Some possible principles - since I am not a wife, the wives of America will have to evaluate the validity of these suggestions.

a. When you get home, take a deep breath, realize that you are a believer, that you are married, that you love this man, that you are to be in a place of submission and make a conscious decision to maintain that role as part of your ongoing spiritual life before God.

b. Work on your marriage relationship. Continue with your husband as you began - it isn't just his responsibility to maintain the romance, to maintain the respect, to maintain the loving environment. Show your love, your commitment, and your joy by keeping a proper house, by keeping a proper attitude, and by keeping yourself spiritual.

Now, men, there is a lot of information here for you as well so continue reading - this is a mutual relationship not a one sided one.

c. Know your husband and work towards his satisfaction, know where he is spiritually, where he is emotionally and minister to him as you can.

d. If you have had a bad day at work, see to it that you don't give your husband a bad evening to get back at the corporation - it won't work, you will just alienate your husband. Realize that your tension is from work and not from your husband. Hopefully he will listen to your frustration and be a solace rather than a reactor to your poor responses to him.

e. Be a Christian wife, not a corporate meany.

f. Constable suggests that the wife should attempt to complete her husband. The two are to merge their lives into one. He likens it to the three legged race where the couple has their legs tied together and they must function as one to win the race. She should attempt to complete her husband so that they might finish their walk with God on a sound footing rather than two people trying to go their own way while one of their legs is tied to one of their mates.

He suggests that the word support is a good synonym for submit. I would not go that far and am not sure this sort of redefinition isn't why we have some problems in the church. True, supporting

the husband is part of submission, but support has no concept of submission, thus should not be seen as a synonym.

This seems to me to be a watering down of the concept of submit. It is a military term signifying the placing of oneself under the authority of the commander. This is not the idea of supporting. It is a voluntary submission to another's authority, while that act will result in the support of the commander by the soldier, but the submission is an act of the will prior to the support.

11. Constable suggests that part of submission is not nagging. He describes nagging as being nibbled to death by a duck. He also suggests that part of submission to the husband is an "attitude of entrusting oneself to God."

I would like to consider this for a moment. Isn't this the key to all submission? We can submit to any authority if we realize that submission is actually submission to the will of God in your life. The wife must first be in a proper relationship to the Lord, and then the submission to the husband will not only be easier but it will feel much more appropriate. She will know that she is in the place that God wants her to be rather than in a foreign area of conflict while not submitted.

This principle works whether you are a wife, or a husband that submits to his employer, or a child that submits to the parent. All submission relates to our proper relationship to God - find your submission to Him and then all other submissions will seem natural - well maybe not natural, but they will seem easier to follow. Not sure anyone really finds submission "natural" though that should be our goal in life - to handle all relationships in a Godly manner.

12. There are those that would have the equality of spouses within the marriage. The wife has equal rights would be the thought of the matter. To this teaching one must wonder how the teachers then discuss the comparison to the church and its head Christ. Are the members equal to the head, not so, heaven forbid.

Submission of the wife has nothing to do with standing before God, it only sets an organizational model within the family that will allow for smooth administration of the family and it also sets the spiritually needed headship of the man over the woman.

Before God both the man and woman are equal in value and in all ways that might exist, yet in the family there is the distinction that God has drawn between the two.

The important item to remember within the relationship is that each has a responsibility before God and that each will be held accountable for that responsibility, not the responsibility of the other.

Example: If the wife seeks to usurp the authority of the man and succeeds and runs a very well ordered family all her days, will she be rewarded for her efforts - that is God's decision, but I would doubt it. Will she be held responsible for not submitting? Very definitely. It is the wife's

choice to make. It is likewise the husband's choice to make whether he is going to assume the leadership role given him or not.

Constable relates an interesting and true point that women might appreciate, while men might wince at the point. Eve ate of the fruit first, but you will note that God went to the man to find out what the couple had done. This is the outworking of that principle which Paul is trying to get across here.

If the family goes incorrectly, the husband will stand in front of God for it, not the wife. This should give the woman a little easier thought on the area of submission. If she is submissive she will have no time before the Lord concerning the family result, however if she assumes the role of head she may well answer as head.

13. Now then, I won't belabor the point but in the American context of "What is a family?" we have those that tell us two males or two females are just as much a family as one male and one female. Biblically we can clearly say this is not true. Paul speaks of one of each in this passage and nothing else.

This principle of wife submit, and husband be the head is impossible in the homosexual relationship which is not a family in the Biblical context. Not in the social context of the world either I might add. If they want to do what they do, if they want to have all the rights of the married - that is their business, but calling themselves a family is Biblically incorrect and in my mind in light of social history, ignorant. They may want to redefine the concept of family, but they cannot say that they are equal to the historical/Biblical family, they are quite different.

14. I might suggest that anyone wandering about whether the wife can work outside the home, the answer in my mind is yes. The yes is somewhat qualified in that she still is to submit to her husband, this is not negotiable. The last chapter of Proverbs is clear on the subject of a woman working outside the home - it is a Biblical concept, but she is also clearly the keeper at home as well (Prov. 31.10ff).

15. As to the husbands love for his wife, Constable points out that this is the self-sacrificing love not the brotherly love that some might think. It is a love that is deep, and committed, and total. It is love that will move the husband to give his all for his wife. Constable also makes a very profound statement that bears repeating. "Love requires an attitude of unconditional acceptance of an imperfect person not based on her performance but on her intrinsic worth as God's gift to her husband."

Often the husband evaluates the wife on her imperfections as well as her performance in the home, yet the evaluation should be related to her love and submission to him. This acceptance does not, however, remove his responsibility to assist in perfecting her spiritually by teaching her, suggesting lifestyle changes etc. to the wife so that she comes more to conformity with the Word of God.

16. One last comment relating to the marriage and the comparison to Christ and His church. If the marriage relationship is easily broken by marriage, then also the church can easily divorce Christ - not so, how can the body divorce the head and continue to exist? Impossible. The whole thought of Christian divorce is so ludicrous that it is appalling.

Those within the church that feel divorce is okay must really struggle or must really turn a blind eye to this passage and all of its implications.

The marriage is not only an act, a commitment and a union, but it is the joining of two into one - that is the final process - one, not two and definitely not two separate from the other. This "one" is the same as the concept of Christ being the head of the body, the church - it is one total being, with Christ as the head. How ignorant to say the husband and wife that are one can be separated and continue on as if nothing happened - the body cannot exist without the head.

The idea of divorce is so far from the concept of marriage that one must wonder how anyone could make that jump. Kind of like the "Bible Diet Bar" I heard about this weekend. How do you relate the Bible with a diet bar - the two are so different, so separate, such opposing concepts, that one must wonder what kind of brain could relate the two together to make a buck. The buck is the key rather than logic.

17. We have mentioned divorce a time or two, and I would like to further make the point. We need to read two verses together.

Gen. 2.24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Matt. 19.4-10 "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. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

Note carefully the disciple's reaction to the "BIBLICAL" concept of divorce - it's better not to get married! They knew this thing called marriage was for life! They knew that you had better be ready for the full brunt of that truth before getting married.

Section eleven: 6.1-12

We have just seen that the wife is to submit to the husband and now we move into other sorts and depths of submission. We see now that the child is to obey their parents as well as honor them. A double hit for the child, but there is certainly a reward for proper actions on the part of the child - long life on earth.

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.

Children obey your parents in the Lord - why? It is the right thing to do - simple enough.

A pastor I once knew years ago took this passage to an extreme which led him into trouble with the law. He misconstrued this verse to mean that if you lead a child to Christ, that child is to obey you and no longer obey their natural parents. He actually took some boys into his home as his own under this premise, alienating them completely from their natural parents.

This is not the meaning of the passage and this man was never corrected by his association for his false doctrine, nor for his intervention into the families that he sent into chaos. He was listed in the association's yearly compilation of pastors/churches for several years after and to my knowledge they never once cautioned him about his false doctrine.

The phrase "in the Lord" is better related to the child obeying, rather than to the parents. The child is to obey the parent as an outworking of the life committed to Christ. This is part of their lifestyle; it is part of their being to be an obedient child.

This is the proper lifestyle for a Christian child. It is right and it will please God and it will result in a reward of long life on this earth.

I have taken no official survey, but I have talked to many older folks and have asked them if they were obedient children, and every one of them said that they had been.

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

Not only are they to be obedient, but they are to honor their parents. Now, the usual question is "How long do I have to honor them?" and the answer is not given in this text, but since there is silence on the when, maybe we should take it to mean that the child is to always honor their parent. This would seem logical to me.

"Which is the first commandment with promise" is from the ten commandments. Ex. 10.12 "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." It however is not the "first" commandment, it is indeed the fifth in the Exodus

listing. It is however the first of the second section of commandments. The first four are related to God and His worship, while the last six relate to our relationships to man. (See also Deut. 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.")

Might we take a moment and review the ten - we all tend to think we know them, but I wonder how many of us could list them if asked.

1. Don't have any other Gods before Him.
2. Don't make any graven images.
3. Don't bow down to them if there are some already made.
4. Don't take the name of the Lord in vain.
5. Honor thy father and mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's belongings.

Note should be made also that this is the only commandment put in the positive spin. Years ago when on the faculty of a small Bible institute the faculty was admonished that the student handbook was made up of negative rules. The board suggested we redo the handbook in positive terms, so the faculty spent many hours rewriting the entire book to show a positive spin rather than a list of don'ts. Humm, if don'ts are good enough for the Lord why not us?

Don't is not a bad word, and parents need to know this and use the word now and then when speaking to their children. Restrictions are not always bad; they indeed are good in the family. God has many restrictions in His family, why in the world shouldn't we?

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Note that God is asking for good behavior on the part of the child and to encourage it He gives a positive reward to bring the child to desire to behave well. This is actually a Biblical principle

that these child experts of today are encouraging us to use. If you do this, then you will gain this reward. However, notice that the reward is way far off in the future, not something that the child will gain immediately. This encourages one of the growth developments that children should learn - putting off gratification. We teach our kids today that they should get everything that they want - NOW - not in the future when they can afford it, or when they have done some work to earn it.

Now is the key to the now generation and believe me we have done a good job of training this present generation of kids in the NOW. They want it all NOW, not when they are fifty and have earned the money to pay for it ALL.

This is part of the problem with government, it is run by a bunch of spoiled elected officials that got it all RIGHT NOW when they WANTED it and are not willing to wait for anything. The national debt is on the increase due to their unbridled spending to get it ALL for EVERYONE that WANTS it ALL!

"Live long" is of interest in three ways. First, that it is a reward for a proper lifestyle as a child, and secondly it is not wrong to want to live long. Thirdly, to not want to die must be somewhat normal if we want to live long here.

Let's expand on those for a moment.

a. Reward for living correctly. What an encouragement to the child to have a reward from God for living as they ought. It is also a reward to the parent because their child will not precede them in death most likely and the grand children will most likely be forthcoming.

b. Wanting to live longer. It is natural to want to live in this life as long as possible. Very few find a desire to check out early, and most of them do so because of some mental condition that puts them into depression.

To want to live longer is not abnormal for the believer, for even Paul seemed to plan and have desires toward the future.

c. Not wanting to die. Some have criticized believers that were terminal for wanting to live. To fear death might be something to be considered, but to want to live is most natural. Death is the last ENEMY, according to Paul the apostle so why would we want to throw ourselves into the enemy's arms?

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

The term translated "provoke" and the term translated "wrath" are the same Greek word and the word only appears in this verse. It can relate to provoke or anger or wrath or exasperate. The

thought of the verse would seem to run along the line that the father (or mother) is not to cause anger or exasperation in the child. Maybe more to the point, the parent is not to anger the child to exasperation. I might add that the present tense would indicate not provoking on a continuing basis, which might allow for an occasional provoking.

Now, to relate this to our modern society I am not sure that we can. The teenager of today is full of anger to begin with, they are against all authority, and they are quick to let you know all about it. To say hello might well set some teens off into a fit of rage. Indeed, this is true of many children. Say no and the items at hand will be in the air headed your direction.

So, how do we understand this verse and apply it to our own lives today?

- a. As Dr. Phil says, "Pick your battles." Be sure what you are going to say is worth the battle that will come forth. He also adds that no matter what happens when you have started a battle that you are sure that you win.
- b. Be sure you are right and that what you are going to say or prohibit is really wrong and not just you're on the spot opinion.
- c. Start when the child is a baby to bring them up properly - that is what the last part of the verse is telling us. Raise them properly and the "attitude" won't develop. The child will want to obey and honor you because of their upbringing.
- d. If you failed to do "c" then you will have to rely on "a" and "b" and find some help from the word on how to relate to one that dislikes you.

In case anyone wants my opinion, the anger of today's child/teen is often caused by improper upbringing in the first place. Correct your mistake and the anger may well disappear.

Now, the last part of the verse is where we are going to run into trouble. "Nurture" is a word that can include chastisement and discipline. It is the whole educational process of bringing a child into adulthood. It is the loving instruction at the Word, it is the loving feeding at the table, it is the loving kindness when they have been hurt by another, and it is the loving discipline when they have erred. From kissing to spanking if the need should arise - this is what nurture is.

All of the above is to be done in accord with the admonitions of the Lord, from His Word. The Word should be our guide to all nurture as we travel through life with our families.

"Admonition" is an interesting term. It isn't the soft cuddly term that you might imagine. It is used in Titus 3.10 "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;" This would not necessarily be an easy time of admonition with an heretick. I have dealt with people that were in doctrinal error and they aren't easily, if ever, convinced that they are in the wrong. This might relate to how teens today relate - they are just as set in their incorrect behavior as the

heretic is his doctrine.

The verse seems to indicate whatever measures are required to bring up the child in a proper manner.

We now shift to another relationship that deals with the servant's submission to the master. This is a forced submission by way of the relationship itself, but the servant should, in their mind, submit willingly to the master in light of the Savior. That submission will rather naturally result in a better servant that is a more willing participant in the relationship.

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;

We need to understand this text in light of the position of the slave. The slave was considered as one of three classifications of farming equipment. There were the slaves, the animals and the equipment - just a different class of farm equipment; a slave is only a tool that is able to talk. A sick or maimed slave was not worth expending any effort - simply a tool that won't work any longer.

"Obedient" is the same word that is used in verse one where we saw the child was to "obey" the parent. There is an element of listening in this word. It means that the one that is obeying is listening to the one giving the request. The listening would also result in a better execution of the request which will result in a better servant or child.

I don't mean to demean computer telephone and email support people, but seldom do I find one that is interested in listening to the request. Often they will interrupt me in the middle of my first question with an answer to a question I have not asked, nor was I in the process of asking.

I recall one email exchange where I asked a question and the result was a long-winded reply that did not relate to my question at all. I replied that I would like for the person to read my original question and answer it rather than the one I did not ask. The reply to my reply was not actually a reply to my reply, nor the original question, it was a reply to some figment of his imagination, for it had nothing to do with my question either. Finally on the third try, he read my question and answered it fairly quickly.

When you relate to another, be sure that you listen to what is being said, and listen carefully so that you can respond as you ought rather than as you desire.

I find, also, that many Christians in leadership positions have a tendency to ask questions to show interest, but they seldom are really listening nor interested. If you ask questions, listen with interest to the answer.

The servant is to listen carefully to the request of the master so that they can do the task with the

utmost clarity and quickness.

"To them that are [your] masters" is one word and that is the word that is normally translated Lord. This master is to have the response that the Lord Himself would expect. Our response to the employers is to be as if we are responding to Christ - a very heavy responsibility we have in the workplace.

The verb "obedient" is an imperative and a present tense - a command for ongoing living as a servant, or in our society, an employee.

The rest of the verse explains just how this is to be done - in fear and trembling and in singleness or simplicity of the heart - as unto Christ. We seem to be responsible for taking this obedience very seriously.

Since we are relating this to the employee relationship - and it is such a relationship. Servant is a bondservant, one that has placed themselves under the authority of another. This describes well the employee/employer relationship. I, however, do not see this relationship, nor this attitude in the work place.

I see lack of respect, I see lack of obedience, I see lack of actual work and I see lack of any portion of this verse in the work of many employees. The attitude today is more of the employee thinking they are the employer and that they are there to tell the employer how to run his business. There is complaining, there is bickering and there is little similarity to what should be.

Christ would have His people submit to those that they are under with FEAR AND TREMBLING WITH SINGLENESS OF HEART!

Singleness relates to simplicity, it relates to bountiful, and it relates to mental honesty. It can relate to generosity of heart as well. Does that sound like most Christian employees you know? I trust that is true, but I fear it is not.

God would have us serve our employers as He would have us serve Him.

Just one further application. Missionaries that are on the field are there to serve their Lord and Savior, and I trust that they are doing so with fear, and trembling and singleness of heart. A total service to Him rather than to self or things.

It is easy, when no one is watching, to become lax in our responsibilities. This is one reason many mission organizations place several missionaries in the same place - there is more accountability to the Lord and the contributors. One mission, though they have stopped doing it, required each missionary to do a self-evaluation for their overseer quarterly, including goals and how they are doing on those goals. The overseer then wrote a letter to the contributor yearly to tell them what their missionary is doing and what the goals are and how they are going to

approach them. This gives indication of the work as well as it gives the giver some specific items to pray about.

It was a very beneficial practice that should not been allowed to die.

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

"Menpleasers" is one that does things in front of his master. It is one that does things to impress the master and relates to those that do what they do to please the one watching them in the hope of impressing. The implication is that they don't necessarily do what they should when the master is not watching. The next word gives further explanation to the thought - one that wants to please man rather than God.

We are to do this as the servants of God, rather than as servants of men - we ought to want to please Him rather than all others. We are not only to be doing for God, but we are to be "doing" within his will and not our own. We are to do all this from the heart - with all our soul. "Heart" is not the normal word for the pump within our chest, but it refers to the soul, our thought center or who we really are under the cover of any and all facades.

I could never count the people that are in the ministry for the purpose of pleasing those around them. This would include the congregation they pastor, or the pastor's fellowship that they belong to or the fellowship of churches that their church belongs to - they do what they do and are always in tune with those around them so that they might be sure to please others, and not offend them in anyway.

I also have observed that this activity is usually in the hope of finding respect and/or recognition. There is often a desire to have position in the fellowship or group that is in view. If they find no respect they feel they have failed.

I must wonder just where this drive for recognition and acceptance comes from - it certainly isn't the Lord because many of these groups tend to reduce the whole to the spiritual level of the least spiritual in the group.

It seems logical to me to seek a higher spiritual plain rather than the lesser. This might well illustrate the verse, seeking the pleasure of man or the pleasure of God. We have to be told to do that which pleases God, thus we must naturally seek to please man.

I must admit that seeking the recognition of man is needed if you are ever going to be the "in" type of person. If you are going to find a church to pastor, if you are going to find a ministry, if you are going to find a financial support base, you MUST get "in" with the right group. Otherwise you will be out in the cold with no hope of doing what you might feel the Lord calling you to do.

This also relates well to staying within a group. You will either comply with the whole, or you will be out. You will be like everyone else or you won't fit and probably won't survive.

NOW, I say these things not to get you to comply with the norm, but to do what God leads you to do, and be what God leads you to be. This will quite often leave you out in the cold - without a group to fellowship with, without a support base, and without anyone of like mind.

You might as well face reality that if you aren't complying with the group, you are alone with God. Personal opinion - being alone with God is much preferable to the group - it is He that we must satisfy, and no one else. Satisfaction of the group can only lead to lessening of who and what you are before God.

Any time you place yourself under someone else in a Christian organization you tend to lessen your ability to follow what God wants you to be. Not necessarily, but the tendency is there. If there is a lesser standard set, you will be expected to follow it by the one above you. If you stick to your own standard, often you will be looked down upon by the superior. It will likely lessen your chances for advancement, it will likely lessen your respect, and it will likely lessen your own feeling of yourself.

HOWEVER, serve God and all this stuff is for the other guys and will not weigh on your mind.

Lonely? Yes, it will be lonely as far as man is concerned, but then how lonely can you be if God is with you? He is our supply, He is our strength, and He is our sustenance - why do we feel we need to please men?

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

Here we have further basis for what has been said - that we are to "do" as to the Lord not to men. Serve Christ, not man. Service is a term that is related to the word we observed earlier when we looked at the servant. It is the service or work of a servant. All we do is for the Lord, no matter whom the earthly superior might be that is over us.

Good will could be translated benevolence as well. It is the doing of good. When you serve the Lord via earthly work relationships we are to "serve" and do it with good will or benevolence, not as something that we begrudge those we are under. You might want to take a look at Col. 3.22-23 and Titus 2.9-10 for further on this subject line.

The Life Application Bible states that at this time in the Roman Empire there was upward to a million slaves, thus this topic would have been very important for Paul to address. There were undoubtedly servants in the churches, also masters, and indeed, most likely there were masters and servants in the same assembly and they vitally needed to know just how they were to relate to one another as believers.

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether [he be] bond or free.

Here we see why we are to do well in our service under others. We will be rewarded for what we do as if it were done directly to the Lord. God wants us doing good and no matter who we do good to or who we do good for, God takes it as having been done to or for Him. What a deal - do good and God will notice as if it were done for Him. You can't beat a deal like that and not only that you can feel good about doing good, because you know God is pleased with what you do.

When you do that little extra at work for the boss that never notices your work, you can feel good about it because you know God noticed and you know you did it for God anyway and not the boss that doesn't pay attention.

If we do good with the proper attitude we win. God not only provided salvation for us and he provided all the other things we've studied about in this book and now he gives us notice when we do what we are supposed to do.

Years ago it was the custom at my place of work for the store manager to take everyone with perfect attendance for the year to dinner at a nice restaurant. I was one of the few and after the great meal I turned to the manager and said, "Thanks a lot for rewarding us for what we are supposed to do." God does the same for us at every turn of good.

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.

Can you imagine a moment, as the masters and servants are sitting there in church, maybe in a circle where they can see one another, and listening to Paul's letter being read? The master hears these admonitions aimed at the servants that have been giving them grief thinking, ya, Paul you go guy, you tell them what for, they really need this stuff. Go for it, tell them how they are to act - then verse nine is started - "ye masters, do the same things unto them," WHOOOOOOPPS, that must be a misprint, or computer glitch, did Paul really say the masters are to do the same? Naaah cannot be Paul wouldn't do that to us masters!

Ah, the masters are now faced with a few things to think about. "Do the same things unto them" would relate to their treatment of the servant, or in our line of thought employees. They are to do for the servants with good will or benevolence and they are to treat them as they ought not - as someone trying to make points with his own superior. God is the standard - treat all that you relate to, whether master or servant as if you are dealing with God Himself.

With this concept in mind, can you imagine how it would be to work for a Christian employer, and how it would be to hire Christians to work for you? The work place would be full of benevolence and what a place to work it would be!

This is the standard God has set and we ought to follow it - even if the other party forgets the principle.

The master is also admonished not to include threatening in the relationship. The term forbearing can be translated "give up" thus have no threatening in the master/servant relationship. Keep that relationship on a level where the master asks/commands and the servant does; a situation where the master gains what he wants without having to threaten the servant with retribution.

Again, imagine the work place if there were no threats of any sort to coherence the employees into proper action. This is actually a two-edged sword. The master is not to use threats, but his servants ought to relate to him in a way so that threats are not needed to gain the desired work.

I had a young man that worked well when he showed up for work, but often was the times that he just would not show up. He wouldn't call in sick, he wouldn't call in with even a lame excuse, he just wouldn't show up, thus forcing the rest of the crew to work three times as hard to do his work, as well as their own, in a short period of time.

I must admit I did not forbear threatenings altogether, but the threats were encased in positive encouraging thought provoking comments. He was a good worker when he showed up, and I really thought that with some chances he would become a regular, good worker. He had other thoughts on the subject evidently. One day two hours after he hadn't shown up he called in and quit, since he knew if he showed up after being this late that he would be let go.

He was not a believer so I shouldn't be too disappointed in him, but as an employer, or a manager, or a supervisor we must do all we can to deal with the lost employees as God would have us do. We should treat them as if they have worth to our Lord, but we must also deal with them as the lost, the self-centered being that they are - not that believers aren't totally self centered as well.

The basis - God is master of all and He will show no favoritism when it comes to dealing with master or slave - both will receive equal and just treatment.

This is also a comfort to all people in all relationships - it is God that we serve and it is God that will settle all accounts. It is our responsibility to do what He asks us to do in these relationships, and if someone wrongs us when we are doing right, then it is God that will settle accounts.

We do not have to dwell on these inequities, we do not have to deal with those that cause the inequities, we only need to continue as God has directed, and allow him to settle all the accounts.

This is an easy concept to state in words, but it is not an easy concept to practice at times. When someone has really wronged you, it is very difficult to just walk away and let God deal with it, but that is the standard that we should vow to operate within.

When teaching I often had people doing things that were really out of line and I would go to my office and spend long periods of time stewing about the situation and trying to figure out how to correct the situation and all the time knowing that God would deal with it. It is our nature to want to fix wrongs ourselves, but it is our sole duty to allow God to fix things - after all it is He that can do the much better job of fixing.

In the situation that I was in, there was seldom any fixing that would ever be done. This was sad because one day all that unfixed business is going to detract greatly from the great things that some of those people had been doing in their life. Because they had problem areas of life that they failed to deal with it tended to detract from their example before men as well.

See also Job 31:13-14; Col 4:1 for some further study. Job points out the fact that we will answer for our relationships to the one that matters - God.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Be strong is an imperative or command, yet the mood of the verb is passive which shows something is acting upon the subject. This would be of interest for how can we be expected to do something if the action is dependant on something out side of us - the Holy Spirit is the only answer that really fits the construction. Be strong in the Lord, by allowing the Spirit to work through you.

There are three different words used here. "Strong," "power," and "might." They are three different words and we should look at them briefly.

Strong: This has to do with the strength one has. It may relate to increasing in that strength. It may be strength that you do not necessarily have, but strength that can be gained or brought into being.

Power: Seems to indicate the power one has, that which one can exercise. Strength would be the muscle strength to lift weights, while power might relate better to the power of a president or of a political leader.

Might: This word is usually used of people like a judges, magistrates or even God. It relates to the whole realm of power and might that one has at his disposal.

In light of the verse, we are to gather strength, or increase our strength by standing in the power of His might. In other words we should become strengthened by the power that He makes available to us through His might or being.

Now, I won't draw any real conclusions, but in a context of wives submitting to husbands, children obeying their parents, servants obeying their masters and masters treating servants correctly, we have this call to be strong. Hummmmm. Do you suppose there is a relationship? I

suspect that there is.

Not only this, the next verse calls us to put on armor - not to fight with our spouses, parents and masters, but to confront the Devil, the one that causes so much trouble in these precious relationships.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

We might set the stage of the conditions in Ephesus when Paul was there earlier. Acts 19:13-20 "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of [one] Sceva, a Jew, [and] chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all [men]: and they counted the price of them, and found [it] fifty thousand [pieces] of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

"Put on the whole armour of God" is not a daily item of business, it is a one time act. This ought to confuse some of those spiritual warfare folks that tell us to get ready for battle daily - nope, get ready for battle once and that is it. AND it is also a command, so not an option folks.

"That ye may be able to stand" - notice this is not a battle, this is a standing against the Devil. We aren't told to go to war and whip his hide, we are told to stand against his wiles.

The "whole armour" is the Greek word that we gain panoply from which also means whole armor. Note it is the armour of God and not our own.

"Wiles" are not something ethereal, they simply relate to methods of the Devil, which by their nature are cunning and sneaky. The Greek term here is the one we gain "method" from which originally meant to subtly arrange things.

We are to protect ourselves so we can stand up to the Devil's ways and methods toward us. That seems to indicate to me that we aren't to sin, we aren't to fall into his temptations. It is our responsibility to stand and not fall.

I watched a movie once that declared that the glory of man was that he would fail God. Now, I don't know how long that premise took to conger up, but it must have been one of Satan's prized followers that dreamed it up. It is in no way glorious for man to sin, nor is it glorious that we all do. It is our failing, not our gain.

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].

There are a number of terms that we want to look at but the overview of this verse is that we don't wrestle with man, but that we wrestle with all sorts of other beings and evils. The term wrestle is a good choice, it is a struggle between us and all sorts of things that the Devil shoves in front of us, and it is a match that must end in one or the other as victor.

Since we are to stand, it must be us that God expects to be the winner. So, many people have talked to me about not being able to stand against temptation that they have failed due to their weakness - not true - they have not wanted to stand nor have they wanted to win. They have not prepared themselves for spiritual warfare, and they have succumbed to the Devil's wiles.

"Flesh and blood" simply relates to humankind. We don't have a fight with others of our kind, be they believers, or lost, but we have our fight with all that is the Devil's and all that he has at his command.

"Against principalities" is the seat of power, or the beginning of power that a person/system has; that overall power to wield over those that serve it. The church constitution is the seat of power to the church leaders. It is where power begins within the church.

"Against powers" is the power that authority has for its use. The powers of the world, the powers of the Devil and the powers of the demons. This would be the massive power that our president commands. He has the power of the armed forces and all that the country to produce to back up his decisions.

"Against the rulers of the darkness of this world" actually is in the singular, the ruler of this world or the Devil himself. The one that has the rule over the world as we know it right now.

"Against spiritual wickedness in high [places]" relates to the wickedness in high places, in the heavenlies, again referring to the Devil and His assistants and all that they are doing in this world.

APPLICATION:

1. I would imagine the first point to consider is just what the idea presented in the last verse means - that phrase "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood" - what did Paul mean. Is he saying that our struggles with fleshly desires are not the important battle? Is he saying that our only real fight is with the Devil?

No, I don't think this passage is an out for us in the battle with fleshly and personal desires. It has to do with the fact that we do not battle with other men, we do not have to settle disputes with other denominations, and we do not have to fight those in our church. In the context, we don't

have to fight with those that we have relationships with.

Our real battle is the spiritual darkness around us which really includes the world, the Devil and all lost people that might oppose us and our work for God.

Years ago there was a book relating to our struggle with "THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL." This would have us believe, as was the teaching of many back then, that we fight all three on an equal basis. Yet, this verse seems to speak to the main battle being the world and the devil. The flesh or our bent toward sin is a different problem than the battle that is mentioned here.

Our personal bent toward sin is our personal bent toward self-centeredness. We do what we desire, rather than what the Spirit desires. This is a matter of personal decisions of the mind and this is the ease with which they should be settled.

The world and the Devil are another thing. They also attach us in the mind but it is those outward temptations that our personal battle is with. The Devil tempts, but it is our personal mind's decisions that determine our sin or not. It is that decision making that is centered in the area of our commitment to God. We are committed or we are not.

That decision making session is the place where we need the armour of God, which is where we need the power of his might. The Devil cannot force us into sin, his legions cannot arrange circumstances so that we must sin, and the world cannot make itself so beautiful that we must follow its ways.

STAND is the word. Prepare yourself to stand and not fall - that is the passage's message for us. Our decision making is that standing or falling.

2. We saw that children are to obey and honor their parents. Most writers state that obedience is for childhood and honor is for life. I would concur I believe, with this line of thought.

There is a current phenomenon that might relate to this. There are many grown children living at home. To an extent there should be a bit of obedience to them in this case even if grown and making your own living. Some might say that this would be covered in "honoring" and if that is the case then I would agree.

The grown child under the roof of the parent should adhere to the norm of the house as far as lifestyle and activities. If they don't want to abide by the parent's restrictions, then a move out would be appropriate.

I would want to think about "honor" for a moment. Just what does it mean to honor your parent? Is it complete obedience to their wishes? Is it obedience to their choice of a spouse for you? Just how and what is this honor that we are to show to our parent.

In general it is giving due respect to the parent. It is keeping a proper relationship with the parent. It is listening to the parent, even if you don't accept and follow their wishes, an attentive ear should be theirs.

Let's list some points for the honor of the parent.

a. It is the child's responsibility to honor, not the parents place to live and act so as to deserve honor, though that would be nice in the equation.

b. It is the child respecting the position of the parent in their life, not necessarily over them, but an integrated part of their life.

c. The word relates to placing a value upon the parent. Valuing who and what they are. Valuing their values might also relate. You don't have to live by their values, but giving them the honor of listening to their values and understanding them and not demeaning the parent or value system.

d. One of the usages of the word is to revere or venerate. We don't have to put them on a pedestal and bow down to them, but we should see them as something of great value to us.

The care homes of our country are full of parents that have no visitors - not even their children. This does not reveal any great value on the part of the child.

e. Matthew 15:4 tells us that the alternative to proper honoring is cursing of the parent and the result is to be death. This is of note in that God promises long life for those that honor correctly.

Not cursing would indicate the use of loving and correct terms with the parent rather than cutting and hurtful words that demean and destroy.

Just a side note, the Life Application Bible writers are a little sloppy at this point. They mention "Mt 15:4. This verse quotes or is quoted in Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16" Just how can a New Testament verse be quoted in the Old Testament that was written hundreds of years prior?

f. Patience should be the watchword in this relationship. If the parent is not what they should be, the child is obligated to honor anyway, however they can have hope in the fact that most parents mellow over the years and it may come easier to properly honor them.

g. Know, some parents aren't easily honored. It will take work and effort on the part of the child to properly fulfill their Scriptural obligation.

h. As a free word of advice, to those of you that still have living parents - get to know them. Sit and talk to them and mostly listen to them. Listen to their stories, listen to their hard ships, listen to their unfulfilled hopes and dreams, and listen to their fulfilled hopes and dreams. Know them before you lose them.

So many of my generation did not talk to their folks and after they are gone we realize we know little about them or what their life was like. It is only by piecing together little bits of information from many many sources that I have gotten to know a little bit about my parents, and what they were like and why they related to me as they did or didn't do.

It is only by knowledge that you can really properly honor them as you can and should. I am sixty-five and still putting together the pieces that I have gleaned over the years and the picture is quite spotty at best.

Parents, I would suggest that you start putting down notes of information that come to mind about your life. Your kids may not be interested, but I'd guess that most will one day realize that they would like to know you better. If you are gone it will be impossible, unless you have given them the information that they will need.

On a personal basis, my kids are going to be so sick of knowing me that they will one day quite reading my sermons and writings that are full of illustrations from my life. They will have ample opportunity if they desire. I would encourage all parents to give their kids this option.

I. Honor or respect for the parent relates to the honor and respect, or lack there of, in our society for older people. In years gone by elders were something to be desired in a community or society, but today they are mostly the cast aways of society and relegated to the old folks home or to the senior centers. There is little respect for them or their knowledge and this is sad for their lives are filled with knowledge that could teach and guide the present generation.

The boomer generation is going to change this some. They are such a large economic block that the younger generation is going to have to get to know them to be able to get their money. Sad that the respect of elders has to be on the basis of economic status rather than a societal desire to honor those that have so much wisdom.

3. I think that we have had a real opportunity to see verse four played out on our televisions of late - at least the wrong side of the verse. The parent is not to provoke the child to wrath. The self help shows have been overflowing with examples of bad parenting and the children that are in the throws of wrath and rejection of parental authority. Teens that have been provoked over and over are viewed on television as those taking drugs, drinking, smoking and having sexual relationships.

Most of these teens are in the mess they are in due to some of the bad parenting they have been under. The parents have, by their improper discipline, provoked their children into actions that are not fitting for them.

The parenting of today is based in part upon the teaching/writing of Dr. Spock and he has supposedly confessed that his parenting information was false and just plain wrong yet the parents of today continue to follow in his muddled foot steps and have added to the problem by

providing the kids with everything they want when they want it.

The kids of America know they have been raised incorrectly, but they enjoy the toys so continue on as if nothing is wrong and fail to learn the meaningful experience of waiting for satisfaction, and working for the things that they desire.

4. In this passage the apostle speaks to the fact that we wrestle with the Devil and his minions. We are to be wrestling with them, not playing with them! We have Christians messing around with Ouija boards. We have seen them in churches - what are people thinking? Or are they even thinking? Exposing their children and youth to one of the Devil's toys and making it a fun activity!

We have Christians involved in Halloween; we have churches and Christian colleges involved in Christianized Halloween called harvest festivals - black cats, ghosts and all! Again, what are people thinking - we can't call ourselves Christian and wrap ourselves in satanic memorabilia and look spiritual to the lost around us.

I recently read a thread on a message board relating to whether Christians should watch television. The overwhelming attitude was that there is nothing wrong with it. Those that feel it is okay railed against those that felt it was evil by saying it is no more evil than a car or a stove or any other modern convenience. One apt lady observed that cars are not without their own evil side.

I posted the following and not one person responded to the post. "Phil. 4.8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things." How do you follow this verse watching television?"

You can't possibly fill your mind with good while watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer or some of the other programming on television. The evil and the trash and the vile language sent over the airwaves are the worst kind of air pollution we could conceive, and we invite it into our children's minds for their contemplation. We invite it into our own minds for our own self pollution.

Imagine how God must feel when He is waiting for our fellowship and He sees us watching some of the sex scenes on television, or some of the wholesale murders, and corruption. This is God's mind, this is God's time, this is God's property and we pollute it with garbage.

5. Barnes suggests some reasons why the child should obey the parent.

"(1.) because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.

"(2.) Because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to law, as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.

"(3.) Because the child is not competent, as yet, to reasons on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.

"(4.) Because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child.

"(5.) It is important, because the family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God."

The whole nature of the child is at risk if the parent isn't doing their job and if the child isn't obedient to that parent. The personal safety is an issue, the personal life is at issue, and the personal salvation of the child is at issue - all must be guided and nurtured to maturity.

Studies have found that an obedient child will react to the parent correctly when in a dangerous situation. The disciplined child will know to hearken to the parents commands, while the non-disciplined child may or may not adhere to commands that will lead to safety. They may do their own thing, and go further toward danger, they might panic and freeze resulting in further danger or they might, if the parent and child are fortunate, follow the parents command to safety. Other studies have shown that there are many other benefits to an obedient child.

Barnes elaborates on number five by saying that the child will be accustomed to this relationship to God when maturity comes and the child will naturally follow what he already knows.

6. Let's explore this idea of relationships in the family and work place as they relate to the person's relationship to the church. The same relationship exists. The leaders are over the congregation, but they are also under God, thus how they treat the congregation will be part of their accountability. How we, as congregants, react to the leaders is also our responsibility before the Lord.

Let's think of some situation and how this might work out.

a. The leaders make a decision which you disagree with. What will be your reaction to them? It should be polite, and it should be Christian, but you may do some different things. You can let it slide, leaving them to the responsibility if things go wrong and do what you are supposed to do - be under their leadership. You might go to them in a Christian manner and voice your concern/disapproval and submit to their reaction to that whether positive or negative. You could

also do as many do today, find another church.

I would submit that the choice may relate to how serious the disagreement is and whether it is Biblically based or not. Do you have a clear command or prohibition against what the leaders have done? Do you know for a fact that there was an error in their decision making process, etc.?

b. The leaders do something which is against the church documents (constitution, by-laws, or doctrinal statement). You have the same choices as above, but you have a more serious basis for leaving if there is no change or response. You need to also, know just what powers the leaders have. Are the leaders able to change the documents without congregation approval, etc.?

Congregations must know what the documents contain. I was filling in at a small church and finally was given the constitution. I went through it and found that the pastor had no vote on any committee, no vote as a member of the congregation, and no power to move or change anything in the church. On top of this there was one committee which had total power over the Christian education in the church and it answered to no one, not the pastor, not the elders, and not the congregation. They could have suspended Sunday school and instituted the weekly movie and nobody could have said a thing.

Know your church documents before you join a church and feel free to educate those in leadership if they don't know them.

c. Leaders need to know their people and what they are thinking. Many leaders make changes that are against the wishes of the entire church. When they find opposition they feel persecuted - well they shouldn't, they should know what the congregation desires for their church.

The Bible is clear on a few things relating to what "church" is to be, but outside of those stipulations there seems to be wide latitude. Music is to be a part of the church, but what type of music should be up to the congregation and leaders to decide as a unit, not the leaders doing it in the board room.

The Bible is clear on the need for fellowship, but little is seen as to how this was accomplished other than in gatherings and meals. Again, the congregation and leaders should determine what would work best for them.

The Bible is clear on the ordinance of the Lord's Table. How this is carried out is also up to the entire congregation, though the leaders may vary it from time to time to keep the service from becoming mundane.

d. The leaders may use the documents to wield their power, which is not right either. I knew of a Bible college where the board and faculty were at odds as to the running of the school. The board thought that the faculty had the power and that they had to just buck the faculty as best they could. The president of the school asked one of the faculty to go through the documents and

figure out the structure of the school via the documents. Odd, that after twenty plus years someone decided to wonder, but the faculty member set about the task.

The result was that the board had total and complete power to do anything it wanted, but it could delegate what it wanted to delegate to the faculty. The result of finding they had total power, was that the board put a statement to the faculty that the faculty would adhere to what the board said without question. The "or leave" was not in the document, but the faculty obliged the board by vacating the school.

The board also changed the school's purpose statement, which was a part of the constitution which they were not allowed to do by the constitution. They found they had power and they used it for their own purposes. I won't comment on the purpose of God in all of this, but have to wonder, since every man on the faculty had been called to serve at the school specifically and were serving on a bare minimum of support that they had to raise themselves.

Power is delegated by the Lord, but how power is used will be overseen by the Lord as well.

7. The passage is clear that the Devil will use any and every trick that he has to bring about problems for the believer. He will use temptation, he will cunningly bring about situations were we need to make a split second decision that had better be the right one. He is able to trick believers into coming against other believers.

Beware of all that goes on in your life, you may be looking to fight the Devil, but it may well be a misguided to sinful believer that brings you into a problem situation.

A pastor was accused of making obscene phone calls from the church to one of the ladies of the church. The woman hated the pastor and was bent on getting rid of him. The storm finally was quieted when the woman finally confessed to her sin and guilt before the congregation, but due to the upheaval within the church the pastor was forced to leave within a few months, even though he had done nothing, and the falsehood had been corrected. The rumors and innuendo did not stop with the confession and a good man was forced to move on.

Another pastor had lead his church through a very hard decision making process. The vote was unanimous not to move forward on a project. There was one family that was not present for the vote because they disagreed with the pastor very strongly on the project. About a month after the vote, the man that disagreed approached the pastor and announced that the church wanted to take another vote. Truth revealed that the man had gone to every home in the church and convinced all families to now oppose the pastor on the project.

Understanding that the congregation saw the man as the leader rather than the pastor, the pastor resigned and moved on to a ministry where his leadership was of use.

I am not saying that one should mistrust church members, but they should give due caution to all

situations of life and know that it isn't always the out and out sinner that can cause you problems.

8. The Christian is to put on the whole armour of God. There are two distinct items and two distinct reasons for the two. The believer is to do something, yet God is to do something. The distinct reasons are that we cannot do it alone, we need God's assist, and God wants to assist us, but we have to allow Him to do so.

Some are so confident, Constable observes, that they do not rely on God, while others, he also correctly observes, are so afraid to do that they shrink from doing for fear of failure. Both extremes are outside the idea of the passage and are also outside the will of God for our lives.

We must balance our confidence and our fear with the power of God that is needed for victory over the Devil.

We might point out that there are two sources of this false confidence. We may think we are so great and spiritual that we don't need any help. On the other hand we may not appreciate the Devils power and we don't see him as a real threat, thus having confidence to overcome this simple and puny enemy.

9. Constable seems to divide sin into the three items, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life that John mentions in I John 2:15-17. He seems to separate these from the Devil. What do you think? Are these separate from the wiles of the Devil?

I view these as the internal dialogue that we have with ourselves before we sin, but I am not sure just how separated these are from the Devil's world and ways. The Devil isn't inside our head causing the conflict, we can do that quite effectively ourselves, but He is outside bringing his world into our view for our consideration.

No, he does not cause the lust or the pride, but he is most likely the originator of our thinking along those lines because of the situations we find ourselves in - situations of his making, as well as situations of our allowing - we should have brains enough to stay away from situations that will cause us to consider sin.

Instead of watching "a little porn" and taking the chance of falling into problems, stay away from it all together. Instead of having "just a social drink" and taking the chance of falling into problems, stay away from it all together. Instead of going to the strip club (this applies to both sexes) to "see what it is like" and taking the chance of falling into problems, stay away from it all together. Don't toy with sin for many are the believers that have gotten tripped up with "A LITTLE" sin.

Section twelve: 6.13-24

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.

It is of note that all verbs in this verse are aorist - one time action. You are to take, withstand, and are to have done all to stand - once, not daily, not as it is convenient - you know after you have sinned a lot and want to clean up your act a little - no, we are to take on the armour and take our stand - period.

Rather, takes the sails out of some of the spiritual warfare teachings. Standing is to be the hallmark of our lives; it is to be backed by that taking on of our armour. We should be noted for being at the ready; never not being at the ready.

God wants a standing army, not a bunch of reserves that will get armoured up when the time is forced upon them; they are to be armed and ready at all times - a natural state of affairs.

Note also that it is the "whole" armour, not just part of it. Fully prepared is the desire of God, not partially prepared. "Whole" and "armour" are one term that we have mentioned - we get our word panoply from the Greek word which also means whole armour.

This is only logical, what soldier would put on his helmet, flack jacket and go out to fight without his rifle? When you step up to stand in the gap, you want to have yourself covered as best you can so that your armour can deflect oncoming weapons. You also want that weapon to help in the protection of your person and others around you.

One of the saddest parts of the Iraq war was that we sent our troops in with less equipment than they should have had. This was a major mistake of preparations long before the war was undertaken. The leaders should have had the equipment on hand to face any war. You can't take two years to prepare for war, then attack - that is illogical. The armour should have been available for the soldier's protection when they hit the ground running.

When I was in grade school I accidentally made a big huge sixth grader run off the sidewalk on his bike and he was scraped up a little. The bell rang for school to start or I would have been in serious trouble. As I headed for school he was shouting at me that he was going to clobber me after school.

The rest of the afternoon I was putting my little mind to work as to how I was going to hop on my bike and make a quick get away. I had several routes planned on paper to get myself home safely. NO, I was not about to STAND against this huge guy; I was going to run for all I was worth. Stand? Never, there was not enough armour in the world to protect me against that guy.

God's armour, on the other hand, is sufficient to stand against any comer, including the Devil

himself. We don't have to plan exit strategies, we don't have to plan attacks, we have only to put on the armour and stand in the Devil's way.

"In the evil day" is the time to stand. I don't know of a time or day in history since Paul penned these words that we couldn't call the "evil day." We, as believers, are to stand in our day against the evil that is present.

As I read more and more from the old time writers, I am finding that the evil of their day is basically the evil of our own day. Nothing much has changed except the sugar coating on the outside of the evil. Evil is evil and it will not change - it will just change its shape or color or configuration now and then to look new, but it is that same old evil.

Our job is to take on the armour and stand, we are to stand against evil - that is important - evil, not good, don't use that armour to wound the Christian, use it against the Devil. Paul says this is all we have to do to stand against evil.

Once the armour is on, we have done all we can do - God is going to do everything over and above that if there is any need. We armour ourselves and stand and we have done everything that we need to do to do the task of standing against evil.

So many today feel we have to get the armour on, then we have to strategize, then we have to march off into the sunset chasing down evil. Some suggest that we must do other things to protect ourselves, some of special formulas that you need to pray to get God's protection. Nope, it is the armour and standing and that is all that is needed.

Oh, the big huge kid. When the bell rang to finish school, I was on the run out of the school, grabbed my bike, pedaled west a block then north two blocks then east three blocks and then south to my home. Never saw the big kid. Guess that means I outsmarted him. Well, maybe I was just quicker. Well, maybe he cooled off and decided the little squirt didn't deserve death by beating after all. No matter the reason home was so sweet that day.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

Notice these items are to be on, not in the closet or on your wife, they are to be on you.

Stand is rather plain but it also carries the thought of being put in place, set in place. You are to do it, but you are to be set as in firm so that you will stand and not fall.

When I was redoing our back yard I put some foot square bricks down to form a little pad for a bench. I did little in the way of preparation to the ground, just a shave here and there and a rock to hold the brick in place. It wasn't long before it looked like a pair of drunks had put the brick in place. There were edges and corners sticking up everywhere.

Later in the spring I decided to extend our patio slab by a couple feet, but this time I softened the ground, smoothed the dirt and then put down some sand and leveled the area to be covered. After the brick was laid I poured fine sand between the bricks and tamped it all down. The job was much better and it was quite nice - very level. The first set of bricks may have been put in place, but they were not "set" in place properly.

As we are armoured, we need to set ourselves as if we desire to be there permanently. We don't want to waver or falter in that stand; we want to be firmly planted. This does not allow for a strong stance on Sunday and Wednesday while you are at church and a mushy staggering stand the rest of the week.

Loins girt with truth: The loins would be the hip area on both sides. We are to have ourselves covered with truth - the truth of God, and certainly not the truth of mankind for it is part of the evil that we are standing against.

The word means to protect by belting on or girding on the shields that will protect you. Belt them on so the protection won't slip or slide out of the way and allow for injury. Belt on truth, don't just play around with it, and don't just put enough on to look good, put all truth on, the truth that God has revealed in His word.

The question came to my mind, just how does truth relate to the hips? I am not sure there is a close connection but let's think about it for a moment.

The hip is important to walking, but we are standing, so that isn't important here. The hip is also the focal point of the muscles that hold us up. Without the muscles of the hip it would be very difficult to stand. We would be lopsided at best and on one knee most likely.

Truth is that which helps us to stand and remain standing.

Breastplate of righteousness: The breastplate covered from the neck to the stomach. That same area which flack jackets cover. The area of the vital organs of life is the specific area. This is to protect the one standing to be able to continue standing while living. If death comes, then there will be total failure of the system.

Righteousness relates to correct standing before God, it is one that is correct and right. If we are wrong before God we cannot be standing for Him. In the spiritual warfare we are as dead to Him, for we can do nothing to the Devil. We are powerless, and in a sense we are the same as He is; only we have a way out of the situation - confession and seeking of forgiveness (I John 1.9).

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Feet shod or prepared for standing. If your feet aren't right with the world then you aren't right with the world. I used to do a lot of walking at the store where I worked. I purchased one set of

tennis shoes that just were not built correctly. Over the course of several months I bought pads, and supports and little items to assist these shoes in correctly preparing my feet for the beating that they were taking.

There were times when I would stop in the stock room and pick up some soft plastic and role it up and put it under one of the pads to give added lift to cure a certain ache or pain. My feet were not properly prepared and I was really out of sorts until things became peaceful in the lower foot area. By the time I found cures for all the ills the shoes were worn out and I started over.

Now, I'm not suggesting we are to improvise till we get it right; God has given us the proper item to put on.

"The preparation of the gospel of peace" is the gospel or good news of peace. I assume that this speaks to the Gospel of Christ rather than some other gospel relating to peace - His Gospel does give peace.

Again, how does the gospel relate to the feet or preparing them for battle? Again, the feet are there for support, they are there as the foundation of the soldier. Without them it is difficult to stand properly. The Gospel is the only foundation that really gives the soldier the proper support to stand against the Devil.

I might add that all verbs since the last time I mentioned verbs are still all aorist - one time items, not a daily item, not a convenience item, but a one time commitment to stand on God's side of the battle.

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

The shield is a tool of war that allows one to deflect that which is sent your direction. Quench means simply to put out or extinguish a fire. Years ago in the days of my childhood, my father took two old awnings that he had removed from our house and built my brother and me a fair sized tent in the yard.

My brother showed me that if you took a match and light it, then hold it close to the canvas that the fuzz of the canvas would sparkle and smoke without hurting the canvas. I watched in amazement and could hardly wait until he left so I could try the same thing. He left, I did and you know the rest of the story most likely. I did not quench the fire quickly enough and created the nicest skylight for our tent that you can imagine. Only a small one but a fist sized hole is as bad as a basketball sized one when you are talking about a tent.

It is with our faith that we can stand the Devil. Faith in God, faith in His Word, and faith in His protection. With this faith we can deflect or quench all of the problems that the Devil can send our way.

My electronic Bible shows "fiery" as a verb, not that it is awful significant if it is, but I found it curious that none of my resources mention this in any way. The thought would be that the fiery dart is blazing and that it will continue to do so until it is extinguished. It will serve its purpose.

What the darts are is of great controversy. Some suggest they are darts on fire, others say that they are poison darts and the poison causes the flesh to burn and others suggest both and suggest it is one or the other. The darts were meant to be a harassment of the enemy and to distract them from the real battle. The soldier would be forced to dodge these darts instead of concentrating on the battle at hand. Some suggest these darts were used against ships as well in an attempt to set the ships on fire. (The LITV translates it as follows, indicating the thought of fiery being a verb, "Above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the darts of the evil one being kindled." The Net Bible translates it as "flaming arrows.") I would suspect flaming darts might be a good translation of the phrase, indicating the active nature of the darts. (I found that this word is a participle which can be used as a noun or verb and is called a verbal noun, but in this usage it seems to be used as a verb.)

The point is to guard against them and to deflect them, and possibly a little warning not to allow them to distract you from the real battle.

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

Again, the verb "take" is aorist, a one time occurrence. Take the helmet of salvation would relate to protection of the head where the knowledge of your salvation is retained. The mind and who we are is our soul - our brain/mind. One of the pop rock and roll songs of yesteryear had the words, we have to have rock and roll to know the hole in our soul" - not that the song nor its writer related it to spiritual things, but man does have a hole in his soul - a spiritual void that longs to be filled and I don't think Rock and Roll has anything to do with it - sin is the key.

Salvation is our protection from the Devil. Christ has done all to keep us safe for all eternity.

Take the sword of the Spirit. Anyone remember the "Sword Drills" of the church quite some years ago? Someone would call out a Biblical reference and everyone would try to get to the verse first, stand and read the verse. The Word is our sword; it is that which Christ wielded against the Devil during His temptation. Knowing the Word and using the Word is the only offensive item in the armor, and since we are to stand, it is not to be used in an offensive manner, but in our own defense. (Heb 4.12 "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.")

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

This seems to be a very specific item to be done. Praying and supplicating, or seeking God with

our needs, and "our needs" more specifically relates here to "all saints" which gives you a major part of our prayer life - others. There is also a major qualifier in the passage, those prayers and that watching is to be done "IN THE SPIRIT" - the Spirit should be the basis for these prayers and sharing of other people's needs with the Lord.

The "watching" seems to indicate that we are to continue sleeplessly in that prayer, keeping up the prayer until it is no longer needed.

One must consider the prayer letters that supporters receive from missionaries. How much need is presented? How often are you updated on that need? Are you told when that need has been met? Missionaries tend to make needs known but seldom update, nor inform when the need is met - or how the need was met which could be of great blessing to the prayer warriors.

Speaking of prayer warriors, did you notice the context of this verse - the armour of God and His preparing us for battle? Seems this may be the basis for that term "prayer warrior."

Note, this is not a text that is addressed to a bare few in the church at Ephesus that will meet for prayer; it is addressed to all at the church of Ephesus. I have seldom seen a church prayer meeting attended by more than a few percent of the total church membership. Ten percent of membership at a weekly prayer meeting would be about the top in my experience.

No wonder the church is so puny and weak, when those that are at God's throne in prayer are so few. God has given us the great privilege of sitting at His feet while telling Him the needs of others and we all just flock to the prayer meeting to meet Him! Ya, right. You would think that God is a puny wimp the way we call on His name.

When I was a child I lived across the street from the church we attended. I saw a lot of people gathering at the church. I asked my mother what was going on since I knew Wednesday evening was prayer meeting. She told me that it was choir practice. I heard that as "car practice" and for years wondered why all those people drove up in their cars and parked them to have car practice. Not sure why a church would schedule car practice on the same night that they had prayer meeting - seems that those practicing cars should be in the room praying, but then that would be too Biblical I guess.

I'm not sure how many years it was before I realized that it was choir practice - at least that is a little more spiritual than cars!

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.

This passage has always been a blessing to me. Paul asked for boldness in witness - we have this picture of him out there like a street preacher giving forth the Gospel, yet he felt he wanted more

boldness for his ministry.

Most of us need that boldness to share our faith. We need to realize witnessing is not something that comes totally naturally to the believer. There are some that can witness anywhere and to anyone without a thought, but that is not the norm. Most of us are not that bold.

It is also of note that Paul wanted to "OPEN MY MOUTH" to witness. There are many that have succumbed to the idea that we can witness by our life - yes that is part of the plan, but we might understand that Paul went from town to town witnessing, and at times did not take time to live in the town so that people could see his life. He would go in witnessing with his mouth, not his life.

Yes, live a proper life before your neighbors and co-workers, but don't forget to open your mouth as well, for it is the spoken word that will help them understand the Gospel. The word translated "utterance" is the word "logos" which relates to utterance, to talking, to communication by mouth. It is also related to the Lord and His Word - important stuff, over and above a good lifestyle.

We need to do this no matter how it affects our life. Paul was in prison for his witness, so we should not shrink from the same if the occasion should arise.

It is our ministry to open our mouths - within that context you can live your life properly before men so that they might see Christ.

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:

This isn't a Biblical imperative to the Missionary to send prayer letters, but it certainly is a good example that they might want to follow. Giving report to those that are praying for you is certainly a good gesture of thanks giving as well as smart strategy - if you have people praying for you, it would seem prudent to have them continue to do so and if reporting will encourage that, then it is plain smart.

This also pictures Paul as a very open and transparent person relating to his own flaws, inabilities and needs. He wasn't above asking for prayer, he wasn't above telling others how he was "REALLY" doing.

So often saints tend to keep their fallacies within and their well being a secret lest they seem less than they ought to be. If Paul, an apostle, can be open and up front, why shouldn't we all - including the pastor and other leadership within our churches?

We see that Paul was not above giving others credit for being a good servant of the Lord. He made mention of the messengers faith and service to the Lord. So often people minister in a church for years without any recognition. Not that they desire it, but that they ought to be

recognized by the leadership as Paul did Tychicus.

"A beloved brother" is indicative of an acceptance of this man as a brother in Christ, a person that he ought to hold with some esteem. Often a pastor views his congregation as a body to assist him in advancing to bigger and better things instead of a group of brothers and sisters to be fellowshiped with.

There may be a relational side to a pastor of being shepherd, but there is also the "brother" side that is just as important. You don't shut out the brother side so that you can assure your position of shepherd.

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and [that] he might comfort your hearts.

This is the purpose of his visit, but while he is there he will comfort your hearts. This may have been a comfort from the information from Paul, or from his own ministry to the people. Just hearing his report of Paul would have been a comfort, but it seems that a person's presence can be a further comfort - one that has recently been with Paul.

When people die in war it always seems to be a real comfort to meet and talk with someone that was with the loved one that has died. I am sure that Tychicus was a comfort as well as his message.

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.

A great benediction to close the letter. To remind them of all the treasures that they have in Christ. That one term "sincerity" is quite the qualifier. If you sincerely love Christ, then these are yours, but the implied opposite is that if you don't "sincerely" love the Lord they are not.

Imagine knowing that you did not have peace, love, faith and grace from God and understanding the ramifications of same. It might make you consider your place before God. It is also of note that the passage is introduced with the term "brethren" a further call to consider your place before God.

Are you really a brother in Christ? Seems that there may have been a touch of witness in this prayer of Paul's.

There is a very stiff qualifier for those that are to receive this peace, love, faith, and grace. Those that love the Lord "in sincerity" which relates to purity, lack of corruption, and sincerity are the recipients of those wonderful benefits. Don't live a life of sin and expect to have the good life that the verses describe, but look for a life that lacks these things. We have no claim on God's

good things if we are rejecting Him in the area of purity.

APPLICATION:

1. Verse thirteen speaks specifically of an evil day in which we are to stand. We have taken it to mean on an ongoing basis and I believe this to be a right and proper application of the text. There is also a real truth that this may be speaking of a specific time in a person's life - not world wide, but for some generations and some geographical locations.

For example I am sure it has a real meaning to the Christians in China that are being imprisoned and persecuted. I am sure that the believers in Sudan that are being starved could view this passage as their day.

On the other hand I personally believe American believers may well have their day coming. We have enjoyed the luxury of decades, but that "Christian nation" concept is wearing way too thin in our country today.

The last presidential election was won by only a few percentage points, and we see conservatives under attack from the liberal side constantly. They are demeaning and vicious in their attacks trying to picture a conservative as a Hitlerite.

We may have our evil day in America soon. We are in the precursors of it now and we have another generation of liberal students graduating each year from the liberal based schools of our country.

Now! The following comments are not "against" any believer that is in the public school system, though some of them may be adding to the problem for there are many liberal thinking Christians. The following comments are not "against" the home school movement nor the Christian school movement. I have always considered Christian schools and home schools a wise choice for believers.

I say what I say from perfect hindsight and none of what I will say was in my mind until recent months as I was evaluating our country and how believers relate to it. Remember - nothing against anyone, just some observations of where "we" as believers may have gone wrong.

The public school system is creating class after class of liberal humanists. Yes, I am sure that there are some young people that do not buy into the teaching that they are getting, but many are.

The point? The Christians of America have given the public school system over to the liberal humanist slice of society, and since it is educating the most students, they are dictating the move away from a "Christian nation" to a liberal humanist state. Sure, it will take a long time, but that is where we are headed and these liberal and humanist youth are becoming the voters of America - the majority one day and where will Christians be?

There is one hope, that these young people will see the error of their education as they grow older, but if this does not happen we will find ourselves in a state where the majority can close churches and ban Christianity. They are already trying to push Christianity out of public life and they are succeeding. They are pushing Christianity out while providing places for Muslims to pray in public schools.

Add to this the fact that many of our evangelical churches are full of humanism themselves and you will see that hard times are coming. I have taught a class or two that takes the Humanist manifesto point by point and have shown that it is already in our Christian thinking. Not just a point or two, but the entire mind set of the humanist.

Don't say that is impossible, for the Roman church started out in the beginning much straighter than it is today and it accepted humanism and integrated it into their system.

Had Christians been in the school system, and had run for school board offices there would have been a huge dampening effect on the slide of public education. I must wonder if the march away from the school system was not, in part, a mistake on the part of believers.

Again, I stress I am not casting stones at anyone, just musing from hindsight what might have been.

We have school teachers teaching students that Total English Immersion is Racist and it bars students from their culture. For those that do not know about the TEI program it is where a student that does not speak English is placed in a class by them selves with a teacher that is fluent in the student's language. For one year the student is taught English only with some math and other subjects mixed in. The teacher speaks both languages but teaches English to the student.

Now, what is racist about that, and how does that bar a student from their culture. It is a program that will save millions of dollars and help the students - it has been proven to work in other states, yet in our state the school system is against it - most feel it is because it will reduce the number of teachers/administrators to produce the programs that "they" want to keep going, or institute.

More and more countries in the world are outwardly persecuting Christians. We had better prepare our thought lives for the day when it could happen here.

There are a couple of choices believers have. Face what is coming as strong Christians or buckle under to the trouble; these are the two obvious choices. We ought to become more active in our governments and school boards so that we are an influence that will slow if not change the direction of things.

We need to get involved in political campaigns and be an influence for the positive.

No, I am not saying detract from what you are doing for God, but in some of that spare time you have get involved in something that will make a difference in the country. Get involved in what your city council is doing, watch them on public access, follow their votes, see what they are doing and make your voice heard when they are wrong.

2. When I consider this verse telling us to stand I am reminded of two specific military actions. The first was the Spartans. They were terribly outnumbered but they stood fast till the last man died. They formed themselves into a geometrical shape and withstood the onslaught of thousands before being killed. They were beaten only because they were seriously outnumbered, a situation which we will never face - God is the equalizer of all time and we will never be outnumbered.

An Old Testament account has always been a true blessing for me, let us take a moment and read it.

II Kings 6.14 "Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that [be] with us [are] more than they that [be] with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain [was] full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

We do not stand alone. Years ago Faith and I had a card on our bedroom wall. It was during a time when we were in heavy trials and hard times. The card had a picture of the earth on the backs of a young couple. On the card was printed the words, "It's you and me against the world babe." We both knew full well it was the Lord holding up the world and we were only bowed down doing our part, but it was of great encouragement to know that no matter how bad things became, it was God that was doing the hard work for us.

The slightly more successful account is the wagon trains of old. When they could circle up the wagons they had a good chance of beating the Indians. Again, this "standing" against the enemy. No, we won't consider Custer's last stand.

3. We noted that the armour of God is to protect the believer, but protect only the front. There are two truths here. We aren't going to be protected if we are on the run, and we aren't going to be protected from the attacks from the rear - from other believers.

This thought of humanism in the church is producing a mind set in believers that allows them the freedom, in their own mind, to attack another believer, no matter whether there is truth or not. Many stories I have heard of people that have been maliciously attacked verbally from other believers, from the pulpit and especially that brave and tried method from behind.

Many are the people that have been forced to leave a church because a pastor or a board has

accepted the word of one person against another without caring what the other side of the story was.

Believer, stand against the enemy Satan, but beware your back as well. The importance of your church selection cannot be overstressed. Be very careful where you decide to attend. It could have a direct bearing on how long you stay.

4. Barnes makes a good point when commenting on Paul asking for prayer. He was at that time a prisoner and he asks for prayer.

What might our response be to this - should we not be praying for those in prison? Ought the Christians in our prison system in need of prayer be held before the Father? Talk about standing against evil! They are in the midst of their day of evil. True they are there due to their own actions, but they are still believers and they are also in need of prayer.

Many have come to Christ since being imprisoned, but they still are believers in need of the same thing Paul asked for - boldness of mouth. Might we consider adding the prisoners to our prayer list?

I raise this question out of a recent burden for these people that have strayed from truth, or did not have it until it was too late. I was contacted by a prisoner that still had about eight years to go on his sentence. He was not crying about the inequity, he was sharing his dumb mistakes of the past and the fun and excitement of trying to rectify his wrongs. He was taking seminary courses while in prison - he has it planned that he will have his doctorate when he is released.

His descriptions of prison life are not pleasant and his surrounding "Christian" group is not all that pleasant either. He is one of the few that really follow a true view of the Word and the rest are a hodge podge of denominational error. Yet, he is upbeat and looking forward to serving God now and in the future. He has truly taken the standing concept to heart and is doing so in that evil place.

5. Barnes makes point that Paul asked for boldness but nothing else. He didn't ask them to pray for his need of a BMW, nor his need to be released, nor his need of a new leather jacket, but BOLDNESS. My how messed up his priorities seem to be according to our time.

6. Tychicus means fateful or as Constable suggests "chance." Tychicus was from the district in which Ephesus resided (Acts 20.4) and may even have been from Ephesus. This may have been part of the reason Paul sent him - someone that the people knew and would be sure to listen to. He most likely delivered Colossians as well, Col. 4.7 "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, [who is] a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:" and II Tim. 4.12 "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus."

We do not know why he was in Rome with Paul; he may have come to visit, or may have been

with him when he arrived in Rome. Little is known of the man, but he was important to the apostle.

Paul was also considering Tychicus for the ministry of replacing Titus in Titus 3.12 "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter."

We know nothing else of the man, except that the Greek tradition believed him to have become a bishop over the province of Asia. It is clear that he was in the confidence of Paul, and that Paul had a great respect for his abilities to serve God.

7. One must consider the apostle and his cool mind and strong faith. He is in prison awaiting a date with most likely death and he is concerned with the churches that he has planted. He took some of the little time he had left to write these important doctrinal issues to them. True, he had talked with the Lord, and true he knew the Lord wanted the church well grounded in doctrine, but to take some, if not all, of your last hours or days to write letters to the churches must have taken some good concentration.

Paul was one that could really isolate what was important and focus on the completion of that task. How focused are you on the task that God has given to you to do? How sure are you of that task? Was it God that gave it to you or was it your own desire and mind?

We must seek out what God wants us to do in this life then pursue that task with vigor.

If you take time to look out over a congregation and watch to see how many of the people are involved in the church ministry you will see that in most churches there are a few that are doing all the work. The many are sitting from week to week doing nothing except giving their attendance and some cash and calling it good.

Ephesians calls us to consider just what we should do for Him. The book tells us many things that He has done for us, and the end result SHOULD be that we love Him so much that we want to do for Him.

He has gifted each and every one of us for ministering within the church, so there is no reason for ALL of us not to be doing something! It is a sad day in most churches because there are many gifts sitting idle in the pew and nothing is being gained for God from the non-use of those gifts.

Christ gave His life for us. Paul gave his life to serve Christ, just what are you giving? Have you even considered what God would have you do with your life? Have you even prayed about it and asked Him what He might have you do? It is time that Christians across the United States and the world to seek God and find out His will for their life!

In closing this study I find myself toward the end of my days. I have sought to do all I could for

the Lord at every juncture of my life since He called me to ministry. I may have a number of years left to minister, but I might be gone tomorrow.

My study of this book has called my mind so often to the question, "Have I done all I could have for God in my life?" I am sure I could have fit in some more, I am sure I was lax at times through the years, but I can know that I have followed His will at every turn. I have sought His direction as to where, and what I should be doing in life. I have attempted to make Him first in my life, even though I know there are times when I have failed.

My question to the reader is this. Have you sought God's will for your life, do you follow His will daily, are you attempting to do the very best that you can for Him? I trust that these are questions that you will consider if they aren't already on your daily schedule.

Our purpose in life is to follow Him. If we are not doing that then we are missing the whole point of life as a believer.

I think this study has stirred more in my spiritual life than any other in my entire life. It has prodded me to be more productive in writing; it has prodded me to be more special in my prayer life, not only to God, but for others. I trust that you have found similar results in your life.
