

Ephesians

The City Of Ephesus

The city of Ephesus was located at the mouth of the Cayster River which is on the west coast of the western Roman province of Asia. The country of this location is present day Turkey. Ephesus was an important commercial port city being located on the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was the midway point between Miletus, to the south, and Smyrna to the north. This made Ephesus the focal point of a major trade route.

Ephesus was a major population area and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The city contained a large theater and it has remained until modern times. The theater could seat 24,500 in its audience. It was in this theater that silversmiths led by Demetrius rioted against the Christian mission work of Paul and his companions.

Ephesus was home to a large Jewish population and they had a Synagogue there in the city, where Paul began his missionary work. (Acts 19:8) Some of the Jews hardened their hearts towards the gospel of Jesus so Paul turned to the Gentiles. From Ephesus the gospel spread throughout the Asia province.

Paul the Author of Ephesians

In Ephesians 1:1 Paul identifies himself as the author of Ephesians. The letter was written around 60-61 A.D. and was one of the four prison letters that Paul hand penned.

This letter was written to the church in Ephesus as identified in Ephesians 1:1. There have been arguments that the letter was rather to churches in the area but these arguments have been dispelled in later years. The argument was if the original manuscript had identified Ephesus as the recipient in the first verse and has sense been accepted as it had.

The purpose of the Letter to the Ephesians was to strengthen the church. At the time of its writing Paul was a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial, and could not revisit the church at Ephesus. Paul had established the church at Ephesus on his third missionary journey about three to five years earlier.

The theme of the Letter to the Ephesians can be found in verse 10 of the second chapter. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Chapter 1

Verses 1-3

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Notice that Paul does not use the word “Christian” but the word “Saint” in this opening verse. In Roman Catholic terms the word saint refers to great Christians of the past, which are now home with the Lord. Yet here in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians Paul uses the word saint, meaning that the present Christians are the Saints of today. We as followers of Jesus Christ are Saints. Even though this letter was addressed to the church at Ephesus in all probability it was also passed around to the other churches in the area. As a matter of fact, this letter has been passed to you. Therefore Paul is not only referring to the Christians of Ephesus as Saints but all of those who are in the faith with Jesus Christ.

The word Saint means separated one, or holy. As followers of Jesus we are set apart as a chosen people of God. We are no longer of this world but citizens of the Kingdom of God. You may wonder how this can be. We are mindful of the sin and unrighteousness that permeates our lives. Yet through Jesus we are saints. Still subject to lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the boastful pride of life, and lack of love in our lives. How then, can we be a holy person set apart in the service of God? This is the mystery that Paul will later share with us.

Paul received the call to be an apostle of Jesus but each one of us who are followers of Jesus can be assured that we are disciples and have received the call of God. We have been purchased by the blood of Jesus and now belong to God. What happened to Paul also happened to us. We all are unlikely candidates to live in the holy presence of God. We were unholy people living in a fallen world given to all kinds of unrighteous behavior. Yet we have been called, bought by the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, and now belong to God and serve Him. It is important to remember that our former selves, sons of disobedience, lived under the wrath of God. It was with great sacrifice that God satisfied His wrath in the death of His Son on the cross and through that blood atonement made us His precious children.

Verse 2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace unmistakably come from God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. We should never think that there is anything that we could do to earn it. We most certainly are in awe that a Holy God would call us out of our wickedness and unrighteous living to serve Him.

It is important to note that Jesus is the foundation of our faith. It is important to recognize Him as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the risen Lord whom we serve in faith. We follow Jesus in faith. We can't just talk about Him but must walk with Him. Many today acknowledge Jesus but go on living their lives separate from Him. They still live in the desires of the flesh and the ways of this world. This not only shows that we truly do not believe but it destroys the validity of Jesus as our Lord and master and makes our testimony of Him worthless. Our faith must be in the foundation of what God has done through His Son Jesus and our belief in Him as the power in our lives.

A stumbling block that Satan places in our path is that we are not good enough for salvation from our sin. If we can't meet our own expectations then how can we expect to meet God's? With this thought Satan places in our mind that we are not good enough or we do not deserve salvation. Satan is able to convince us simply because those thoughts are true. Because we know that we fail to make the walk. As said these thoughts are founded in truth that Satan will use against us but they are only half truths.

The full truth is that God has chosen to love the unworthy, the rebellious, and the unmoral. This is shown to us by the use of the word grace. It is by God's Grace that we are saved. God's shows His favor towards mankind because He loves us. There is nothing we can do to earn His favor. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. It is a free gift from God according to His grace towards man.

There are three truths that we must found our faith in, Christ, Peace, and Grace. If we do not understand these then our faith will be weak, we will compromise and live by our own old ways. As a saint we must master these truths in the Word of God so that we can develop the strong faith to live by them. Our life through Jesus is dependent upon the faith we gain from believing the truth.

Christ is mentioned five times in the first three verses of Ephesians and is mentioned nineteen times in the whole letter to the Ephesians. The phrase "in Him" is mentioned seven times in this letter. Christ is the source of all our blessings.

There is only one Christ and His name is Jesus. Jesus died at the hands of the Romans at the insistence of the Jews. Jesus died for the sins of the world and rose again on the third day defeating death and now sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. In one act the whole world shares the burden of responsibility in the worst possible sin. Through God's grace we all became partakers of Christ's work on the cross. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Without this work of Jesus on the cross we have no hope of peace. In Christ the judgment against sin has been paid by the shedding of His blood and by this atonement we can now have peace with God. This sacrifice of God, His beloved Son, brings an overwhelming surge to rally in thankfulness to His good and glorious name.

Once we were destined to the grave buried in the dust from which we came. Now by the grace of God we can receive eternal life. There is but one difference between the grave and grace. That is the letter C which stands for Christ.

We often think we know what we believe but the way we live our lives will prove what we really believe. If we are to be God's children then we must be faithful to live in these truths. Only knowing the truth and living in the truth brings us good and lovely lives.

Verse 3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

It is good to note that in the verse the root word in bless. In the first creation God said "it is good". No one can fault that God's physical creation was good. In the new creation the term is blessed. In His new creation it is good that we are spiritually blessed. In the physical sense we enjoy the goodness until we become afflicted. Then we fuss and complain until we are healed or we find relief from pain. We desire things to be as they should be. This is also the same desire we should have towards the spiritual things as well. Spiritual blessings are good and make our lives beautiful and wonderful. Without spiritual blessing we have guilt and loneliness. We become driven by our sinful lust and have trouble with our relationships. The good news, the gospel truth, is that God has brought a new order of good things into our lives that can heal and restore us to His will and purpose for our lives. God's love through Jesus will answer all of our troubles in life.

Many people think that the commandments of God are restraining. If they are restraining, they restrain us out of bad places. Our obedience to God's commandments leads us to a better life because they lead us to a better way to live our lives. By reaching out in trust and obedience to God's commandments we are reaching out to the very best possible life. Our trials and tribulations of this life is not the fault of the giver but the fault of our lack of trust and obedience.

Our fears should not be in God's words but often it is our fears that prevent us from accepting His truths in our lives. Combining His worthy and holy person, along with our insight into His love and provision in our lives, our spirit of worship and adorations is lifted exceedingly higher. Worship is not all singing songs and making a joyful noise but our realization of His outpouring of love towards us. This is the reason that God alone is worthy of all praise and glory, He alone is the giver of all good things.

As the children of God we are the recipients of His blessings through Jesus Christ. Do not think it unfair that only those in Christ are the recipients of God's blessings as all have an invitation to come to Jesus. If you think it unfair that those who live in places that have yet have heard the gospel, then you go and tell them, this is our mission. If that is important to you, then go. If you can't go, then pray, give, and send those who will and

can. You are reading this because one man, Paul, dared to do just that, preach the gospel message.

The word spiritual has a blend of meaning, the invisible part of man called the soul; it is related to things in the wind, the part of us that is affected by the Spirit of God, and those things that are not earthly. We will look at the spiritual blessings that are referred to be in the heavenly places. The term “Heavenly Places” is used five times in the letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
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Ephesians 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
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Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 3:10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.
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Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Some people conclude that the heavenly places refer to Heaven. This cannot be so as in Ephesians 6:12 references are made to spiritual wickedness. We must then conclude that the term heavenly places refer to the spiritual world.

The spiritual word is every bit as real as the earthly world that we live in. Some view it as another dimension but we must be careful not to view them as completely separate. In Ezekiel 1 man is given a glimpse into the spiritual world. Many laugh at the reality of a spiritual world. It is amazing that we are willing to believe in God but not in a spiritual world apart from the world we live in. This is what we call belief, a confidence in that which cannot be seen. The spiritual world not only relates to God’s work or the work of Jesus, but also Satan and his demons, and Heaven itself.

Paul’s concern in his Letter to the Ephesians is that they will not use the spiritual blessing available to them. Spiritual blessings are somewhat like a bank account which no one uses. The funds are there and available but no one uses them. We have an account of spiritual blessings just waiting for us to make a withdrawal.

The first spiritual blessing is becoming God’s child. Through the work of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of our sin by the sacrifice of Jesus’ life on the cross. There is no greater

spiritual blessing in that without the work of Jesus we would face the judgment of God’s wrath and an eternity of hells’ torment. There are no spiritual blessings apart from Christ.

The second spiritual blessing is being God’s child. There is an abundance of spiritual blessings given through Jesus. Once we are shielded by His atoning blood, we are on the receiving end of a long line of spiritual blessings. Note that Paul writes “every spiritual blessing”. God the Father has given His best to us and has held nothing back from us. We who do not deserve anything now have everything.

Six Spiritual Blessings

1. God's Grace full and free forgiveness of sin.	Ephesians 1:7
2. freely justified	Romans 3:24
3. Peace with God	Philippians 4:7
4. Reconciliation	Colossians 1:21-22
5. Being brought nigh unto God	Hebrews 10:19-20
6. Eternal Life	Titus 1:2

Verses 4-8

God is the Father of Jesus Christ and we through Jesus Christ are also the sons of God, as He is our heavenly Father. As God is the Father of Jesus, He also is the Father of the Devine world. In God’s redemptive work He blesses His children not in word only but in acts. We as children of God through Jesus Christ have been given spiritual blessings in the Heavenly Places. When we were living in our sin the heavenly places were not obtainable but now they are because of our walk in faith toward the righteousness of Jesus. Now we have citizenship in Heaven, where our High Priest is ever blessing us. Our treasures are in Heaven, our aim and affections, our hope, and our inheritance.

God has chosen us out of the world, in Him, Jesus, as He is the Holy Lamb of God and there is no way to the Father except through Jesus. We were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world because Jesus was before the creation of the world for by Him all things were made. Now we are an election of believers in Jesus Christ. That once again, as before the fall of man in the Garden, we will be holy, without blame before Him in Love. The love that was lost at our fall but now is being restored by the work of redemption through Jesus Christ. Love is the root and fruit of all holiness.

We have been chosen out of this world and predestined to all good things that secure our inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven. By God's grace through Jesus bringing us back into a relationship with God the Father for His good pleasure according to the purpose and will of God. It is only fitting and proper that we have received God's grace freely and in that He is worthy and deserving of the glory of our praise. All creation should praise God for without Him nothing would exist. God's grace has abounded upon us because of our faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

Verses 9-14

Our spiritual blessings are available to us by the Lord revealing to us the mystery of His sovereign will, and His method of redemption and salvation. This mystery would have forever been hidden if God had not made known His Word, the gospel message, and the Spirit of Truth. Christ united the two, God and man. He restored the fellowship between man and God once enjoyed in the Garden. Jesus by His Spirit revealed the graces of faith and love restoring the union of Man and God. His Divine teaching enables us to see the glory of His truths. His gracious promise of redemption and salvation secures the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the sanctifying and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit we are sealed as believers and the children of God with an inheritance of Heaven.

Verses 15-23

In His Son the Lord Jesus God, has laid up an abundance of spiritual blessings that we are to draw out through prayer. Even the best of saints need prayer, as we hear of their welfare we should pray for them. As true believers we greatly desire heavenly wisdom. Some of us may not be willing to come completely under God's yoke, but there is no other way to find complete rest for our souls. So many times we often for a little pleasure part with our peace. If we disputed less with the truth, and prayed more with and for each other, we would more and more see what the hope of our calling is. Our hearts and minds would be drawn closer to the Divine riches of the glory of our inheritance. We desire to feel the mighty power of Divine grace through the work of faith in our spirits. It is difficult to bring our spirits to believe fully in Christ and to go all in. In this we weaken our hope in eternal life in the glory of His Kingdom. Nothing less than the almighty power of Jesus can discipline us in full faith of our belief in Him. It is Christ Jesus who supplies all that is needed for those who trust in Him. To them He gives all the blessings in rich abundance. The closer we come to Jesus we become filled with His grace and glory. In the realization of our weakness and the power of the enemy we must perceive the mighty power and greatness which effects the conversion of the believer. In this we are guarded by His love to live for our redeemer's glory.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Verse 1 gives a description of man's state. Paul is describing the natural state of man. Notice the word "you". One would not think that Paul would use the word you to the people of the church of Ephesus after writing such nice things about them in chapter 1. Are they not the saints of verse one in chapter one? Are they not the blessed in every spiritual blessing? Are they not the ones chosen in Christ? Are they not the ones predestined to adoption? So why does Paul say they are dead in their trespasses and sin. Let us look at these three key words, dead, trespasses, and sin and see if their meaning can shed some light.

The word dead comes from the Greek word, nekros and has an English derivative of necromancy which brings the word to mean in a spiritual sense. This could mean that they were spiritually dead.

Trespasses mean a lapse from the standard. It is only a mild infringement of wrong doing out of ignorance. Perhaps straying onto someone's property unknowingly, or picking up something that is not yours by accident. It generally does not call for a major punishment of sort. It is interesting that used here it might mean that even the least of violation of God's law makes us guilty.

The word used for sin is hamartia, its meaning is missed the mark. Think of an arrow that is shot at a target but comes nowhere close. Or a life that God has a purpose and meaning for but has used its energy and resource to accomplish something different from its purpose.

Paul here is not addressing our physical lives. This is proven by the following verse. He is speaking of the same sin that caused Adam to fall in the garden. God could have ended Adam's physical life right then but chose to let Adam and man live in this world for a short time. This pause before judgment is a period of grace. We are all burdened by the sin of Adam and are born with the sin nature that he allowed to enter into his life by that first sin.

Before the fall into sin by Adam he was in complete spiritual communication with God. As a result of sin man has lost that communication with God for man is no longer righteous. Spiritual death then speaks of a lack of communication with God. Because we have inherited and committed trespasses and sin, we are cut off from God and therefore spiritually dead.

Apart from spiritual life offered by God's Son Jesus all of mankind is spiritually dead from the lack of communication with God. It is not pleasant to see a physically dead body. The same feeling should hold true to a spiritually dead soul. People's ability to think all is well outside of a right relationship with God is proof that they are blinded and living in the darkness of this world. Spiritually dead people are unconscious to what is good, right, and normal.

Verse 2

in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

The picture in this verse is not pleasing and most people may find it offensive. Most people like to think that God chose them because they are basically good people. They are lovable, charitable, try hard, attend church, put their money into the offering plate, and call themselves Christians. This is a misconception of the modern world we live in. They think they are alive when actually they remain spiritually dead. Being spiritually dead means that none of us on our own cannot break back into life. We do not have the insight, wisdom, affection, will or power to connect to God. This is the opposite of what modern religion teaches today including humanism. They believe there is a residing essence of life in every man.

Can a dead man be partly dead? There is no way a dead man can decide he wants to be alive again and then by his own self will become alive.

This is the natural state of man. Everyone is condemned to a life without God. We have no way of bringing life back; we cannot reconnect ourselves to God. We are miserable, devoid of spiritual life, and live our lives without God's special touch.

Paul now describes the world we live in. Carnal man is not willing to accept that there is a spiritual world. There is a spiritual world network that has an effect on the people that are caught in it. Some people cannot accept the description Paul gives of the world in verse 2. They will not accept the testimony of scripture, Jesus or the apostles. They believe the stories of Satan, demons are nothing more than fairy tales. Carnal man is overly bold in denying the truth of an evil one.

Man today looks to governments and world leaders to solve the issues of unequal distribution of wealth, and global warming. They look to institutions like the United Nations to solve the discord in the world. Sin for today's people is not being tolerant or not focusing on our own potential.

We are in this world and too many of us are very comfortable with it. Apart from Christ this world is our home. We must remember that as we are in the world we are not of this world.

We must not ever forget that those who are of this world are under the rule of the prince of power of the air. We also must not forget whose government we are under rule of, God Almighty.

The way the world reveals the darkness that lay within is revealed to us with great deception. Explain how a country like ours, the United States, can have citizens who abhor the death of 3,000 soldiers but think nothing of defending the rights of millions of children slaughtered at the altar of abortion clinics.

Take notice of the one who came from Heaven, Jesus, and the one who fell from Heaven, Satan. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) The greatest deceit of Satan is to cause man to think there is no spiritual aspect to this world.

Paul also states that the evil spirit is working in the sons of disobedience. Is Paul saying that we are possessed by demons? Consider the title of the evil one here, the prince of the air. Consider how air works in our bodies. Air flows in and out of our bodies and without it we would surely die. The oxygen in the air is absorbed by each and every cell in our body. The prince of the air works in the same way in those who disobey the gospel of Jesus Christ. He enters in and out of their body and influences every aspect of their life. They are under his influence and they do not even know it.

Paul is describing the state of the world in order to make a point that if we are not in the undeserved love and power of Jesus Christ we would be rightfully condemned along with the world. Jesus says it clearly that those who do not follow Him are of the devil. "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." (John 8:12)

Verse 3

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest

Paul now turns to the condition of man's heart. Paul is straightforward in his description in order that no one be deceived. The self-righteous are more likely to deceive themselves than others. Paul was like this before his conversion. Paul is trying to bust their puffed up egos. It is so easy to examine someone else than it is to examine ourselves in complete honesty in view of God's perspective. Paul had no doubt rehearsed this many times on himself. Facing the truth like light shatters the darkness with all its lies.

Not one has lived completely separated from the lust of the flesh. We were all polluted streams infecting the flowing streams next to us. If we subjectively see some people as innocent we must allow the truth of God to shape our opinion.

While all have lusts some express this lust more openly than others. Without the restraints of family, religion and law all of us would express our lust more openly. A parent's discipline does not remove these desires but keeps them from developing and expressing themselves to the point that they dominate their lives.

We are no better than those who openly express sinful desires before God than another. Because of our training we might think we are better than those who practice such things but we still operate naturally from a sinful heart.

The world offers this excuse, "I feel like it". Those feelings are very often of the same as the lust of our desires. "I would rather watch a movie than pick up my room, as mother had told me to do." "I wish I was like her. I see how the boys look at her." These are self focused thoughts of wanting to gain more attention to our self than another. Children and adults alike have them and just because they are more obvious in some than others does not mean we are not just as guilty.

This passage also states that operating with these lustful desires is something that does not describe God's people. We must not only say that we are living in the righteousness of Jesus but that say that Christ living through us produces righteous living. Our righteousness will not save us because our life as a whole has sin. But surely today our righteous lives is proof that Jesus lives within us. Hebrews 12:14 tells us, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."

This does not mean that a follower of Jesus will not sin. But now sin is not natural for us and we hate sin in our lives. It is not pleasant when we give in but we stand back up and continue the battle against sin in our life. We also learn we will gain the victory when we call upon the name of the Lord.

The desires of the flesh and of the mind are two different points of attack that Satan can use.

First our sinful nature called the flesh, our sinful nature that feeds the desires of our flesh. More than often they focus on the desires to feed our bodies and appetites. God has given us these desires but to employ them beyond reason so that we live for them is evil.

Second are our desires of the mind. They are the thoughts that go through our minds. They are the plots to get what we want. The question is what we are willing to compromise or risk in order to get these things. What we want becomes so important that we do things that are not moral. Cheating, stealing, and denying our calling to be as God made us male or female. Abortion, take drugs or drunkenness, and lying in order to get what we want.

Our hope is that scripture will shape the way we think. We talk about God's love. Paul talks about God's love as it is revealed through Jesus Christ. Paul also speaks of God's wrath. God has always been just and will bring judgment upon those who have and continue to rebel against his will and purpose for their lives.

There are two groups of people in this world, those who are saved and those who are not. Paul has gone back to the point that at a time in our life we were not amongst the saved. This put everyone into one group, the lost who are in the bowl of God's wrath.

This is our nature without change. We were born under the wrath of God because of our sin nature. We cannot understand salvation until we understand God's judgment. We cannot understand God's love until we understand God's wrath. We have all gone astray but God through His grace sent His Son who will save many from God's judgment.

Verses 8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

There are six different things we need to look at in this verse. First we are saved by grace. Grace is the underserved favor of God towards man. While God's great mercy holds back the wrath of God that man deserves, grace is an extension of God goodness that in no way man is worthy of. Looking back to verses 1-3 we are reminded of man position in this world. One, from the fall in the garden he is spiritually dead, or out of communion with God. Second, that loss of intimate communion with God has put man under the influence of the evil one. Third, man cannot separate himself from the desires of the flesh. This portrait of mankind is fitting to each one of us. Though we see ourselves as good the righteous eye of God sees us very differently. Until we understand how corrupt we are then we will not fully appreciate the goodness of God. Grace only touches our hearts when we realize we are totally unfit to receive God's kindness. It is then we see that we do not deserve God's kindness, it is not our right to obtain it, and the only thing we deserve from God is His wrath.

A second characteristic is that faith is instrumental in one's salvation. Without faith there is no salvation. We cannot think that Christ died for the general good of all mankind. Some Christians think that faith is a measuring mark to gain salvation. They think because I believe I am saved but this is in opposition to what this verse says. Faith is necessary for our salvation but our spiritually inclined nature to respond in faith is not what saves us. We are not awarded salvation due to our faith. It is quite clear from the context of this chapter that there is nothing that man can do to save himself or make himself worthy of salvation. Even a good, religious person cannot muster enough faith to save themselves. Those who believe they have been awarded salvation due to their faith have placed their confidence in their faith rather than in Christ Jesus. Faith should not be understood as a qualification but as a gift from God which brought about a new life. We cannot contribute anything towards our salvation not even a more sensitive spiritual heart. God sees us as spiritually dead and shows us His grace through faith. He awakens us with His Spirit and enables us to see what we never saw before. We are not aware of the sin in our life until

God reveals it to us. Repentance then is the first sign of this newly given faith. Faith is the result of the newly given life that He has given us. Without His work in us we have no way to respond just as a dead person cannot respond to light or sound. With Him, we start to see and respond to Him.

Third, it is not of ourselves. All of our goodness, upright character, obedience to our parents, church attendance and service, all of these good things placed together would not contribute anything to our salvation. God's Grace is unmerited favor from God, meaning it is because there is nothing we can do to receive it.

Forth, it is a gift from God. God's grace has saved us through faith, and it is a gift from God. Salvation falls on those who have no salvation or any hope for salvation. We were once like this in knowing that we were in a bad position because of the sin in our lives and knowing there was no way to escape the penalty for that sin. There was no way to achieve salvation. How much more then we appreciate the work of His Son Jesus on the cross and that God gives us by His grace the gift of salvation.

Fifth, our salvation is not of our good works. Again there is nothing we can do to earn our way into Heaven.

Sixth, is that no one should boast. It is God's purpose to lay a good foundation for our salvation. If salvation was something that we could bring about ourselves then when the storms of life come upon us it would fail, as we often do. If the foundation of our salvation is built of the rock of Jesus Christ, who was, is, and shall always be, and then when the storms of life come our salvation will stand. It is upon the solid rock we stand not upon our self but upon the power and authority of Jesus. There is no power greater than the Word of God, and if our future was built on anything less it would fail. So that we may not boast for our salvation is by the grace of God through faith.

Verse 10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The second "for" is used here in the tenth verse. The first "for" in verse eight was used to describe God's purpose for designing His salvation plan. His salvation plan is to show us His marvelous Grace. God not only wants to show the marvels of salvation through faith in His Son Jesus Christ but also show us what happens after salvation.

Religious people often are confused by good works. They believe they are saved by good works. God clearly says that it is not by good works that we are saved. Some churches and big institutions claiming the name of Jesus Christ become false Christ's. They tell you to believe in their institution rather than believe in Jesus Christ. They tell us to believe in

baptism rather in Jesus Christ through whom we are baptized. The evil one uses these deceptive tactics to keep us away from the power of Jesus Christ.

We need then to know the proper place for good works. Good works cannot lead us to salvation, as this would put our confidence in ourselves. Good works follow our salvation so that they bear good fruit in God's good works through us. Our new life does not only provide a faith to believe in Jesus for our salvation, but a faith to become what He wants in our lives.

In this way we see the power that He has given us. If we are saved, then we are saved to produce good works as Jesus did. Paul is also expressing the idea that we are raised up together with Jesus. Jesus is living through our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is truth that having been saved through God's grace through faith there should be no doubt that we are of His design. "For" we are His workmanship, like any craftsman, He has His purposes for making us.

God has shaped the background from which we have come. God has designed our personalities, our dreams, and our pimples. We may feel inferior but we are not, that would place in doubt the excellence of God's workmanship. We might feel that there are imperfections in our design but we must look beyond those feelings and realize that God has made and equip us to fulfill to purpose for which we were made.

We should think less about we want and focus more on what God wants us to be. We can enjoy who we are in spite of our limitations. Yes life has placed its scars on us; we have a tendency to become sick, and in some of our abilities we do not perform as well as others. For once in our lives we can be content and confess all of our envy and discontent and free ourselves of it. We can find God's peace through these truths that He will work in our lives. I am this way because He made me this way, I can accomplish whatever He wants for my life, I don't have to be like anyone else, all I need to be is just myself, and God has chosen me to live out His glorious self through my life.

Whether we are young or old God will empower us to do that He has planned for our lives. Looking at our own possessions and capabilities should never hinder us from thinking about what He wants to do with our lives. Only seek His will for your life.

You are God's workmanship designed to accomplish His plan and will for your life. Place your confidence in that truth and your life will be abundant.

If we are to focus on God's will for our lives then the question comes to mind, what is God's will for our life? We must point to the next phrase in this verse. Paul writes, "created in Christ Jesus for good works." As the workmanship of God we were created in Jesus Christ. Therefore it is not by our own strength or will power that we accomplish His plan

for us but the power and strength of Jesus living through us. God is ultimately speaking of our spiritual lives as we live our life here on earth.

Why does He make us? He made us for good works. Our good works are not just our good efforts but our willingness to let Jesus live out His life through us. As Jesus lives through our lives he wants to continue His work here as He did when He was here on earth. The Holy Spirit which lives in us is the same as Jesus living in us. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (John 14:26) "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." (John 15:26-27)

Good works can be thought of in two categories. General works, we all are to love our neighbor. Specialized works are specific activities that only we can and will do.

In general works in our neighborhood it is important to let our neighbors understand that we stand on the rock of Jesus and follow him in our lives. Invite them to join us in learning more about Jesus and sharing our worship service with them. They may not respond but we have planted the seed. Most importantly we demonstrate the love of God by the testimony of living a Christ like life before them. Proverbs 12:26 says this, "The righteous is a guide to his neighbor, But the way of the wicked leads them astray." Once they know who is Lord over our life they will be watching us. They may want to tear down our testimony of faith in Jesus, or they may want to learn if what we preach is truly how we live. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-16 this, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

God planned the good works before us ahead of our birth into this world. God also planned the abilities that we would be born with to accomplish the good works for our life. Certainly then we can trust Him, as He planned our design then certainly He will equip us to accomplish His work.

We need not fear the battles with giants. If we are to fight a giant His grace is sufficient for us to win the victory. Our faith is in Him, His design, and His appointed work. We may not see how all our work fits together for Him, but He will give us the light to see at the appropriate time for our needed activities. Read Psalms 138:3 and Jeremiah 16:19.

A word of caution here is that as God has appointed us our work to do there still is the evil one who prowls about seeking to steal and destroy. We must always be ready to answer His call to do His good work through us. We must also remain strong in the study of His Word and the practice of His truths. We must keep ourselves in shape as His workman and ready to do His will.

We must be in training every day. Our day most certainly must begin in prayer. How could we face the uncertainty of a day without first asking for our daily bread? Are we sharing what the Lord has revealed to us with fellow believers, our neighbors, and those who we work with? These are basic things that work together to build up our confidence in how God can work in our lives. We should not forsake the small lessons in our life. David tended a flock of sheep before He guided a nation.

Keep firm in your faith, as God knows what your work is and will put your heart on them. We will face trials in our life. The believer and the unbeliever alike face trials. When we are in God's will we know whatever comes will work for good. We trust Him and move forward, as endurance is good work. A joyful heart, sharing the gospel, training up the children, and picking up someone else's trash without resentment, all are good works. Some we have been trained for and some we are being shaped for.

People in the world have all sorts of problems, desire all sorts of pleasurable excuses to avoid the truth, are given to violent means of accomplishment, and their God is that which they lust. This was the old way of live for us but now we are in a new life. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;"

We have a new life and it is Jesus Christ living in and through us. In one sense life has not begun if we are not living in His purpose for our lives. Each of us has our whole lives planned out by God. God the creator of all has created an abundant life for us. That truth alone should make each us completely secure in our future. We must remain in our faith of God's almighty purpose for our life that He has planned for us individually, for our families, and the church we attend, are not only thought of but must also be implemented. Our time in this world is so short and we must be busy in our Kingdom work. This is how we show our appreciation for the salvation that through His Son HE has given us. Let us glorify His name by joyfully taking up the appointed good work He has put in our path, and fear not for He will be with us.

Chapter 3

Verses 14-21

Verses 14-21 Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus.

We may search many things to bring full meaning to our lives, but only one thing will suffice. The things that most people search for, a good partner, a good career, wealth,

meaningful relationships, being active, spiritual experiences, will always fail us. This is not so with Jesus Christ. We were made with the purpose of being filled with God's love and only His love can fill our deepest longing.

We do not fully understand it but our search for it only comes from the promises found in God's Word. God's Word does not tell us that His promise is for some distant future but for today that He might be glorified in His church. We need to examine the church we attend and pray that they are not content just with human love and the things around them.

This group of verses, 13-21, reveals two important goals in reaching this height of love.

Ephesians 3:16-17 says, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love," We must be rooted and grounded in love. We do not achieve something from nothing; we must have a good foundation to build from. We are not to be just content with loving one another. This of course is good and it is a foundation.

Verse 18 says, "May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth," and verse 19 reads, "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." There are two main points in these verses for us to look at.

It is hard for man to understand the largeness of knowing Christ's love. It speaks of a greater love than that we experienced at the time of our salvation. It is as if Paul is speaking of a second experience. Knowing the full dimensions of Christ's love I don't think is possible in our carnal minds but with the grace of God we should reach a fair comprehension of Christ's love.

Knowing Christ's love goes beyond an intellectual knowledge. It is an ultimate experience of experiencing His love. We need to be sure our eyes are open and the flood gates of our heart are completely open and that we allow the fullness of God's love to flow in us and through us.

Chapter 4

Verses 1-6

Verse 1 talks about who we are by the virtue of our calling. We are called into fellowship with God not as individuals but as a community of believers. There are two sides to the equation for peace. Our peace with God and our peace with fellow believers are both the sides of the equation. Paul tells us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. Paul pleads with us to let the influence of God's calling to dominate our actions more than our feelings,

pride, or difficult situations. The word entreat or implore useage in this passage show that this thought bore weight in Pails thinking.

Many strong churches are devastated when the pastor leaves the service of that particular flock. Some members of a church will stop attending and supporting a church because of the departure of their pastor. I have often wondered why that is. Could it be that the church members are not unified in there calling to attend that church? Could it be that instead of worshipping God they are worshipping the pastor.

Instead we find the evil one stealing the hope and peace from God's people. It is a reminder of the high priestly prayer of Jesus.

"I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are." (John 17;11)

"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one" (JOHN 17:21-22)

A calling is a special instruction from our Lord that requires a reshaping of our life. "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." It is a calling from our Lord and it specifically reshapes the manner of our life. It is an invitation that we must respond to. If peace is lacking it is not because God has set aside the call to preserve the unity on the Spirit. But that it shows our reluctance to allow Him to rule our lives. We might feel like listening to our jealousies, anger or pride, but none of these compare to our high calling to preserve the unity of one spirit.

We should never be content with anything less than the harmony between God and other believers in one spirit. It is our inheritance that begins here now on earth. Do not allow brokenness of relationships of the present or the past keep you from claiming God's grace towards you. Broken relationships are the fruit of the evil one. Fellowship with one another and the love of God towards each is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We might not be able to restore all of the broken relationships in our life, but the scripture says in Hebrews 12:14, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In these two verses Paul list five things that we need in order to have a vision of oneness in the Spirit of the Lord and others. These two verses tell us that in our relationships with other believers we must: be humble, gentle, patient, have forbearance, and diligence to preserve the spirit of unity.

In our humility we recognize the views of others as well as our own. This does not mean that we give up our own perspective in what we believe but give proper respect for the view point of the other. Perhaps they may find agreement with ours or perhaps we may find agreement with theirs. And then there may be no agreement between the two. At the least we have been respectful towards each other and even if they are hostile towards us we have conducted our self in a peaceful manner. The old nature naturally believes in the importance of our self over that of others. This is an enemy to love. We are to view every one as important as our self.

There will always be differences of opinion but we must temper our self to be gentle in our response towards them. You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. It is easy to be nice to a nice person and our tendency is to be grumpy towards a grumpy person. We must tame our self down and maintain an even temper.

Learning patience is realizing that we cannot insist everyone run at maximum speed in order to maintain our own time efficiency. Patience is an art of getting excited to help others use their time more efficiently even if it cost us some of our time. When we develop a patient attitude we will not so easily fly off the handle against others. Instead it allows us to exude a kind spirit in disruptive situations.

Having forbearance towards one another is the willingness to forgive one another. Forbearance contains the idea that someone has wronged you. The word forbearance means to suffer. In other words we have to put up with the bad behavior of someone else. We need to show forbearance to all in the power of His love. we are to be forgiving as He has forgiven us.

We are to be diligent, actively seeking, making a constant effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit. It just does not happen. It is something we have to work towards. We all have our own perspectives on just about everything including the Word of God. The first key here is that we are talking about the being in the unity of His Spirit. The key thing we should do then is to pray that He will join us together in the like mindedness of His Spirit. We should also be well aware of what His Word says. If our judgments are based upon His Word then finding unity in thought would be much more accomplishable. So being diligent to preserve the unity then should be prayerful in our discussions, in the view of His Word, and decisions based upon His truths. When He is working in each individual and each individual is seeking to accomplish His purpose then we can accomplish unity of Spirit. The requirement is that everyone is submissive to the will and purpose of God in their lives. When this is done, the Spirit will work mightily in our lives.

Peace is the bond, or the glue, that binds this verse together. Paul says that it is agape love that keeps unity. As we read in Colossians 3:14 “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

There is but one God, one Father. Where ever you go when you are in the company of fellow believers you are with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

He is the God of all. This may be speaking of Him as the creator of all, and it may be speaking of Him as the Father of all believers. Either way both statements are true.

Through all is His way of awesomely exerting His will through His people. God does not need us to be in agreement with him in order to work His will through us. On the broader sense God works through all individuals to work His will. I would suppose this would make the wicked hate God even the more. Just think of those who put Jesus to death. Through that one act God established His Kingdom forever. "this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." So that the last two words make it clear that God works through all mankind to fulfill His will and purpose. Those that believe in Him and those who deny Him, as in the great white throne judgment all will bow before Him and confess Him as Lord.

Verses 11-16

The church is the body of Christ and we as members of His church are the body of Christ. Jesus lives through us as His Spirit has indwelled us. God has chosen through Jesus to give certain gifts to the members of His body. So that we each may serve Him according to the gifts that He has given us. There are four gifts spoken of in this verse though some say five. These gifts are given so the church can teach all the people the truth found in Jesus Christ that they can live right and good lives. These four gifts are apostles, prophets, evangelist, and pastor-teachers. Christ gives these gifts so that the ones who receive them can equip, train, and protect the sheep of His church.

Let us now observe a short comment about each of these gifts.

First let's look at the apostles. Many think the apostles are only the twelve chosen by Jesus and described in Acts 1. But there is a wider meaning to the word Apostle. We can see in Acts 14:14 that both Paul and Barnabas were called Apostles. Paul like the original twelve was called by Jesus on the road to Damascus.

The word Apostle means "sent one". We can best understand an Apostles job of being a church starter by using today's terms. In today's terms an Apostle would be called a church planter. These people go into area where there is no church and establish one. They define the basic truths found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As said before Apostle means sent one and is comparable to the Missionary, which means "sent".

Second is the Prophets of which much has been written about them in the last few decades. The reformed tradition looks at the preacher as a prophet because he preaches the Word of God. This is ok as far as it goes but it does not go far enough. The prophet takes what God has given him and reveals it to God's people. However the prophet both forth told and foretold God's Word. The New Testament record several future telling predictions. Those who have a vision from God of future events to come should not be totally discarded as they often are. Many define a prophet as one who has spoken of past events or regulate it to the pastor's role. This may be done in order to protect the written Word of God and not mix it with new messages that do come from God. Who after all can verify that it was actually God speaking? It has been noted that famous Reformers were prophets that accurately foretold various future events.

Can we actually draw a line and say that prophets were only needed in the early church? Are there not areas today in this world that do not have a church of God and no copy of His written Word? Would it not them be useful for God to send a prophet into those areas? Who among man knows enough to say what God would or would not do in reference to the use of Prophets?

Is it possible that some have rejected the need for apostles and prophets in order to protect themselves from the influences of the Roman Catholic Church's pope to the charismatic movement? The Western church no longer recognizes, encourages, or utilizes these needed gifts. If the Word of God is the infallible Word of God are we able to discount certain passages as obsolete? What would the church be like if the other abundant gifts from God were overlooked because they are no longer acceptable to our way of thinking?

No matter what our position is on the word Prophet we must still call the church to peace through Jesus Christ. We may have our differences but we must pronounce our unity in the Spirit in spite of our disagreements.

Today's media to some point has redefined the meaning of an evangelist. They are somehow perceived as that of a snake charmer. One who can by his winsome personality and charm draw people to come forward to the altar and repent. This is not what an evangelist is because it is not the evangelist that moves people to repent. It is the calling of the Holy Spirit and the convicted heart that God has opened up to the truth that causes people to seek Jesus. Many evangelists do not have a line of letters behind their names. I have read of a fifteen year old boy in China that has no education and yet God uses him to draw many to salvation. It is not anything the evangelist does to save people, the evangelist is just a willing heart that God has given the talent to preach the gospel.

We will speak of the Pastor/Teacher as a one gift/ position. A pastor cares for a local group of people. The apostle focuses on a region, the prophet focuses on a target be it a

group or individual, the evangelist focuses on the unreached, the pastor/teacher focuses on his congregation in the church. This does not mean that others do not disciple God's people, the difference is the kind of ministry that is involved. A Pastor is one who has a heart for the sheep in his flock. He teaches and equips with his insights to help them understand the deeper meaning of God's Word. The pastor is a light in the dark, a friend in a lost world, a comfort in times of trial, a leader in the direction of the church family, and a tie that binds all together in the bond of God's Love.

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

In verse twelve Paul makes this point, we have been talking about the equippers of the church, the apostles, prophets, evangelist, and the pastor/teachers. Here Paul tells us they are the equippers of the saints for the work of service and the building up of the church.

Many congregations today believe that putting their money into the plate for hiring a pastor and staff fulfills their obligation of maintaining the church. They come on Sunday and maybe on Wednesday and that is their obligation to the church. That is not the way that Christ has planned His church to function. There is a difference between the equippers and the saints but not what many people see.

Verse 12 gives us a totally different concept and many are somewhat shocked when they begin to understand it. All of God's people are called to serve and the purpose of the equippers is to train up the saints to be able to serve. The equippers are a subset to the saints. It is important to know that each and every Christian saint is to serve and must be trained for service.

Every saint is given a gift from God for the use in His service. In Ephesians 4:7 we read that He gives the grace to use this gift. "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." There are many spiritual gifts and you can find them in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

As His church we are an amplification of Jesus to the world. In the New Testament times crowds gathered around Jesus just to touch Him. Today in the church age Jesus is able to minister too many at the same time by using His body the church.

Jesus in His glory wants to live through our lives. We might think of ourselves as nobody but Jesus living through us makes us a mighty and awesome contact for others to meet God's love. We are to radiate God's love and use our spiritual gift in the building up of the body of Christ.

An underlying concept that runs through the whole bible is that we are not here to be served but to serve. It is not what we can get but what we can give. The church, as the Lord, puts behind the imperfections and focuses on building up one another, and the community of the church radically begins to grow as a result. The world begins to take notice. Everyone has programs, but as the world sees the glorious healing love of God poured out through His body the church, they begin to see the inferiority of their own ways, thoughts, and desires. Then they want to know God. Revival is turning to the love and truths of God.

We can serve each other just as Christ served us. The goal of every church should be to train and equip each member to serve in a ministry. It is then that the saints of the church will find the full glory of Jesus Christ in their midst.

If the equippers of the church body are not rightly living out there calling for God the whole church body will be weak. The instructors of the church are responsible to teach the saints how to be effective in their ministry according to the spiritual gift which God has given them. If the instructors of the church fail, they as the foundation of the instruction path, the church body will fail in their ministry to the world and the burden of that failure rest on the equippers. If the saints have been equipped but do not employ what they have been taught then the church will fail and the burden will fall upon the saints. The sad thing is there are many dead churches. There are churches that don't follow the instructions clearly given here by the apostle Paul.

The instruction God has made to equip the church is not skits and movies but preachers, apostles, pastors, and prophets. This is the God ordained method that for the growth of His church by bringing His truth to the people. Our goal is not only to get people out to church but to equip the saints in the church so they can go out and serve. The problem is not that the community is too dark and evil but that there is not enough light. The church can awaken overnight and be that instrument of light that God can use. All that the church needs has been given but too many churches just do not believe it.

Many Christians have lost their hope by what they have seen happening among God's people. They think a grand picture of a church is to be seen in the distant future in heaven. Paul does not give us this picture at all; his message is not for tomorrow but for today. The goal of the church is not to just get by until we cross over the Jordan, our goal as His church is to obtain the fullness of Christ. There are three things in this verse that we must seek for our own lives.

We must attain to the unity of faith. If I am seeking the unity of faith then I must live by faith. I will love others because they are God's people even if I don't like them. I will seek the truths that God will reveal to me so that I can carry out the ministry He has called me

to. Faith is always unifying because it causes us to go beyond our own way of relating to people but relate to them as Christ would.

We must attain the knowledge of the Son of God. Once we taste the goodness of Jesus the new heart throws out the useless things of this world. The love of God fills us and nothing that we can acquire can compare to Jesus in our lives. Away with deceit, jealousy, fighting, love of this world, and envy. We just want Jesus.

If I want to be mature in Christ, I need to focus on growth and not the past. We want Christ to be known through our lives rather than for us to be known. We desire God's love to radiate to others through us.

The biggest problem for many churches is that it does not think it is being deceived. If a church cannot see the problem, then most likely it is being deceived. There are four problems that the church is infected with that have resulted in large problems for the church.

Professionalism is the idea that there are certain functions of the church that only certain members can and should do most of the work. This means that the members of the church are not mobilized and untrained so that much of the ministry work is not done. Some people do not expect to be trained because they do not see themselves as workers in the church. They tend to think they are better off when the worship service is short and entertaining rather than long and instructive. Their Christianity can be determined by the one service that they attend.

- The requirement for people entering into ministry to have some degree is wrong on two accounts. The church generally accepts a seminary degree as proof of a calling and readiness for ministry. A degree, however, does not guarantee that a person has been called into the ministry or of a person's godly character. Christ imparted this special gifting into individuals without respect to education, wealth and background. Although we value good training, we must not minimize those who have personally and seriously studied God's Word. The local church should confirm a person's gifts and calling.
- Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are largely anointed for enabling Christians to serve. The church needs to look for the training that they would receive from these men that God would give the church so that they can rightly serve the Lord. We should look for the Lord's anointing on all of His people.

Individualism is the idea that our own thoughts and ideas are more important to our own life and interest. These individuals will focus on meeting their own needs than the needs of other. This also results in people doing work for the Lord in their own flesh rather than in the spirit. Observe how little churches pray today. Prayerlessness is the result of self confidence rather than faith in the Lord.

- We as Christ's body must value each person. Everybody is essential to the complete body. We do not merely need people to be present but actively growing and serving the Lord in the church.
- Our fulfillment does not come from seeking our own felt needs but by serving others as shown by the Lord. Love requires an outward focus. When an unforgiving spirit is dominant in the church, love is absent.
- We must take God's Word and pass it on. We are not to feed people with our thoughts but the thoughts from God's Word. Man's thoughts are worldly thoughts.

Religiosity teaches that a person is a good Christian by their attendance to the functions of the church. By going through all the motions and then just going home and returning the next week. One of the problems with this is that all is expected is there attendance therefore there is no commitment.

- The church is not a stagnant set of faithful attendees but equipped people for the work of the Lord's service. This 'work of service' requires the participation of each member for which he or she was designed (Ephesians 2:10). All of God's people are to live out Christ's glorious love in their lives.

Spirituality teaches that one's spiritual life consists in inward other-worldly notions and feelings which breeds arrogance and despises rules, authority and interdependence.

True Spirituality causes:

- A true desire to constantly grow to be more like Christ.
- Oneself to be very closely involved in the growth of other Christians.
- The balance of truth and love worked out in relationships with others.
- A commitment to learn and observe God's truths as taught in His Word.

The question is asked, is truth more important than love or is love more important than truth? If you answer yes to either one, then you are a little off balance. Truth is love and love is truth. "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10) If you take either one, then you lose both.

We must speak the truth in love. Our goal and means are clear here. The goal is to be more like Jesus the head of the church. The means is to lovingly proclaim and live out the truth.

The church sometimes swings from one extreme to the other. On one extreme you may have experienced a person who constantly wants to argue with you. That person seems to know all about truth but nothing about love.

The other extreme is there are people who care nothing about the truth. They think that love perfectly summarizes the truth. In a small sense they are right but they have misinterpreted love. Love is not toleration, as toleration has no place with truth. Without truth there is no love.

The balance was worked out in Christ. When speaking the truth it must be presented in love. We may speak an uncomfortable truth because people need to hear it. We present that truth lovingly because that is the only way to present the truth.

We are to grow in all aspects and to be honest that will take a life time.

There are some questions that need to be answered here. How come some Christians don't think they need to grow? Sometimes once a person finds a church and has a guaranteed seat in heaven they lose all interest in the things of God. This is partly because the church has not done its job of training the church. Few churches actually implement discipleship, many Christians think they know all they need to know when in fact they only know enough to learn more.

How are Christians to grow? In Ephesians 4:11-13 God has revealed the whole growth process. In order for a church to grow it must rightly receive the Word of God. Each of the equippers before mentioned is the way in which truth enters the church. Growth is directly related to the accruing the love for the truth. We learn the truth and obey it. When a person is more like Christ in his attitudes, treatment of others and belief in God then that person is experiencing growth.

And what does growth look like? Essentially growth is learning truth based on the commands of Christ and obeying them. Anyone who spends time in God's Word must purposefully obey what God is directing him to do.

How can we measure growth? Too many Christians live aimlessly as they pass through this world. They have no goals, no instruction, and no motivation. Christian's that are growing find their time with the Lord sweeter all the time. Have better relationships with others and a deeper personal development.

Chapter 5

Verses 8-14

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

Once we were living in the darkness of this world. We all were born into it with our sinful nature. We were born without being in harmony with God our creator. We could not talk with Him and could not call on His name. We were in the darkness of not knowing His Love or His Truth. We were so blinded by the darkness that we didn't even know that we were passing in the shadow of death.

Now by the grace of God we are children who walk in the light. He has opened our hearts to the truth. Through Jesus we have the light of life. Our vision goes beyond this world and we know the future that lies ahead. We no longer live for the world we are in and unless He comes will die in. We live for the inheritance that He has given us in the world to come which is eternal life in the glory of God's Kingdom of Heaven. We know the truth and stand upon the rock of His salvation. (John 8:12)

Now we are children of light and should walk as children of light. That all may see by our upright living and the words we speak the testimony of Jesus Christ living through us. We have the gospel message deep in our hearts. This is a blessing and a burden to our souls. We have been given a mission, a good work, and the opportunity to produce much good fruit for the glory of the Father. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The good fruit of our walk in faith with Jesus is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. This is how we are to live that the world may see the light in us, and know that our God is faithful and true. That when we endure the storms of life He will calm the waves and give us peace and that through His Son we have a hope that will carry us beyond this world and through all eternity.

We, the children of light, are on an adventure that leads to an abundant life. In our thankfulness to our Lord who has brought us out of the valley of the shadow of death and into the green pastures, He leads us to the still waters. We seek His righteousness and we seek His truth and the more He gives us the more our confidence in Him grows that we are able to persevere in the wickedness of this world.

We repent and turn away from the evil doing of this world and by our new self in the righteous living through Jesus we expose the evil of carnal man. The carnal man may reject us and mock us and persecute us but Jesus our Lord is with us and we have no need to fear. Some may seek that which we have found in the grace of God and also turn away from the evils of this world and seek the salvation of Jesus and find His peace.

In the Day of the Lord all the deeds of man will be shown in the light of His truth. The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night and those who do not keep watch will be caught. Woe to them who have run from the light for in that day they will be caught by the light.

Let us be awake and keep watch, Follow Jesus and study His word for He is the Word of God. His light will shine on us and through us that we will be the light of the world.

Verses 15-21

Idleness is a doorway that Satan will seek for in our lives. If we persist in being idle Satan will fill our minds with temptation into evil behavior. When your mind is at rest think on these things whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, and the God of peace will be with you.

Time is a talent given to us by God. Oh how I wish I had the time I have spent foolishly returned to me that I could do something meaningful. Those who lay in the throes of death would trade anything for just a piece of time that they could accomplish that which they had squandered. We should use the time God has given us in the purpose that He has commissioned us that when time here is no more we have the reward just ahead of us.

Do not be unwise with your time and stay busy in your duty to God's purpose. Do not neglect the eternal soul that is in you, as this is the greatest folly.

Be of sober mind and spirit. Strong drink and drunkenness leads to even more evils. Remember the enemy will attack the weakest point and when we are not in control of ourselves we are weak. It is not only a sin against God but also against your family and friends. Your drunkenness has destroyed your testimony and none will have faith in you.

Let us be steadfast in prayer to our God and be filled by His Spirit and avoid that which grieves our gracious comforter. This is the day that the Lord has made; it is a gift to you that none other could give. This day is an opportunity to spend in the presence of your God, don't trade that privilege for the perishable lust for this world. His gift to you is more than a reason to rejoice and be glad throughout the whole day.

Submit yourselves to the care of one to another. All is God's creation and God loves His creation. Our God is a God of Love and through His Son Jesus His love has filled our hearts. We are to share this love with all His creation, as this is the commandment of our Lord. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:14)

Verses 22-33

The duty of the wife is to submit herself to her husband in the Lord. She is to love him and cherish him in the will and purpose of the Lord. The husband is to love and cherish his wife in the same principle of God's love. The example Paul gives is the love Jesus has for His church which is the bride of Christ. Jesus gave himself up on the cross for His church and there is no greater love seen in the universe. (John 15:13) The love of Jesus towards His church is sincere, pure, and constant, notwithstanding her failures.

Christ gave Himself for the church that He would sanctify it in this world and glorify it in the next. Jesus who shows His church the principles of holiness, and delivers it from guilt and the dominion of sin, by His influence of the Holy Spirit, of which our baptism is the outward sign. When Jesus presents His bride, the church, in glory, then it will be without spot or wrinkle. The church which is sanctified now will be glorified hereafter. The union of Adam to his wife Eve in the garden was a holy union in which they became as one flesh. This is the example given by God of the marriage of the saints in Christ that He as the bridegroom His church shall be the bride and shall be as one spirit. This is the example of man and woman that they shall be joined together in the bond of God's love and all the duties of marriage should reflect their unity in love. In this relationship the worst evils will be prevented and many painful effects will be avoided.

Chapter 6

Verses 1-4

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. This is the right order of things for their training and upbringing is the responsibility of their parents. The family is the foundation of society and the children are the future society. It is the responsibility of the parents to secure the future of our society that it should be in reverence to God. Children are to honor their parents in inward reverence so that they will learn the reverence they should have to the Heavenly Father. God will honor the obedience of a child towards his parent the same as He will honor their obedience to Him. God is love, patient, merciful, and forgiving. Parents are to display the same attributes towards their children. Parents are to seek the Father's knowledge and wisdom in training up their children. Parents are not to provoke their children to anger but discipline them in the right way to grow and they will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

God alone can change the heart but He will bless the good teaching and example of parents. Pray always for your children, as they face a society that is in rebellion against God. Be of strong faith, as God answers all prayer.

Verses 10-18

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. The evils of this world are but a manifestation of that war in the spirit world. It amazes me that the evil one can have so much power over man in this world and because of their blindness cannot take on the super power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who would prove themselves to have the true grace of God must aim their life at the full grace of God and put on the Armor of God, which He has prepared and bestows upon us.

The Christian armor is made to be worn and should not be taken off until our war against spiritual wickedness is fought and our course has been run. The combat is not against human enemies, neither is it against only our self. Our enemy has a thousand ways to attack a soul that is not grounded in the Word of God.

Satan's assault is in the things that belong to our spirit. Satan labors to deface the heavenly image in our hearts. We must resolve ourselves by the grace of God to not yield to Satan. Resist Satan and he will flee us. If we don't, he will gain ground and weaken our resolve. (James 4:7)

If we do not believe in our cause, have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, or do not put on the armor He has given us, then Satan will have the advantage over our lives.

The different parts of our spiritual armor are fitting for an onward Christian soldier to protect himself in battle. In the fiercest assaults of the enemy we can sustain because His word is true. There is no armor for the back because we can face the enemy in all confidence because greater is He within us than he who is in the world.

The belt of truth is the first thought of as upon it all other armor depends. It is the truth of God's Word that sustains us. After the trial of fire that the world shall face, the truth of God's Word will remain.

There can be no religion without honesty. All the religions of man are false because without the sacrifice of Christ there is no atonement for sin. His righteousness is all that can stand before God and by His righteousness we shall stand with Him before God. Put on then the breastplate of Righteousness to protect our hearts.

Resolution is the armor of our feet. As we stand our ground upon the rock of our Savior or march forward along the rugged path to His glory. We must have our feet shod in the full preparation of the gospel of peace. Our motives of obedience in the midst of the trials of life must be drawn from a clear knowledge of the gospel.

We must have a strong faith in the hour of our temptations. Faith it that which is not seen, receiving Jesus and the benefits of His redemptive work, and gaining His grace towards us, which is a shield to us in every way. Satan is the wicked one and his temptations are violent darts that he shoots towards us and creates hard thoughts towards God and ourselves. Applying faith in the Word of God and the grace of Jesus Christ will quench the darts of his temptation.

Salvation is our helmet. A good hope of salvation, a scriptural expectation of victory, will keep the soul pure and undefiled by Satan. We have the greatest of defenses but also the greatest of weapon for our attack, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It subdues and mortifies evil desires and blasphemous thoughts as they rise within; and

answers unbelief and error as they assault from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, at once destroys a temptation or an objection, and subdues the most formidable adversary.

Prayer will fasten all the other parts of our spiritual armor together. We must keep our times of prayer constant and continually. The times of intimate and solemn prayer may not always be available to us but short pious prayers avail us much. We must maintain holy thoughts in the ordinary course. A vain heart will be vain in prayer. We should use all kinds of prayer, public, private, and secret. We should use social and solitary, solemn and sudden, including all the parts of prayer, confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thankfulness. We must pray in the Spirit of truth. We must not pray for only ourselves but for all the saints as well.

Verse 23-24

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.