

Ephesians

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Introduction of Book

Authorship

The apostle Paul refers to himself by name at two places as the author of the book.

1:1 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God¹

3:1 – "For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles..." (ESV)

Today some have questioned Paul's authorship, saying the book contains a writing style, vocabulary and even some teachings which are not typical of Paul.

Others regard the epistle as the crown of all Paul's writings.

Some say it was written by a disciple of Paul in Paul's name.

This would mean that there was a disciple of Paul who surpassed him in theological insight and spiritual perception.

The early church has no record of such a disciple.

The idea that an author with the mental capacity of the apostle Paul could never vary his style, vocabulary or choice of teaching is simply laughable. Paul had an incredible education, a prodigious mental capacity and probably the most advanced arsenal of doctrinal teachings of anyone in the first century.

So there is no good reason to doubt the traditional, wide and early view that Paul wrote the epistle from Rome.

Early church leaders who attribute the letter to Paul include:

Irenaeus (200 AD)

Clement of Alexandria (200 AD)

¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Origen (250 AD)

Polycarp (125 AD)

Tertullian (200 AD)

All of these church leaders, and more, attribute the epistle to Paul.

It is safe to accept the early and consistent belief of the early church writers that the apostle Paul is the author.

Many believe that Paul wrote the epistle while in prison at Rome.

In 3:1, 4:1 and 6:20 Paul refers to himself as a prisoner and as an ambassador in chains.

Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians are known as the "prison epistles".

Paul arrived in Rome for his first imprisonment in approx. spring AD 60-61.

Acts 28:30 tells us he lived two whole years in his own hired house, which would bring us to spring AD 62-63. Paul writes to Philemon (v 22), "At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you." (ESV)

He expected to be released and apparently was before the burning of Rome in AD 64.

It seems that Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon were sent by Tychicus and Onesimus from prison while Paul was at Rome.

Paul writes in Col. 4:7-9, "7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here." (ESV)

Destination

The earliest and best manuscripts do not have the address as Ephesus. The words "...in Ephesus..." (ESV) are not in *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*.

It is interesting that Colossians 4:16 mentions an epistle from Laodicea but does not mention Ephesus.

Paul had spent more time at Ephesus than at any of the other churches. On his third

missionary journey he spent 3 years there.

In Acts 20 Paul sent for the Ephesian elders when he stopped at Miletus. There, apparently on the beach, he had a most intimate and loving farewell meeting with them.

It seems odd that since he knew and loved the Ephesians so well that in Ephesians we find no personal references or greetings or direct addresses of any problem areas.

These facts have led some to conclude that Ephesians was not written to a single church, but was a kind of circular letter designed to be read by a church and then passed on to another church.

Some feel that this is the reason the letter from Laodicea has been lost.

It goes like this:

Paul sends the letters to Laodicea and Ephesians.

...Not necessarily at the same time.

Laodicea has both letters, keeps the Laodicean letter—It was probably addressed to them. They receive Ephesians as it begins to circulate. After Ephesus reads it or while they have it, a copy is made and kept at Ephesus.

The original is sent on its way to Laodicea or to some other church.

Laodicea is notorious for seismic activity.

Some feel that the Laodicean letter, along with the original Ephesian letter, were destroyed in an earthquake.

This would account for the original Ephesian letter and the letter to Laodicea being lost.

The copy at Ephesus was preserved. This theory of the Ephesian letter is only speculation, but today we do have Ephesians, and we do not have the letter to the Laodiceans.

Contents

Ephesians and Colossians emphasize the truth that the church is the body of which Christ is the head.

It shows the believer as seated with Christ in the heavens and exhorts him to live in accordance with this high calling.

Two main divisions of 3 chapters each:

Eph. 1-3 – Who the believer is in Christ.

Eph. 4-6 – What the believer should do because they are in Christ.

Sitting, Walking, Standing

The believer is seated with Christ in the heavenlies (2:6).

The believer's responsibility is to walk worthy of the calling wherewith he had been called (4:1). The believer is engaged in a warfare against Satan and all his hosts. He is exhorted to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Some themes of the epistle are:

"The Church, the Fullness of Christ"

"The Believer's Riches in Christ"

It is difficult to pick a key verse in such a rich epistle, but Ephesians 1:3 has been suggested.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ²

The letters of Ephesians and Colossians are strikingly linked.

Many topics are treated commonly by both letters.

Over half of the 155 verses of Ephesians occur verbatim or almost verbatim in Colossians.

Famous example:

In Ephesians 1:7, NASB95, we read, In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace³

In Colossians 1:14, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins⁴

These verses are even more similar in KJV:

Eph. 1:7 – In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace⁵

²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:7 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:14 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 1:7 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Col. 1:14 - In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins⁶

These verses illustrate two things about the KJ bible. As reflected in the NAS text, the oldest and best manuscripts show the phrase through His blood only in the Ephesians passage. It does not occur in the Colossians passage. So why is it in KJ?

Almost certainly Paul did not write it in the Colossians passage.

Probably in the process of copying, a scribe, while writing the Colossians passage, remembered the Ephesians text through His blood and stuck it in Colossians to make it match Ephesians. It is not bad doctrine, it just wasn't written by Paul in Colossians.

This produces a "fuller" text by harmonizing both passages.

The conservative KJ-only folks of course have a field day, saying, "See, the new (bad) translation is deleting the blood passage."

The passage was not dropped in the NAS text. It was added to the KJ text when it did not occur in the original.

It was added to make it match the text in Ephesians. If the liberals were indeed trying to remove the blood passage, why remove it in Colossians and leave it in Ephesians? Not to mention the many other texts where the blood is clearly taught in the newer translations based on the older manuscripts.

Ephesus

A famous and strategic place in the missionary plans of Paul. Paul spent 3 years here on his third missionary journey. Its population was around 300,000 in Paul's day.

Timothy ministered there after Paul left, and the apostle John made Ephesus his base of operations.

Ephesus was a political, religious and commercial center in Asia Minor. In Paul's day it was probably the fourth-largest city in the world. Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, it was an important seaport.

By Paul's day the city had begun a slow decline which would eventually cause it to lose its importance.

The silting of the Cayster required constant dredging.

The city was allowed to decay, and today the biblical site of Ephesus is approx. 7 miles

⁶The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Col 1:14 (Oak Harbor,

form the coast.

As mentioned, the city was associated with the ministries of Paul, Timothy and the apostle John. The city played an important role in the spread of early Christianity. It is mentioned over 20 times in the NT.

Ephesus was a city of great grandeur. It was the center of the worship of Artemis or Diana. The temple of Artemis was magnificent, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was already 400 years old when Paul saw it. It measured 418 feet by 239 feet (4 times larger than the Parthenon at Athens).

It had 100 50-foot columns which supported a large peaked roof. Inside was the sacred image of Artemis (Diana) which they believed had fallen down from heaven (Acts 19:35).

Its ruins can be seen today at Ephesus.

Since Artemis was a fertility God, cultic prostitution was an important part of her worship. Hundreds of prostitute priestesses were there to serve the worshippers.

The temple of Artemis/Diana also functioned as a bank. Pilgrims and worshippers brought money from all over the world to deposit there. This helped to make it an important commercial center. This was part of the reason Demetrius and the craftsmen were so upset. Not only was their craft in danger, but the very economic foundation of the city was endangered.

There is an interesting historical side note showing that embezzling and dishonesty is not limited to our time.

Around 44 AD, roughly 10 years before Paul's arrival, inscriptions show that the proconsul had to get involved in the temple treasury because of serious financial irregularities. Temple monies were being diverted for personal use by private individuals.

In Ephesus politics and religion were as heavily intertwined as religion and economics, and local civic pride was inseparable from the worship of the Ephesian Artemis.

The city also was a center for learning and magic arts.

In ancient times the phrase "Ephesian writings" was commonly used for documents containing spells and magic formulas. We see in Acts 19 the people burning books and scrolls valued at 50,000 day's labor! That's almost 137 years of labor (probably between 6-7 million), an incredible amount.

These were probably those kind of magic books. The power of God proved stronger than the power of the satanic forces which existed in Ephesus.

The goddess Diana (KJ), Artemis in Greek, was a Roman moon God. Worship of the sun

was also involved. She was widely worshipped in the Roman world.

There were feasts of Diana which were highly commercialized. Some commentators believe the events recorded in Acts chapter 19 took place during one of those feasts. The making of shrines and idols to the goddess was a thriving industry.

Ephesus also boasted a magnificent stone theater. Holding 24,500 people, it was 495 feet in diameter. It can be visited today. Between the theater and harbor there was a magnificent paved street made of marble. The street was 1,735 feet long and 36 feet wide (Rt 194 is 22 feet wide). The street was lined with columns, statues and shops on each side.

(Overheads)

The Duck That Thought It Was a Dog

Scientists know that ducks tend to imprint soon after birth. To "imprint" means that they attach themselves to the first thing they see after they hatch, thinking they are "that" thing. This is supposed to work *for* the duck, since, when they hatch, the first thing they normally see is a mama duck.

This phenomenon backfires, occasionally. Once, for example, a duckling was hatched under the watchful eye of a motherly collie dog. The baby duck took one look at the collie and decided that the dog was its mother. It followed the collie around, ran to it for protection, and slept with it at night. It spent the hot part of the day under the front porch with the collie. When a car pulled into the driveway, along with the dog, the duck would run out from under the front porch quacking viciously, trying to peck the tires.

Some things could not be changed, however. The duck still quacked, enjoyed the water, and flapped its wings. Sometimes it acted like a duck, and sometimes it acted like a dog.

Christians often experience similar confusion in identity. We have been born into and grown up in a fallen world, so we have learned the ways of the world. We have become like it. When we become a Christian, we are in Christ. We die to the world and are born again, so that, spiritually, we are no longer who we once were (2 Cor. 5:17). Too often, however, we don't see ourselves correctly. We act like the thing we *think* we are, rather than what we really are. We believe and try to do the right things; but for the life of us, we cannot get it exactly right. When we least expect it, a car pulls into the driveway of our life; and we explode from underneath the front porch, quacking viciously and pecking the tires.

Who are we? We aren't supposed to do that. We're supposed to be swimming around in clear blue lakes, bobbing for seaweed, preening our feathers, and laying eggs—not quacking at cars or harassing the cat.

Ephesians 1 helps us see who we truly are as Christians. Of course, more influences our inconsistent behavior than just negative imprinting. We are members of a fallen race, encumbered with the internal power of sin (Rom. 7). Still, if we could see ourselves more clearly and more consistently as who we really are in Christ, we would be able to live more consistently like him. That

is why the Bible spends so much time telling us who we really are. If we understand and believe it, we will be better able to live it.

So Paul tells the Ephesians who they have become in Christ and then prays that they might have the spiritual enlightenment to grasp who they have become. To do so is to enjoy the Christian life more completely and to live like Christ more consistently.

Salutation 1:1-2

The writer: "Paul" (Roman), Saul (Jewish), a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin... Raised as a strict Pharisee... Born / grew up in Tarsus (university city)... Educated under well-known teacher Gamaliel.

...A Roman citizen (helped him several times)... Avoided beatings... Called by God out of this diverse background to be a valuable servant and chief missionary ambassador to the Gentiles.

...One of the greatest church planters / theologians the church has known.
an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Lit: "sent one"... Used in NT of Christian missionaries.

Barnabas (Acts 14:14)... Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) (messenger KJ; NAS - apostle)

Timothy and Silvanus (1Thes. 2:6; see v 1)

Greek for "messenger" is *apostolos*.

All of God's workmen have an apostolic relationship and responsibility; We are sent on a mission by God, for God.

Paul says he is an apostle by the will of God.

Paul was thrilled to think that he, a great persecutor, the chief of sinners, was called by God, was used by God.

Paul never lost the sense of wonder that God had chosen him to serve Him.

You and I have been called by the will of God to serve Him.

Are we amazed? Do we have a sense of wonder?

faithful in Christ Jesus

this may mean:

1. "Believers" or those who have faith.

Or

2. "Faithful ones"... those who show fidelity.

Francis Foulkes says, "Here both ideas may be included; they are believers and their calling is to faithfulness." The act of believing results in fidelity.

They not only believe in Christ Jesus. They also live in Him.

They were "in Adam" alienated from God. They are now in Christ Jesus and are reconciled to God. Paul's gospel can be characterized as the call to be in Christ.

Some of his words:

I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:20)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus⁷ (Rom. 8:1)

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (1 Cor. 6:17)

Paul uses the phrase in Christ or a variation of it 12 times in the first 14 verses and 30 times in the epistle as he stresses the unity all believers should have because of their common bond in Christ.

Man came to talk to me about doing Sunday morning chapel services for drivers. He is highly qualified.

During the course of the interview I mentioned the names of some of the other volunteers.

Some are from a very conservative Presbyterian church, some from a more Pentecostal church, some from BIC. This man said, "Boy you really have a mix here." He said it in a way that led me to believe he thought it wasn't a good thing. These men are fully united in their love for and devotion to Jesus Christ. They work together wonderfully. The new man apparently isn't going to be able to see past the fact that they aren't all just like him. I don't think he will help us. It's a shame; we really need him.

⁷The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Ro 8:1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

The Life Application Bible Commentary says,

Faithful in Christ Jesus—What an excellent reputation! Such a label would be an honor for any believer. What would it take for others to characterize you as faithful in Christ Jesus? Hold fast to your faith. One day at a time; faithfully obey God, even in the details of life, then, like the Ephesians, you will be known as a person who is faithful to the Lord.

Song: Find us Faithful

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us line the way
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives

CHORUS:

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful

After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone
And our children sift through all we've left behind

May the clues that they discover and the memories they uncover
 Become the light that leads them to the road we each must find

REPEAT CHORUS

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
 Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful

Are we thankful that God has chosen to use us?
 God is so gracious to allow us to serve Him.
 Are we thankful? Does it spur us on to greater service?

BY THE WILL OF GOD

An apostle was a messenger, a "sent one." Paul says he was Jesus' messenger "by the will of God." If ever there was a clear-cut case of someone's not choosing God but being chosen *by* him, it was Paul of Tarsus. Saul, as he was then named, was a violent persecutor of the church. He was there when Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:58). He was heading to Damascus to do more harm to Christians when Jesus stopped him in his tracks. From that moment, Paul followed, later becoming Christianity's greatest missionary. Whatever sins you have committed, whatever shameful thoughts or deeds haunt your past—or present—they are minor compared to Paul's. If God's grace was sufficient for him, it is sufficient for you. Let go of your feelings of guilt or inadequacy, and leave them at the foot of the cross. Paul did, and the world has never been the same.

to the saints

There are three groups in the Bible called "saints."

Angels

Israel

The church of God (the body of believers)

The word means "set apart ones."

We are "saints" because we have been set apart by God to devote ourselves to His service.

The word "saint" denotes both the privilege and the responsibility of all true believers.

SAINTS AND STAINED GLASS

A little girl who attended worship in a place with a lot of stained glass windows was asked what a saint was. "A saint is a person the light shines through," she replied. A saint is someone whose life—speech, actions, attitudes, relationships—points to Jesus. Does yours? The Bible teaches that *all* believers are saints—including you! This is not a reflection of your personal holiness but of the fact that a holy God has set you apart for his purposes. Face your day ready to treat each responsibility or each relationship as an opportunity to reflect God's mercy to others.

William Barclay speaks of "apostles through the will of God."

He meant three things by calling himself an apostle.

1st, he belonged to Christ; his life was not his own.

He was a possession of Jesus Christ. He must always live as Jesus would want him to live.

2nd, he was sent out by Jesus Christ.

The word he uses was used in classic Greek to describe:

- a. A naval squadron sent out on an expedition.
- b. an ambassador sent out by his native country.
- c. A man sent on a special task to do.

We are like that as ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

3rd, he possessed a delegated authority.

The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jews. It had religious authority over every Jew in the world. When the Sanhedrin reached a decision, that decision was given to an *apostolos* to carry to the persons involved.

Behind the "apostles" lay the full authority of the Sanhedrin which had sent him.

We as Christians are *apostolos* of Christ. We don't need to go in our own strength / authority. The strength and power of Jesus Christ are with us.

Any examples of being used of God beyond your own power as an *apostolos*?

Hispanic driver wept.

Man @ mission – Kill himself – Shot up prayer – God filled my mind with verses / stories I could use to comfort him. Hug. "Thanks, I feel better now."

As I already mentioned,

The phrase "...who are in Ephesus..." (ESV) is not in the oldest manuscripts.

In v 2 Paul introduces two lovely words which were much-used by the early church. Grace and peace.

Grace – *charis* (Gr.) can mean charm.

There should be a certain loveliness in the Christian life.

A Christianity which is unattractive is no real Christianity.

Some Christians look like they just drank vinegar and sucked on persimmons!

No one will be attracted to an unhappy Christian. An unhappy Christian is an oxymoron.

Grace also describes a gift which it would have been impossible for a person to get for him / herself.

...a gift he / she did not earn or deserve.

Grace describes the sheer loveliness of the Christian life and the sheer undeserved generosity of the heart of God.

R.P.C. Hanson, "Grace means the free, unmerited, unexpected love of God, and all the benefits, delights, and comforts which flow from it. It means that while we were sinners and enemies we have been treated as sons and heirs."

peace the Hebrew *shalom*.

I see the Hasidic Jews come into the truck stop—say *shalom*—interesting to see reactions.

"Sit, Smokey."

Peace is not just the absence of strife. It means everything which makes for a man's highest good. It is independent of outward circumstances. Probably we all know people who are very wealthy... live lives of ease / luxury, but they don't have peace. Probably know very poor people who have very little of world's goods, but have deep peace.

Of course, true peace comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is another sense in which we can have peace or lack peace.

Knowing we are in the will of God will bring a deep sense of peace.

"Evading God's will or resisting His will leads to a haunting dispeace." (Barclay)

God's will no matter how difficult will fill us with contentment. In His will is our peace.

In v 2 and v 3 we have the formula, v 2, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; v 3, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

How many people are we talking about?

It could look like 2—God the Father and Jesus Christ. Of course we know God the Father and Jesus the Son are one and the same.

The connecting and here indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ is deity just like God our father.

Paul elsewhere describes the persons of God and Jesus Christ.

In Titus 2 v 13, an incredible passage where we read, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus⁸ (NASB95)

Up in v 10 God our Savior

Chapter 1, v3, God our Savior

Chapter 3, v 4, God our Savior

First Timothy 1:1 - God our Savior

Titus 1, v4 - Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior⁹

Are you getting the idea that Paul is mixed up?

He describes God as savior and Jesus as savior.

Why?

Because they are one and the same.

Peter says in II Peter 1:1, the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ¹⁰

Christ is God and Savior.

⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Tit 2:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Tit 1:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Pe 1:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Just a note... These do not come through quite as strongly in KJ.

Titus 2, v13 - of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ

II Peter 1:1 - through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ¹¹

We see here the essential unity in God and Christ.

We should see the unity believers have with both God and Christ, and thus the unity believers ought to have with one another.

Chapter 1, vv 3-14

This long section is one sentence in the Greek. It forms a long, glorious hymn of praise to God for the wonders of our blessings in Christ. It forms the longest sentence ever found in ancient Greek.

We will look at it quickly and then come back and tear it apart.

Look with me first at three incredible blessings Paul lists for us in vv 3-14.

First: In v 4 Paul says we are chosen by God the Father.

Second: In v 7 we are redeemed by God the Son.

Third: In v 13 we are sealed by God the Holy Spirit.

v 3 - Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ¹²

The word Blessed means to "speak well of."

Paul is blessing God by recognizing and attributing worth to Him.

It is a word of praise and reverence.

This word is translated "blessed" and "praise".

It is only used of God.

God alone is worthy of our praise and our worship; He alone is worthy to be "blessed."

Now Paul gives the reason God is worthy to be blessed.

Because He has blessed us.

This verb means to benefit, to prosper, to give contentment.

has blessed – This prospering of believers has already occurred. We have been blessed.

¹¹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., 2 Pe 1:1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

¹²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

God blessed us from eternity past by allowing us to receive the benefits of:

Christ's redemption (v 7)

Christ's resurrection (vv 19-20)

God blessed us through Christ's death on the cross on our behalf.

v 3 – In Christ believers have every spiritual blessing.

We have every benefit of knowing God and everything we need to grow spiritually.

We don't need to apply for these blessings. They are already credited to our account. All we need to do is access them and apply them to our lives.

Because we are in Christ we can enjoy these blessing now, and we will enjoy them into eternity. in Christ occurs at least 12x in these 13 verses. It speaks of what God does for us through Christ and depicts our unity with Christ.

The phrase heavenly *places* occurs five times in the letter.

1:3 – Believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places*.

1:20 – Christ is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly *places*.

2:6 – We have been raised up to sit with Christ in the heavenly *places*.

3:10 – God is being made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly *places*.

6:12 – We struggle against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly *places*.

Paul is speaking of the realms beyond the material world—the place of spiritual activity where the ultimate conflict between good and evil takes place.

The conflict continues, but has already been won by Christ's death and resurrection.

Our blessings come from heaven where Christ lives. These blessings are spiritual and eternal, not material and temporal.

Paul doesn't use this phrase elsewhere, but the thought is in...

...2 Cor. 4:18 - So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.¹³

...or Colossians 3:1-4, NIV - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Life Application Bible Commentary:

¹³Holy Bible : New Living Translation, electronic ed., 2 Co 4:18 (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1997, c1996).

IN CHRIST

Although you have the blessing of a special relationship with Christ, do you sometimes experience the tension of being a Christian in a non-Christian world? It's like having one foot on a dock and one foot in a boat leaving the dock. Jesus acknowledged this when he prayed for us in John 17, saying that we would be *in* the world and yet not *of* it. The reason we experience this struggle is that we are "in Christ" (we have a relationship with him). Formerly we were "in Adam" (according to Romans 5, unbelievers are totally identified with Adam's sin); we were fallen, thoroughly stained and twisted by sin, unable to please God. But now, by God's grace, we who believe are "in Christ": still fallen, still sin-scarred, but now we are made right with God through faith. When the pressure and temptation of the non-Christian world seem too strong, don't be surprised and don't be discouraged. God has begun a new work in you, reversing the effects of the Fall and restoring you to what you were intended to be, a new person—"in Christ." Keep him as the Lord of your life.

v 4 – God chose us forms the basis of the doctrine of election—defined as God's choice of an individual or group for a specific purpose or destiny. The doctrine of election teaches that we are saved only because of God's grace and mercy, not by our own works or merit.

It focuses on God's purpose or will (1:5, 1:9, 1:11)

A.W. Tozer says,

Salvation is from our side a choice, from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the most high God. Our "accepting" and "willing" are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God.

End of quotation

God does not save us because we deserve it, but because he graciously and freely gives

salvation.

The doctrine of election runs through the Bible, beginning with God's choosing Abraham's descendents as his special people. Through them, God would fulfill his promise to Abraham that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3 NKJV). Listen to the words of Moses:

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt....

Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today. (Deuteronomy 7:6-8, 11 NIV)

Election emphasizes the truth that the initiative in bringing about man's redemption is taken by God and not by man.

Election is not arbitrary, with some chosen to salvation and some to perdition without regard to the disposition of the individual man.

Salvation is to all men (John 3:16, Rom. 10:13)

Commenting on this Ephesian phrase, Wesley identifies the **chosen** as "both Jews and Gentiles, whom He foreknew as believing in Christ, I Pet. 1:2." While assuming the foreknowledge of God, it must not be deduced that His foreknowledge is causative and that man therefore is without freedom. Implicit in this issue is a paradox, the solution for which is to be found "in Christian experience rather than in intellectual and logical terms." Dale writes: "There is not a touch of speculation in this glorious passage." A man knows at the time of his conversion that he has made "a choice between Christ and not-Christ," but as he reflects more and more on his experience he realizes that "even those very first stirrings in his own heart which led him to choose

Christ were the work of the Holy Spirit."

(c) Those who respond to the gospel in faith are designated the elect, the chosen, or the *ecclesia* (called-out ones). They are the Church. Martin comments: "This new people, the Christian Church, is not the result of a hasty, temporal expedient, but is a part of God's eternal purpose equally with the people of Israel."

William Barclay comments on these verses:

Paul is thinking of Christians as chosen people of God. His mind is running along three lines.

I The Fact of God's Choice

Paul realized it was not about his choosing to work for God. It was God who chose him to do His work.

Jesus said to His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." (John 15:16)

It would not be so wonderful that man should choose God; the wonder is that God should choose man.

II The Bounty of God's Choice

God chose us to bless us with the blessings which only He can give us.

We can discover some things by ourselves, but there are things beyond our discovery.

Man can acquire skills, can attain certain positions, can amass this world's goods, but by himself he can never attain to goodness or to peace of mind. God chose us to give us those things which He alone can give.

III The Purpose of God's Choice

So that we should be holy and blameless.

"Holy" carries the idea of difference and of separation.

A temple is holy because it is different from other buildings.

A priest is holy because he is different from other men.

A sacrificial animal is different from other animals.

God is supremely holy because He is different from men. From us.

The Sabbath is holy because it is different from other days.

So God chose the Christian that he should be different from other men.

The professing church has lost the concept of being different than the world.

In the early church, in some areas of the world today, it is for sure the world will hate the Christian. It is possible, maybe likely they will kill the Christian.

The tendency in the modern church is to play down the difference between the church and the world.

I heard Alistair Begg speaking on this... He said,

The young lady who is sleeping with her boyfriend can't talk about morality to the world.

The businessman who cheats on his taxes can't talk to the world about integrity.

The grouchy Christian (oxymoron) can't talk to the world about the joy/peace that comes with the Christian life.

The Christian should be different:

Man on ferry whistling *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

Eating lunch along road. Man stopped, "I thought you all looked like Christians."

Britney at Petro. Customer told me I looked like a Christian.

Christ says in John 17, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the world."

Barclay says, "It should be possible to identify the Christian in the shop, the factory, the office, the hospital ward, everywhere. And the difference is that the Christian behaves not as any human laws compel him to do, but as the law of Christ compels him to do."

How do we do? Can those around us tell by our words, actions and looks that we are

holy?

"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The word "blameless" is a sacrificial word. Under Jewish law before an animal could be offered as a sacrifice it must be inspected; if a blemish was found it must be rejected as unfit for an offering to God.

Only the best was fit to offer to God.

Blameless thinks of the whole man as an offering to God.

It thinks of taking every part of life, work, pleasure, sport, home life, personal relationships, and making them all such that they can be offered to God.

The Christian must be perfect.

The word is used of the offering of Christ (Heb. 9:14, 1 Peter 1:10) and can be used to refer to Christian living.

The Beacon Bible Commentary:

The man in Christ can be without blemish, not merely by human standards, but before Him who is witness of all that a man does; and thinks and says. Holy refers to the inner spiritual quality, whereas "without blame" refers to the outer conduct of the life.

WHY ME?

Why would God choose some and not others? A better question is, Why would God choose anyone at all? We will never fully plumb the depths of God's purposes in election, but Ephesians 1:4 gives some insight into them. We are to be "holy and blameless" before him. When we select members of a sports team for awards, we look for those most capable, desirable, and worthy. Not so with God; he seems to delight in choosing the most unlikely. And in calling us "before the creation of the world"—before we had done anything to demonstrate our own worthiness or lack thereof—God shows that his decision has nothing to do with our righteousness, and everything to do with his compassion. When your head spins with the mystery of election, let your heart also swell with the reality of grace.

In Ephesians 1:4-5, Paul gives four specific components of this election: (1) It is "in him" (in Christ, because of his sacrifice on our behalf); (2) it is "before the creation of the world" (from eternity past); (3) it is done for a specific purpose: "to be holy and blameless in his sight"; and (4) it is an act of "love." Our salvation rests on God's choosing us. Our being chosen rests on God's love and mercy alone.

It may seem difficult to understand how God could accept anyone. But because of Christ, believers are made *holy and blameless* in God's sight. God chose us, and when we belong to him through Jesus Christ, God looks at us as though we had never sinned. Our appropriate responses are love, worship and service—in thankfulness for his wonderful grace. We must never take our privileged status as a license for sin.

Paul wrote that we are holy and without blame *in his sight*. That is, we have received the awesome privilege of standing in God's presence. Every act we do is *in his sight*, for God knows us thoroughly. "In his sight" means in his perfect moral judgment. The image is not so much of an all-seeing eye as of a judge who pardons because, in his judgment, there are no longer charges against the accused. Paul knew and testified to the truth that God knew all his thoughts, actions and motives...

So with every believer. We cannot hide from God. Thankfully, while God sees and knows us completely, he also sees us as he has made us and will perfect us. And when we at last stand before God the Judge, we know that God will accept us because of Christ's sacrifice (Colossians 1:22, Revelation 7:14).

To which clause do the words "in love" attach? To verse 4, "holy and without blame before him in love," or to verse 5, "in love he predestined us"? Most likely, the words, "in love" modify the words following it (thus tying into verse 5), pointing out that God's love is shown in predestination. The fact that God chooses and predestines believers for a glorious future with him is most certainly an act of love. Love is both the basis for and the end product of our holiness.

ADOPTION

Our relationship with God is like one in which a judge "throws the book" at a lawbreaker and then comes out from behind the bench and pays the penalty for the guilty one. Yet that analogy doesn't go far enough. According to Ephesians 1:5, the judge not only pays the penalty, but he then takes the offender home and adopts him or her into his family. *What amazing compassion!* We stand guilty as charged and convicted before God, the righteous Judge. But thanks to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, we are "pardoned"—declared not guilty—and set free. Even more, we are taken into God's family and given the status of sons and daughters. When you consider your standing before God, do you see yourself as a pardoned convict or as an adopted child? Devote your life to fulfilling God's purposes and show your true status as his child.

Under Roman law adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children. Even if they had been slaves, adopted children became full heirs in their new family. Paul uses this picture to show the strength and permanence of a believer's relationship to God.

This adoption occurs through Jesus Christ.

v 5... God chose us in love to be adopted as His own children.

People were created to have fellowship with God. Because of sin they forfeited that fellowship. God brought us back to the family through Christ's sacrifice.

We were predestined to be adopted.

Not only had God planned this from the beginning, but he also planned it *in accordance with his pleasure and will*. The Greek word translated "pleasure" (*eudokia*) can mean a good feeling one person has toward another, or, where there is no object, this "pleasure" can be translated as "purpose" (see also 1:9). The word for "will" in Greek conveys more emotion than volition; God's will, therefore, means God's heart's desire. Predestination, election, and adoption are all part of God's purpose and God's will, a magnificent expression of God's character.

CHOSEN IN HIM

Very few issues cause more confusion and even arguments among Christians than the issues of election and predestination. It is very difficult to simultaneously embrace God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Election was not a theological concept dreamed up by Paul; it appears throughout Scripture. Even though we may not be able to completely comprehend how these two truths can coexist, we can say this:

Election...

- comes from the heart of God, not the mind of people;
- should be an incentive to please God, not to ignore him;
- should give birth to gratitude, not complacency.

Human responsibility...

- requires that we actively confess Christ as Lord;
- focuses on living according to God's plan;
- requires that we share the gospel with everyone.

Election energizes a Christian's life of obedient service. Responsibility challenges us to build a life "worthy of the calling" we have received (Ephesians 4:1). As you consider God's divine selection of you, how do you respond—with pride or apathy, or with a worshipful heart and obedience?

v 6 ESV... "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

KJ... to the praise of the glory of his grace¹⁴

to the praise of his glory occurs in vv 12 and 14. Mankind's purpose is to praise God.

¹⁴The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 1:6 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Isaiah 43:21:

“The people whom I formed for Myself
Will declare My praise.¹⁵

Matt. 5:16:

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.¹⁶

The Westminster Shorter Catechism of approx. 1640 says, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

One of the most solemn thoughts is that how you and I conduct our lives reflects either glory or dishonor to our God.

Remember David was told by Nathan the prophet after his great sin with Bathsheba, thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme¹⁷

Is my life bringing glory or dishonor to my glorious God?

glory refers to the splendor which relates to God's character as redeemer.

When God succeeds in adopting a son, the divine glory breaks through and the hearts of men are lifted in praise.

grace is classically defined as "the unmerited favor of God".

In v 6 Paul is saying that God has "treated us graciously" or "visited us with grace". In the beloved it is "in Christ" that the gift of grace becomes ours.

The Beacon Bible Commentary lists two points:

1. The incorporation of the believer in Christ is the supreme expression of God's grace.
2. There is no way that men may know the redeeming grace of God apart from God.

The Life Application Bible Commentary says:

¹⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Is 43:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Mt 5:16 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁷The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., 2 Sa 12:14 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE

Praise means celebrating God. Undoubtedly you have seen, and probably participated in, celebrations like Fourth of July fireworks displays and Memorial Day parades. The purpose of such festivities is not simply to set off firecrackers and Roman candles or to watch graying veterans march down city streets. The events are held to remember and honor the sacrifices of men and women who went before and paid the price for freedom. As Christians, our lives are living tributes to God's grace. God selected us as believers so that we might praise him. When others look at our lives, what kinds of "tributes" do they see? Liberated, engaging individuals, full of gratitude for all he has done for us? Or shrivelled, sullen, embittered shells that feel as though we've been cheated out of life's good things? Let your prayer life and worship express your gratitude to God.

The word **beloved** at the end of v 6 transitions from election to God's redemptive act in accomplishing that election and adoption through His son, Jesus Christ.

vv 7-8... In Him refers back to **beloved** in v 6.

It is in Jesus Christ alone that we have **redemption**, for it is when we believe in Jesus Christ as savior that we are redeemed.

Key word is **redemption**. It speaks of "to release on ransom" or buying back a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom.

Pauline passages which emphasize the matter of cost:

1 Cor. 6:20:

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁸

1 Cor. 7:23:

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.¹⁹

¹⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 6:20 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 7:23 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

1 Tim. 2:6:

who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.²⁰

Peter tells us the cost in 1 Peter 1:19...

but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.²¹

Jesus provides a sinner's full redemption.

through His blood conveys the fact of an atoning death. Herein lies the price of immeasurable costliness.

forgiveness of sins parallels redemption through his blood. Our consciousness of redemption is that of having been forgiven of our sins.

forgiveness denotes "remission", "letting go", "not exacting payment" or "setting aside".

The Beacon Bible Commentary says, "In his forgiveness God graciously ceases to demand of the penitent soul the rightful punishment which sin merits. Furthermore, guilt, the one thing which no man can of himself remove from his life, is swept away miraculously by God's mercy and love."

Dale writes, "But when God forgives He actually remits our sin. Our responsibility for it ceases. The guilt of it is no longer ours. That He should be able to give us this release is infinitely more wonderful than that He should be able to kindle the fires of the sun and to control, through age after age, the courses of the stars." This does not mean that God makes light of sin, as if to say, "Oh, never mind; it is of no consequence." That would be immoral. As James S. Stewart rhetorically queries, "Is it making light of it, if every single act of forgiveness has—as Paul and John the writer of the Hebrews all proclaim—the blood of the Lord upon it?"

End of quotation

²⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 2:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

sins (KJ), trespasses (NAS) is lit. "a false step" or "deviation", a "misdeed". It indicates that one's life is persistently conducted outside the divinely-planned boundaries of life. When God forgives us He doesn't just not exact payment for our sins; rather, He remembers them no more.

according to the riches of His grace

...follows most naturally from Paul's concept of forgiveness. What God performs in the believing heart is in conformity with His grace. He removed the barriers separating Him from His creation.

Foulkes comments, "And God's giving is not merely out of those riches, but according to their measure."

abounded (KJ), lavished (NAS) is a favorite word of Paul.

II Cor. 9:8:

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed²²

Eph. 3:20:

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us²³

It expresses the overwhelming efficacy (efficiency, power to make it happen) of God's giving.

The word means to superabound (in quantity or quality); to be in excess; to have more abundance; enough and to spare; over and above.

This describes God's giving to us.

God's redemption, forgiveness and grace to us are infinite, eternal, unchanging and far beyond our understanding.

Two gifts the believer receives as a result of the lavish operation of the divine grace are wisdom and prudence (KJ), insight (NAS), understanding (NIV)... Wisdom is the ability to see life from God's perspective. Prov. 9:10 teaches that the fear (respect and honor) of the

²¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 1:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 9:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

prudence or understanding refers to the ability to discern the right action to take in any given situation.

To understand God's will we need this wisdom and understanding from God.

vv 9-10... mystery... Not Agatha Christy or Sherlock Holmes, but something which has been hidden before and is now revealed.

God had purposed to offer salvation to humanity before the foundation of the world (v 4). How this would happen was not made clear until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The mystery is more than the gospel itself. It includes the details of its limits and scope. The details of bringing people (Jews and Gentiles) back into fellowship with Himself through faith in Christ and His keeping them with Him through all eternity.

according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself²⁴ declares that God's redemptive action was not the result of some outside pressure, but was brought about by His own gracious purpose.

It was God's "will" from the beginning to give his people glorious privileges. The fact that Paul ties the word "mystery" in with "God's will" reveals the certainty of the outcome of God's plans and promises. As with our election (1:4), so the revelation of the mystery of salvation is *according to his good pleasure*. It pleases God to make known to us the mystery of his will.

v 10 describes the all-inclusive dimension of the mystery, namely God will gather together in one all things in Christ...

gather together literally means to "bring to a head". It indicated the addition of a series of numbers (to add up a sum).

It indicated any kind of summarizing or gathering together.

Paul declares that God will reunite unto Himself all things in Christ. The harmony which God originally intended to prevail has been destroyed by sin, but now in Jesus Christ He launches a move to restore it.

dispensation is "stewardship" or "administration", neither of which seem to fit the context.

²³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 3:20 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁴The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 1:9 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

"Arrangement" or "plan" has been suggested as better fitting Paul's thought.

Paul seems to be speaking of the plan of operation for bringing God's purpose to pass.

A possible translation is, "with a view to giving it (God's purpose) effect".

This plan of operation relates to the fulness of times.

times does not refer to passage of time, as in days and months.

The word Paul uses here refers to the "end of times" and those times are God's alone.

God is planning to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ. All of creation will be reinstated to its rightful owner and creator—Christ.

And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God²⁵ (Rev. 7:11)

so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth²⁶ (Philippians 2:10)

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²⁷ (Rom. 8:20-21)

Not teaching that all will be saved (universalism).

In the end everyone will bow. But for some it will be too late.

Christ will bring those elected and saved, and all creation with them, to be united under him in this glorious kingdom. Those who have refused to believe (whether Jews or Gentiles) will face the consequences of their unbelief (Matthew 25:31-46)

HAPPY ENDING

If you read a good murder mystery or see a well-done suspense movie, chances are you don't know "whodunit" until the end. The author or screenwriter gives you clues all along, but you probably won't catch on until the final, climactic scene, when all the tensions are resolved and all the loose ends are tied up. That's what Paul portrays as God unfolds his plan for the world. We probably won't truly grasp God's plan until the "final scene," but

²⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Re 7:11 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 2:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 8:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

he has certainly given us plenty of clues. And, unlike a suspense novel, in God's great drama of redemption, he revealed the main character early on: Jesus, the unique Son of God. When you feel as though your world is too confusing or completely out of control, remember: God is sovereign; he is in charge. God's purpose to save you cannot be thwarted, no matter what evil Satan may bring. God has it all worked out; the ending is already written. For the Christian, it's a happy one.

v 11 In him (NIV), In whom (KJ) refers to Christ.

It is through Christ that we have obtained our inheritance (NIV). In Him we were also chosen (See v 4). God chose us!

God chose Israel in the OT to be His own, for salvation.

We are the new Israel—chosen by God—for special relationship—for salvation.

Paul is apparently making a distinction between Jesus/Gentiles here with the use of his pronouns.

v 11... we obtained.

v 12... we should be to the praise of His glory

v 13... in whom ye trusted

ye heard

ye believed

ye were sealed

v 14... earnest of our inheritance

we in vv 11 and 12 refers to Jews; Paul was a Jew.

ye (v 13) refers to Gentiles.

our in v 13 refers to both.

Important to remember, the mystery is that both Jews and Gentiles are chosen for salvation.

Jews believed only they could be saved. Gentiles were created by God to stoke the fires of hell!

Glorious truth of Paul's gospel is Jews/Gentiles are one.

...both alike eligible for salvation / eternal life.

Predestination / Election vv 5, 11

predestined – marked out beforehand.

Definition – God's work in ordaining salvation for people without their prior knowledge. The Greek verb translated predestinate occurs only four times in two passages of the Bible. Rom. 8:29,30, Eph. 1:5,11

It is used in Acts 4:28 to describe human determination under God's sovereign control.

These passages indicate God's sovereign control in choosing us to salvation.

They are silent as to choosing someone to be lost.

Scripture seems to indicate that God gives man a free will which he does not violate. It also indicates God chooses some to be saved and that others choose to be lost (This happens because they do not choose salvation through Christ). Predestination never eliminates human will.

Bill Hendricks in *The Holman Bible Dictionary* says,

In the final analysis, the way in which God's guidance of his creation interfaces with human freedom is unknown to us. I am convinced that God who made us with free will and freedom woos us by his grace and condemns people only because of their own willfulness and unbelief. The only alternatives are to suppose that God is going to force all to be saved, whether they want to be or not; or that God in a choosy way is going to save some favorites but deliberately withhold salvation from others. I cannot find either of these views consistent with the full range of biblical teaching. Predestination is an assurance of God's redemptive love. There has never been a time, not even before creation, when God has not shown redemptive love for his creation. Whatever else predestination means, it assures us that God takes the initiative in relation to creation and that God pursues us with redemptive love.

The Holman Bible Dictionary says:

Election and the Christian Life Paul admonished the Thessalonians to give thanks because of their election (2 Thess. 2:13), while Peter said that we should make our "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). However, in the history of Christian thought few teachings have been more distorted or more

misused. The following questions reveal common misperceptions. (1) Is not election the same thing as fatalism? Predestination does not negate the necessity for human repentance and faith; rather it establishes the possibility of both. God does not relate to human beings as sticks and stones but as free creatures made in His own image. (2) If salvation is based on election, then why preach the gospel? Because God has chosen preaching as the means to awaken faith in the elect (1 Cor. 1:21). We should proclaim the gospel to everyone without exception, knowing that it is only the Holy Spirit who can convict, regenerate, and justify. (3) Does the Bible teach "double predestination," that God has selected some for damnation as well as some for salvation? There are passages (Rom. 9:11-22; 2 Cor. 2:15-16) which portray God as a potter who has molded both vessels of mercy and vessels of destruction. Yet the Bible also teaches that God does not wish any one to perish but for all to be saved (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). We are not able to understand how everything the Bible says about election fits into a neat logical system. Our business is not to pry into the secret counsel of God but to share the message of salvation with everyone and to be grateful that we have been delivered from darkness into light. (4) Does not belief in election result in moral laxity and pride? Paul says that God chose us "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13). We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, even though to be sure, it is God who is at work within us both to will and do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13). The proper response to election is not pride but gratitude for God's amazing grace which saves eternally. Election, then, is neither a steeple from which we look in judgment on others, nor a pillow to sleep on. It is rather a stronghold in time of trial and a confession of praise to God's grace and to His glory.

Some thoughts from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

Some obligations of election with reference to believers:

1. They are to make their election sure: (2 Pet. 1:10)

Not by causing it to be. It is God who elects and no agency of man enters

into it or contributes to it. Calling and election are always joined. Rom. 8:28-30; and from the certainty of our calling we may be assured of our election. The fruit of the Christian life is evidence of divine election.

2. The assurance of election should bring gratitude and humility.

Salvation is all of grace and that this grace takes its origin from the sovereign good pleasure of God the Father in the counsel of his will from eternal ages should fill the believer with adoring amazement that he should have been chosen in love for life everlasting.

Election constrains the praise of the glory of God's grace and to make it the occasion for presumption or pride is to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. The thought of election should drive ransomed sinners to incessant doxologies and thanksgivings.

The fruit of gratitude is not license but constant care to "prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, to be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ".

3. Election brings security.

Bound up with election is the immutable purpose of God. In this resides the security of God's people and nothing will separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:33-39). The praise of God's grace is intensified the more believers rely upon the faithfulness and power of God. His counsel stands fast and is the guarantee that the final issue will correspond with the love that election reveals.

v 12... we probably refers to Jewish believers who recognized their promised messiah.
Paul was very intentional about going to the Jews first, then to Gentiles.

Jews heard the gospel first (John 1:11, 8:30-32, Acts 1:8), but throughout this passage Paul's focus is on the unity of Jew and Gentile which results in the praise of His glory. This phrase, appearing in 1:6, 1:12 and 1:14 reveals once again God's ultimate plan for all His creation—to glorify Himself.

vv 13-14... In v 13 the **ye** signals a turn to the Gentiles. In so doing he asserts the unity of Jew and non-Jew in Christ.

The Gentile came to Christ in three stages.

First... They heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation (v 13), See Col. 1:5.

truth is the saving facts of the gospel.

God in Christ Jesus had provided redemption from sin—for them.

Hearing this truth demands action—One cannot be neutral—Must obey or disobey (Gal. 5:7).

Second... They believed in Christ.

The whole context reveals it is faith in Christ that brings salvation. After hearing comes believing—responding to the demands of God to repent of one's sins and commit one's life to Him.

Thrid... They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Gal. 4:30, 2 Cor. 1:22).

This sealing follows the believing. It does not occur at the same time.

sealed... (seal, signet or the mark made by a seal)

So many images are conveyed by the seal.

In NT times letters, contracts and official papers were fastened with a glob of warm wax, and then the signer pressed his seal into it.

The seal attested to:

1. The genuineness or authenticity of the item.

Wesley says the sealing implies a full impression of God on their souls. This would result in a truly Godlike quality of spirit.

2. The seal indicated ownership.

To be sealed by the Holy Spirit is to be possessed or owned entirely and unequivocally by the Spirit.

Ralph Earle comments, "When a person surrenders himself completely to Christ, to belong wholly to him and no longer to be his own property, then he is "sealed" with the Holy Spirit as a sign that he belongs no more to himself but to God."

Two additional truths about the Holy Spirit are briefly expressed.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise.

Promises were made to Abraham.

The coming of the Spirit was announced by the prophets Ezekiel (36:26, 37:1-14) and Joel (2:28) and by Christ (Luke 24:49).

Peter confirmed the Holy Spirit had come on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17, 33, 39).

2. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance.

earnest = guarantee, advance installments, or pledge.

The Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee that the transaction of eternal life will be carried through to completion.

The spiritual life of the believer, here and now, is the same in kind as his future glorified life; the kingdom of heaven is a present kingdom; the believer is already seated on the right hand of God. But the present gift of the Holy Spirit is only a small fraction of the future endowment.

The Beacon Bible Commentary:

The Holy Spirit therefore is that active divine power which, when we

possess him, brings to our lives the assurance of full deliverance and enjoyment of fellowship with God in the world to come. Being filled with the Spirit is a foretaste of the inexpressible joy and peace into which we shall enter one day.

redemption of the purchased possession refers to God's possession of His redeemed children.

Foulkes comments, "God will take completely from alien hands, that which is his own. The object redeemed is God's own 'peculiar people'".

And so the hymn of grace and salvation (vv 3-14) closes with the familiar refrain, unto the praise of his glory (cf. vv 6 and 12).

In vv 15-23 Paul, recognizing Christians need to be spiritually enlightened so they may understand the hope of God's calling, the riches of their inheritance in Christ and the greatness of God's power, prays for the Ephesians and us.

v 15... having heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints.

Two traits that should be found among all groups of believers—faith and love.

How do we do? Faith which has its basis in Christ promotes confidence in one's fellowmen and thus generates a love which binds Christian men together.

v 16... Paul says he does not cease giving thanks for them while he prays.

Prayer is so vital to our Christian lives.

We see two characteristics of the apostle's prayer life.

First... It is constant.

I Cease not to give thanks

Paul was practicing what he preaches.

1st Thess. 5:17... pray without ceasing

Eph. 6:18... With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints²⁸

Col. 4:2... Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of*

²⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 6:18 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

thanksgiving²⁹

Second... It is accompanied by thanksgiving.

Eph. 5:19-20... 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father³⁰

Phil. 4:6... Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.³¹

Col. 3:15-17... 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

17 Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.³²

Paul was truly a prayer warrior, remembering the believers in the churches he was associated with by name, interceding, thanking and praising. Quite an example for us.

PRAYER POWER

Many churches—and many Christians—act as though truth were the only emphasis that matters. Just give us good preaching and sound doctrine, and everything else will fall in line. Solid preaching and doctrine are important; in fact, they are essential. But so is prayer. A church or individual Christian who gets a steady input of truth but little or no prayer is like a beautiful sports car without oil in the engine. It may look and sound great for a while, but sooner or later it will break down. Prayer is the oil that keeps us running. When we pray for others, we ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen them. That's why it's so important that we pray for one another as Ephesians 1:15-16 teaches. Prayer also unleashes his power in us—power to guide, convict, encourage, heal. If the church depended on your prayers, how long and how well would the church keep running? When you say to someone, "I'll keep you in prayer," be

²⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 4:2 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 5:18 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 4:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 3:14 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

sure you do it.

v 17... Paul prays with great confidence because he prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory³³.

He is the only one who is capable of hearing and answering.

Paul describes Him in two ways:

1. the God of our Lord Jesus Christ³⁴

...repeating the title used in v 3.

2. the Father of glory³⁵

(the glorious Father ...NIV)

...the only one to whom all glory belongs.

The one to whom Paul prays is the God whom Christ acknowledges and at the same time reveals. Paul prays for a spirit of wisdom and of revelation. This will come through the Holy Spirit.

wisdom (v 8)... the ability to see life from God's perspective, to have discernment.

revelation... enlightened understanding, insight into God Himself and the mysteries of divine truth.

1 Cor. 2:10-16...

10 For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

11 For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

³³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.³⁶

Col. 1:9... For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding³⁷

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Paul prayed for the believers to know God better. How do you get to know someone? By reading biographical information or historical data about him or her? That will help you know a lot *about* that person, but it won't enable you to actually *know* him. If you want to get to know someone, you have to spend time with that person. There is no shortcut, no microwave process. The same holds true with God. Reading the Bible and great works of theology and devotional material is wonderful, but there is no substitute for knowing God personally. What about you? Do you really *know* God, or do you just know *about* him? The difference is spending time with him. Study Jesus' life in the Gospels to see what he was like on earth two thousand years ago, and get to know him in prayer now. Personal knowledge of Christ will change your life.

"in the knowledge of Him"

Beare comments:

The sum of knowledge of the Christian believer is the knowledge of God, which always means the knowledge of Him as God, living and true, and the source of all life and truth—a personal knowledge which involves communion, adoration, and obedience in love.

³⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 2:9 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

vv 18-19... The eyes of your understanding being enlightened is another way to express v 17 regarding the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

It is another way to describe the gift which results in "inward illumination".
understanding is *kardia* (heart NASB).

In Hebrew thought the heart refers to the will. The heart is the moral understanding, the essential inward being.

Paul lists three rewards of this illumination.

1. what is the hope of His calling

(NIV) the hope to which he has called you

2. the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints³⁸

Believers look forward to a future inheritance; we expect it to happen, trust God to bring it about and patiently wait for its arrival.

3. the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward
(NIV) his incomparably great power

Each of these three truths builds on the previous one. Paul uses four nearly-synonymous Greek words to express God's comprehensive power.

Each word, by itself, has a slightly different focus:

1. power means capability or potential.

2. working means effective or active power.

3. mighty or "might" means a force that overcomes resistance (This word is used only of God, never of believers).

³⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:9 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:18 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

4. strength refers to bodily or muscular strength in humans; inherent, vital power in God.

Taken together the four words exhibit God's all-inclusive power.

Because of God's power believers know that:

- God is on their side, ready to help them meet each and every obstacle;
- God's power is never stagnant or out of commission—it is always actively working on their behalf;
- God is always fighting against the forces of evil on believers' behalf;
- No human strength or spiritual power from the evil world (not even Satan himself) can deter or change God's inherent power.

Only God's power can change weak human beings into strong believers who are willing to sacrifice everything for the God who loves them.

v 20-23... Which he wrought (brought about NASB, exerted NIV).

Paul points out three instances where God's power was exerted:

1. Raising Christ from the dead
2. Exalting Christ to His present position of authority
3. Appointing Him to be head over the church.

1. Raising Christ clearly showed God's power.

Only God can raise the dead.

Christ's resurrection assures us that God will also raise our bodies.

2. Exalting Christ

Philippians 2:6-11...

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.³⁹

Christ is seated in a place of honor at God's right hand.

Matt. 26:64... Jesus *said to him, **“You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”**⁴⁰

In Acts 2 Peter says, THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,
“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,⁴¹ (Acts 2:34)

In Acts 7 Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55)

Heb. 1:3, 13:

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high⁴²

But to which of the angels has He ever said,
“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?⁴³

The seat at the right hand was a seat of power and equality.

His being seated symbolizes His finished work and supreme authority.

Christ intercedes with God on behalf of believers.

³⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 2:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Mt 26:64 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 2:34 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 1:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 1:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Rom. 8:34... who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.⁴⁴

3. Having been raised from the dead, Christ is now the head of the church, the ultimate authority over the world.

This is one of the themes Paul develops in Ephesians.

God has won the final victory and is in control of everything. Rom. 8:38-39 says that nothing can separate us from God and His love.

Scriptures for Christ's headship:

Eph. 4:15... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ⁴⁵

Col. 1:18... He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.⁴⁶

v. 21... **above** indicates superiority.

Whatever power exists will be under Christ's authority.

Christ has no equal and no rival. He is supreme over all other beings.

ENTROPY

Entropy is the law of the universe. The sun will burn out, the rain forest is vanishing, species become extinct by the thousands every year, and your car falls apart by the mile. Everything wears out, falls down, disintegrates. Many people think that if there is nothing more to life than what we can see, touch, taste, and experience, the best we can do is try to enjoy the ride while it lasts because there's a nasty crash at the end. But Ephesians 1:21 teaches that there is hope. Instead of the world just fizzling out, we are heading toward a definite conclusion where Christ is Lord and God will make all things right.

⁴⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 8:34 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 4:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:18 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Christians are called to proclaim truth to a world that embraces falsehood, light to a world that dwells in darkness, and hope to a world that has given in to despair. Entropy is the law of the universe, but Christ is Lord over the universe. Rely on his all-sufficient power for your daily needs.

v 22... Paul may have been thinking of Psm. 8:6, Thou hast put all things under his feet

Two possible ways to take to be head over everything for the church

1. Christ is over all things for the sake of the church (that is, the church receives the benefit of His universal headship).
2. Christ is the head of the church and in this position controls everything in all of creation.

v 23 (NLT) "and the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself".

Christ is the leader or head; this implies unity with the church, Christ's body.

This passage focuses on Christ as the head of the body, the church.

The church is not a building. The church is all believers in a living, growing, moving, working organism deriving existence and power from Christ. The church obeys Christ's commands to carry out His work in the world.

All believers, as part of Christ's body, are *made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself*. That Christ "fills all things" could be interpreted several ways: (1) The church contains the fullness of Christ—he fills it with himself; (2) the church contains gifts and blessings that only Christ can give; (3) the church fills up Christ—as the church grows, it completes Christ.

3 probably most clearly translates the Greek word (that which fills). Nowhere in the NT are we told that Christ is somehow incomplete without the church.

A combination of 1 & 3 seem to be more correct.

The Life Application Bible Commentary:

Christ fills all things with himself and with his blessings, bringing all believers to the state of obedience and praise for which God created them (as in 1:10; 4:10, 13, 16). The church is being filled with and by Christ, who fills all things totally. Thus, Christ, who is the fullness of God (Colossians 1:19), finds full expression in the church.

By Christ's resurrection and exaltation, he is head over all things for the church. Christ fills the church and then uses the gifts he bestows to fulfill his mission—revealing himself to the world and drawing people to himself by that witness. When reading Ephesians, it is important to remember that this epistle was written primarily to the entire church, not to an individual or even to one congregation. Christ is the Head, and we are the body of his church. The image of the body shows the church's unity. Each member is involved with all the others as they go about doing Christ's work on earth. We should not attempt to work, serve, or worship on our own. We need the entire body.

HEALTHY BODY

Try an experiment. Get your Bible study or prayer group to finish this sentence: *The church is* _____. You will undoubtedly get many different answers. But Ephesians 1:23 tells us that the church is *Christ's body*, filled with him. Just as Jesus is God in a form that we can grasp, that we can understand, the church is to present Jesus to the world in a form it can understand. We are his hands, his feet, muscles, tendons, voice. If Christ is truly the Head of the church, what does that say about the role of the pastor(s), elders, deacons, worship leaders, and other members? If we are truly his body, what does that say about the role we are to play at our jobs, in our schools, in our relationships?

Ephesians chapter 2

Back from the Dead

When James Calvert went out to the cannibal island of Fiji with the message of the gospel, the captain of the ship in which he traveled tried to talk him out of going. "You will risk your life and all those with you if you go among such savages," he said. Calvert's magnificent reply was, "We died before we came here."

In that sense it is possible to be dead even though you are alive. Corrie Ten Boom's life offers a modern example of this principle. Her remarkable story is told in the book *The Hiding Place*. She lived with her family in Holland just before World War II broke out. The Nazi military machine was beginning to press in on European Jews like the jaws of a vice. Jews who had any chance were fleeing Germany and other neighboring countries, but the German military machine was on the alert to capture any fleeing Jews. In response, an underground railroad was formed among compassionate people to assist the Jews to escape. Corrie Ten Boom's home was part of the underground system. Eventually, she and her sister were arrested and condemned to a German concentration camp for their part in assisting Jews.

Her life in the concentration camp was terrible beyond belief. In any civilized country, not even animals would be legally treated the way she and the thousands of other people in the camp were treated. Her sister, of weaker constitution than Corrie, died in the camp. Though on any given morning when she awoke, she was breathing and her heart was beating, Corrie, herself, was as good as dead. Only a short time stood between her and the gas chamber. Then one day, due to a clerical error, she was inexplicably freed. Snatched from the jaws of death, she was given her life back again.

Winston Churchill once said that there is nothing quite so exhilarating as being shot at and missed. That must have been how Corrie Ten Boom felt. Death shot at her but missed.

In that sense we've all been shot at. We have all died, spiritually; but God has given us a second chance. While we are dead, we may respond to his gift of life and receive new spiritual life. Chapter 2 of Ephesians tells the story.

In Ephesians chapter 2 Paul continues his habit of writing long sentences. vv 1-7 are one long sentence in the Greek.

Note the subject is God (v 4).

Note the three main "verbs"

1. made...alive (2:5)
2. raised...up with (2:6)
3. seated...with (2:6)

The object of each of these verses is US, referring to the believer. God has made us alive, raised us up, and seated us with Christ.

Paul backtracks to a train of thought introduced in v 19 of chapter 1... **exceeding greatness of his power**

In chapter 2, vv 1-10 the apostle declares that the spiritual renewal of all men, Jew and Gentile, is part of the resurrection of Christ, the highest manifestation of God's might.

We see this thought in v 5 where we read, *Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened [or made alive] us together with Christ⁴⁷* (The words *hath quickened* are in italics)

We will look at two divisions in vv 1-10.

First... vv 1-3... The old life of sin

Second... vv 4-10... The new life in Christ

The contrast between these sections speaks of the mighty power of God.

1. The old life of sin... 2:1-3

Paul shows five characteristics of the life his readers once lived apart from God.

a. First, spiritual death

you were dead in your trespasses and sins (NASB) v 1

To be dead in sin is to be spiritually dead. Mankind is separated from God because of their trespasses and sins.

Man is not simply under sentence of death. He is actually dead... physically alive, but spiritually dead. trespasses and sins emphasizes the total nature of this death.

Our Calvinistic friends call it total depravity

trespasses speaks of the desires of the flesh. Open, gross and palpable (capable of being handled, touched or felt). trespasses suggest a lapse or fall.

sins designate more the desires of the mind, sins of thought and ideas, of purpose and inclination (an innate state of corruption).

b. Second, Paul says, "sinners walk according to the course of this world" (v 2).

The word course is literally "age".

This is not speaking of chronological time, but the spiritual character of the times.

Like we would say, "The times are evil."

...or "Those were good times."

Spiritually dead people walk in conformity to the thoughts and pursuits of this present evil and transitory age. They have forsaken the rules and ways of God for the rules and ways of this world.

c. Third, sinful people walk according to the prince of the power of the air (v 2)

In II Cor. 4:4 Paul tells us, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving⁴⁸. We believe that god is Satan or the devil.

We know who is stronger. Paul tells us in 1 Tim. 1:17, Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.⁴⁹

See also 1 Tim. 6:14-16...

⁴⁷The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:5 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁴⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 4:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach
 until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 15 which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the
 blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,
 16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in
 unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be*
 honor and eternal dominion! Amen.⁵⁰

Paul's readers once bowed to the transitory god of this world, but Christ brought them liberation from the devil and his cohorts.

spirit refers back to the powers of evil and suggests that inner disobedient disposition which becomes active in the hearts of men when subjected to the evil one.

Men are "energized", either by God or by the forces of evil; if by evil, they are rightly called the children of disobedience.

d. Fourth they, and Paul once lived in the lusts of our flesh.

The *we* tells us that Paul, though a Jew, was among the sons of disobedience before he met Jesus.

in the lusts of our flesh defines the domain in which these people spent their lives. They lived to satisfy the appetites and impulses of their fallen human natures.

They surrendered to the lusts or cravings of the flesh which speak of the human nature under the domination of sin.

fulfilling (KJ), indulging (NASB) the desires [or wills] of the flesh and of the mind

e. Fifth, they were by nature children of wrath

by nature sets them out as having the sin nature inherited from Adam.

children of wrath... objects of God's wrath.

They were unaided by the Spirit of God, committed to sin.

A law of sinning controlled them, and thus they fell under the wrath of God.

The new life in Christ... chapter 2, vv 4-10

⁴⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 1:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 6:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

In these 6 verses Paul sketches a contrast between spiritual death and the new life in Christ.

Three features of life in Christ are identified.

First... it is a God-initiated life... vv 4-5.

In history past, God, through Christ broke into mankind's sinful state.

Today God breaks into each repentant person's sinful state to bring salvation.

See Paul's forceful conjunction **But** God.

What a rich study the "but Gods" in Scripture make. 44 times in the KJ bible we read those powerful words.

Some of them are:

Acts 7:9... The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. *Yet* God was with him⁵¹

Acts 13:30... **But** God raised Him from the dead

Rom 5:8... **But** God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.⁵²

1 Cor 1:27... **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 mighty⁵³

1 Cor 7:15... **But** if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: **but** God hath called us to peace.⁵⁴

1 Cor 10:13... There hath no temptation taken you **but** such as is common to man: **but** God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; **but** will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.⁵⁵

⁵¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 7:9 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 5:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵³The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., 1 Co 1:27 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁵⁴The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., 1 Co 7:15 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁵⁵The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., 1 Co 10:13 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Eph. 2:4... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us⁵⁶

⁵⁶The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:4 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

"but god"	
Gen 20:3	But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.
Gen 31:7	And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.
Gen 45:8	So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.
Gen 48:21	And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.
Gen 50:20	But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.
Exod 13:18	But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.
Exod 21:13	And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.
Judg 15:19	But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.
1 Sam 23:14	And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.
1 Chron 28:3	But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.
Ps 49:15	But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.
Ps 64:7	But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.
Ps 68:21	But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.
Ps 73:26	My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
Ps 75:7	But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.
Prov 21:12	The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.
Isa 17:13	The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.
Jonah 4:7	But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.
Mark 2:7	Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?
Luke 5:21	And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?
Luke 12:20	But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?
Luke 16:15	And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.
John 1:13	Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
Acts 7:9	And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,
Acts 10:28	And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
Acts 13:30	But God raised him from the dead:
Rom 2:29	But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.
Rom 5:8	But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Rom 6:17	But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
Rom 9:16	So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.
Rom 13:1	Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
1 Cor 1:27	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;
1 Cor 2:10	But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
1 Cor 3:6	I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
1 Cor 3:7	So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
1 Cor 6:13	Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.
1 Cor 7:15	But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.
1 Cor 7:17	But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.
1 Cor 10:13	There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
1 Cor 12:24	For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

1 Cor 15:38	But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.
2 Cor 1:9	But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:
2 Cor 1:18	But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.
Gal 3:18	For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.
Gal 3:20	Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.
Gal 6:14	But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.
Eph 2:4	But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
Phil 2:27	For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
Phil 4:19	But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
1 Thess 2:4	But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.
1 Thess 4:8	He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.
51 verses... 44 verses "but God"	

But God... God always makes a difference.

Even when we were dead in sins... His love was acting in our behalf.

Rom 5:6-8...

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.⁵⁷

mercy is God's disposition toward sinful men, but love is His motive in all that He does for them.

mercy is rich (exhaustless), but love is great (indescribable or magnanimous).

It is on account of and not through this great love that God chose us and quickened us together (v 5). The resurrection of Christ is not only the assurance of spiritual regeneration; it is also the means of regeneration.

Dead men are raised from spiritual death in and with the risen Christ, all initiated by the love of God. Rom 6:11... Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.⁵⁸

by grace ye are saved (KJ)

by grace you have been saved (NASB)

Point action—Points back to a time when the transaction was done—it was complete.

Salvation is in three stages.

1. We have been saved (done)
2. We are being saved (sanctification)
3. We will be saved (glorification)

Second, the new life in Christ is resurrection life (vv 6-7).

As Christians we share not only the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but also in his exaltation.

⁵⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 5:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 6:11 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

God hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together⁵⁹

The verbs *raised* and *sit* are in a tense expressing particular and completed action. Bruce says, "Believers are viewed as being already seated there with Christ by the act and in the purpose of God. Temporarily, indeed, we live on earth so long as we remain in this body; but in Christ we are seated with Christ where he is."

That is the meaning of in heavenly *places*.

The Beacon Bible Commentary points out four facts about the heavenly places.

1. Where the risen Christ sits supreme over every other authority (1:20)
2. Where spiritually-resurrected believers enjoy fellowship with Christ (2:6)
3. Where principalities and powers see the many-hued wisdom of God exhibited through the church (3:10)
4. Where the fully-armed Christian wrestles against spiritual wickedness (6:12)

The inner life of the man in Christ has been invaded by the power of heaven. He possesses eternal life, and he is in the kingdom of heaven. Thus in spirit he is lifted above the earthly, the worldly and the temporal.

Temporarily, the Christian is in the world but not of the world.

John 17:13-16...

13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."⁶⁰

Calvin says, "The Christian, having been lifted from the deepest hell to heaven itself,

⁵⁹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:6 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

enjoys life and citizenship in heaven."

Phil 3:20... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ⁶¹

You and I are "citizens of heaven" if we are "in Christ".

The purpose of this resurrected and exalted life of the new man is That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus⁶². (v 7)

In the limitless future of eternity, spiritually-resurrected men will display God's grace. Note the repetition of the praise theme of 1:6, 12, 14.

Third... The life in Christ is given to us... vv 8-10

Expanding on the parenthesis of v 5, Paul presents one of the great evangelical summaries of the New Testament.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God⁶³ (v 8) (KJ)

Again, it is point/completed action—it has already taken place.

(NASB) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God⁶⁴

Nothing we can do to earn salvation by good works. It is a gift from God.

Religion... man's effort to try to make himself good enough to be saved.

Christianity... a gift from God / a relationship with Jesus Christ.

grace means that it all begins and ends with God. Salvation is a gift from our creator.

How thankful we should be! Are we?

Some quotes:

John Brown... Christ rose again, but our sins did not; they are buried forever in his grave.

William Temple... The only thing that a man can contribute to his redemption is the sin

⁶⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 17:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁶¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 3:20 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁶²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:7 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁶³The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:8 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁶⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 2:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

from which he needs to be redeemed.

C.H. Spurgeon... If there is to be in our celestial garment but one stitch of our own making, we are all of us lost.

NOT OF WORKS BUT OF GRACE

- Acts 15:11 "On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the *grace* of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." (NRSV)
- Acts 18:27 "On arriving, [Apollos] was a great help to those who by *grace* had believed." (NIV)
- Romans 3:24 "justified freely by His *grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (NKJV)
- Romans 4:16 "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by *grace* and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring...to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all" (NIV)
- Romans 11:6 "But if it is by *grace*, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be *grace*" (NRSV)
- Galatians 3:18 "For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his *grace* gave it to Abraham through a promise" (NIV)
- Ephesians 2:5 "by *grace* you have been saved" (NKJV)
- Ephesians 2:8 "For by *grace* you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (NRSV)

2 Timothy 1:9 "who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time" (NIV)

Titus 3:4-7 "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us...so that, having been justified by his *grace*, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (NIV)

This is where all the "works" systems of religion break down. We can never do enough good works to merit salvation—it is a gift.

v 9... Not of works, lest any man should boast

v 10... For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus⁶⁵

We have "undone" and "marred" ourselves, but in Him resides our help. Our creator mends His soiled creation with His own hands.

II Cor 5:17... Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.⁶⁶

grace is the origin or source of our salvation.

faith is the means.

Faith can raise no claim or boast lest it too be called a "merit" or work". Rom. 4:2... For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.⁶⁷

The Beacon Bible Commentary: "Faith is the free, obedient response of man to the divine overtures of salvation. But when faith operates and the sinner possesses the joy of new life, the spontaneous declaration is, 'It is all of God!'"

GOD'S MASTERPIECES

Why would God do it? Why would he sacrifice his only Son for sinners

⁶⁵The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:10 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁶⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 5:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁶⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 4:2 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

like us? Ephesians 2:10 gives one reason: so that we could be living, breathing pictures of his grace and mercy. Not only does he change us radically into new creatures, he also wants to use us as display cases for his artistry. According to this verse, believers are his workmanship, his masterpieces. That would be an arrogant claim to make about ourselves if God hadn't already said it. This statement also carries some significant implications about how we ought to see ourselves and how we ought to treat one another. God's masterpieces should not lower or degrade themselves with sinful attitudes, words, or behaviors. Nor should we devalue his other works of art: our brothers and sisters in Christ. Treat fellow Christians as God's masterpieces.

Commenting on the last part of v 10, *The Beacon Bible Commentary* says:

Paul reminds us, however, that **works** have a place in God's salvation. When grace operates through faith, a new man is created **unto good works** (10), as God had originally intended. **Good works**, which are in keeping with those elements of the law of God that are retained in Christ, follow the experience faith. And to the man of faith these **good works** are not human works, but God's works inspired by the ministry of the Spirit in his life. Hence the new life in Christ is a manifestation of the mighty power of God!

The Life Application Bible Commentary has this to say:

Out of gratitude for this free gift, however, believers will seek "to do good works"—to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness. While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God's intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are saved not merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church (4:12). This solves the so-called conflict between faith and works. Works do not produce salvation but are the evidence of salvation...

[James 1:22... But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.⁶⁸

⁶⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jas 1:22 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

James 2:14-26...

14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

18 But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

26 For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.⁶⁹]

The Greek word translated "do"...means "to walk about in." We move ahead in this life of grace doing the good works *which God prepared in advance for us to do*. The new life that God gives cannot help but express itself in good works.

1 Tim 6:18... *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share⁷⁰

⁶⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jas 2:14 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 6:18 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Titus 2:7... in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified⁷¹

1st Peter 2:12...Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.⁷²

vv 11-12... In these verses Paul returns to the theme which he dropped at the end of v 2, namely their lost condition without Christ.

Wherefore (KJ) or Therefore (NASB) remember reminds them why Paul is so concerned that the church be a united society.

He talks about the historic rift between Jew and Gentile.

The Jews were descendants of Abraham, and the sign of their acceptance as covenant people was the rite of circumcision.

The unconverted Gentiles were despised by the Jews and contemptuously called the Uncircumcision.

Instead of sharing their knowledge of God they practiced a hate-breeding and grace-denying separation. Paul wants his readers to think about the change in their relationship to God which has come about through Christ.

Grace has brought the unity that God planned.

flesh (v 11) means the physical body.

Now Paul lists 4 spiritual tragedies that existed before they came to Christ.

First: They were without Christ (v 12 KJV), separate from Christ (NASB).

Before they experienced grace they had no part in the messianic people or the benefits that went with knowing messiah. Their history was Christless. No greater tragedy can befall a people.

Second: They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (NASB) excluded from

commonwealth has two senses.

1. State or nation
2. Citizenship or the rights of a citizen.

⁷¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Tit 2:7 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 2:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

These speak of the separation practiced by the Jews. Gentiles were outside the community of God's people except for a few proselytes. Even the proselytes still felt like outsiders.

William Barclay talks about the rift between Jew/Gentile.

The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Jew said that Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell.

It was not lawful to help a Gentile woman in childbirth, because that would bring another Gentile into the world.

If a Jew married a Gentile the funeral of that Jew was carried out.

Today that alienation has taken a different turn.

Today often the Christian rejects the Jew.

We forget that Christianity came from Judaism... that for centuries the Jew preserved the promises and worship of God.

The Christian should love the Jew. We should make every possible effort to remove the Jewish barrier of rejection of Christ.

Third... Paul says they were strangers from the covenants of promise.

Israel was a covenant community.

Covenants made to Abraham, Moses and Jeremiah (31:31-34) provided the basis for Israel's existence. Those covenants held promises of blessing if God's people obeyed him.

The greatest blessing was the assurance of deliverance through God's messiah.

Gentiles were outside the commonwealth. v 12 says they were strangers from the covenants of promise. They were not participants in the privileges, present or future, which were pledged to Israel.

Fourth... They had no hope and were without God (v 12).

Someone has observed that we need an infinite hope, which faith in God alone can give.

Westcott notes the pathos of the strange combination of without God and no hope.

These people faced the future without hope, because they had no relationship with the interpreter of the future.

Today millions face the future without hope. How that should spur us to telling the good news to all who we come in contact with.

"Are you a priest?"

Man in truck in Georgia. Hopeless found hope on the phone.

Timid knock at office door. Hopeless man found hope because of the message of salvation.

In v 13 we come upon another of Paul's dramatic transitions (see v 4). The past of the Gentiles was desolate and foreboding. But now in Christ Jesus all is changed.

Paul seems to be taking his thought from Isa 57:19, Peace, peace, to the far and to the near, says the LORD⁷³ (RSV).

The near people were the Hebrews, and the far off people were the Gentiles.
sometimes means once.

These who did not have the hope of the covenant nor the joy of God's presence are brought near to the grace and redemptive power of God. This was accomplished by the blood of Christ. In the great sacrifice of Christ the barrier between Jew and Gentile is removed.

vv 14-15... enmity abolished through peace.

Paul takes a third word peace. He, Christ, is our peace.

He purchased peace through His passion and He is in Himself the very essence of peace.

He is the prince of peace.

Isa 9:6... For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.⁷⁴

Luke 2:14... "Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."⁷⁵

He hath made both one.

One of the things Christ does as peacemaker is that He hath broken down the middle wall of partition.

Four possibilities have been suggested for Paul's meaning here.

1. The wall between the inner and outer court in the temple.

⁷³The Revised Standard Version, Electronic edition., Is 57:19 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971).

⁷⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Is 9:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Lk 2:14 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

This wall separated between Jew and Gentile.

This was a physical and a spiritual barrier.

2. The curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

...symbolizing the separation between God and man. Christ's death tore down this curtain.

Josephus tells us it was thick as a man's palm (between 3"-4" thick). Two teams of oxen could not tear it. But the finger of God ripped it from the top to the bottom.

...showing us in symbol that we no longer need a priestly mediator. We can bring our petitions directly before God's throne.

3. Paul could be referring to the manmade wall of legal requirements, statutes and ordinances.

4. Paul may mean the barrier between God and man, and man and man, which consists of angels and other principalities and powers such as are listed in Eph. 1:21.

Whatever Paul meant the gospel truth is clear.

The Beacon Bible Commentary

Jesus Christ is concerned with whatever divisions exist between races and nations, between science and morals, natural and legislated laws, primitive and progressive people, outsiders and insiders. Christ has broken down every barrier of the spirit between men.

v 15... Having abolished... nullifying or making invalid. Could translate, "The enmity is removed by the nullifying of the law which occasioned it".

ordinances refers to "dogmas" or "regulations" and introduces the issue of legalistic religion when religious hope is presented as acceptance with God through meritorious works.

Christ in his flesh (incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection) wiped out all dividing

elements between men.

Men, both Jews and Gentiles, come to God the same way through grace.

15b states again the purpose of Christ's coming. (NASB) that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*⁷⁶.

Christ, the second Adam, by His own involvement in the whole of man's life, fathered a new humanity. This new creation is in Himself—in vital union with Jesus Christ.

The Gentile is not turned into a Jew, nor the Jew into a Gentile, but both into one new man; this removes all grounds of jealousy.

vv 16-18... Reconciliation of both groups to God.

Paul makes it clear that the removal of the breach between the two great divisions of mankind results from the reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile to God.

by the cross... by the atoning work of Christ.

reconcile lit. means "to exchange completely".

Reconciliation is the act of exchanging one set of relationships for another.

Because of sin men were alienated from God, but now they can be reconciled to Him by grace.

This brings about one body, which is Christ's church. Christ's work at Calvary was to unite members of diverse backgrounds and abilities. This resulted in the putting to death the enmity.

v 17... Christ came and preached peace to both groups. The risen Christ announced the peace which His death made possible.

Jesus preached peace during His ministry.

John 14:27... **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**⁷⁷

John 16:33... **These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**⁷⁸

After His resurrection... John 20:19-23:

⁷⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 2:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 14:27 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 16:33 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

19 So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and *said to them, “Peace *be with you.*”

20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace *be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*”

22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and *said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 “If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.*”⁷⁹

v 18... Through Christ we can come boldly unto the throne of grace.

access – (introduction)

Christ is more than an introduction / He is the way to God... John 14:6... Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”⁸⁰

Christ brings us into the throne room of the King of Kings and causes us to know Him in the fullness of His glory as the Father.

vv 19-22... ye, the Gentiles, are not one bit inferior to the covenant-keeping Jews.

They are no more strangers (foreign visitors without rights in the community)

or foreigners (aliens enjoying temporary and limited rights as residents).

Paul uses three figures to express the grand unity which prevails in the fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers.

First, Citizens, with the saints (19a)

This metaphor from city life... The apostle assures the Gentiles are part of the new Israel (Gal. 6:16). The Jews once were saints, citizens of the city of God. The Gentiles were outsiders. Now in Christ the Gentiles share all the rights and privileges of this new people.

Second... The household of God (19b)

This speaks of family life, an intimate relationship. Gentiles are not God's housemates, full members of His family on the same basis as the natural children of Abraham.

⁷⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 20:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 14:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The relationship with believing Jews can be characterized with words like "kinsmen", "brothers", "fellow saints" and "sons" and "daughters".

Third, an holy temple in the Lord

The church is an holy temple under construction and is an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Four aspects of the metaphor are spelled out...

First... The apostles and prophets are the foundation stones of the temple.

Their function is to proclaim the word of the Lord.

The apostles and prophets are of lesser importance than Christ, but they are important foundation stones.

Second, Christ is the chief corner *stone* of the Temple.

There are two possibilities here for *corner stone*.

One: would be the stone set in the foundation at a corner to bind it together and to establish the line for the walls.

Two... Another interpretation is the stone placed at the summit of the building as its crown and completion. Whichever interpretation we take, the intention of the apostle is to affirm that Christ controls the shape and form of the church.

Third... The believers in Christ are the living stones which when fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple.

Paul is suggesting that the church is still in the process of being built. It is a living, growing organism.

This growth takes place and will result in beauty only as the new members "by the quality of their discipleship in adhering closely to their Lord, contribute to the unity, strength and completeness of the church".

Fourth... The temple into which Gentiles are builded; is habitation of God.

The tabernacle and temple provided a place for the holy one of Israel.

Paul told the Corinthians Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?⁸¹ (1 Cor 3:16)

God not only calls us His people, He abides with us, He dwells in us.

The Christian church, when it is truly the church, is the home of the presence.

⁸¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 3:16 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Ephesians chapter 3

Paul has been declaring the potential unity of mankind through God's work in Jesus Christ. Gentiles and Jews can become one people in the Christian church, the temple of God, through the Holy Spirit.

Paul begins a prayer for inward strength and the highest possibilities of the new life in Christ for his readers.

His thought is interrupted by the thought of the mystery of the call of the Gentiles and his ministry to them.

vv 1-13 carry that thought.

In v 1 and 14 we see the phrase **For this cause**. This refers back to the preceding description of God's inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of redemption.

Between vv 1 and 14 is the extended parenthesis on the mystery of the gospel.

It's as if Paul starts a thought in v 1 and the mention of him as prisoner triggers a long passage, vv 1-13, about God's purpose to unite all things in Christ (1:9-10).

Paul also talks about his mission of bringing *all men* [to] see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God⁸² (3:9)

v 1... prisoner of Christ Jesus

Paul knew God was sovereign: His imprisonment was in God's will. So he calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Rome was technically his jailer, but Paul knew he was doing Christ's work and will.

See Eph. 4:1 for similar language.

Paul was a prisoner at Rome waiting trial before Nero. In prison Paul had certain privileges. He was allowed to stay in a rental house.

His friends could visit him.

But night and day he was chained to the wrist of a burly Roman soldier whose duty it was that Paul would never escape.

What an abject situation!

What an incredible opportunity!

Paul had been hoping and praying to witness in Rome. Now 24/7 he is chained to a Roman soldier.

⁸²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 3:9 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Talk about a captive audience.

The Scriptures speak of converts who were of Caesar's household.

I think Paul must have witnessed to these guys. Can you imagine Paul saying, "Let me tell you about my adventure on the road to Damascus... Do you know that this dead man got up and walked!".

Talk about making lemonade when you are given lemons. Paul saw the opportunity in every problem. How do we do?

Are we grumblers?... always whining about the circumstances we find ourselves in? Or do we look for the positive and seize every opportunity to witness for our Lord?

William Barclay says,

One's point of view makes all the difference in the world. When Sir Christopher Wren was building St. Paul's Cathedral he was making a tour of the work in progress.

He came upon three men at work. He asked them, "What are you doing?"

The first man said, "I am cutting this stone to a certain size and shape."

The second man said, "I am earning so much money at my work."

The third man paused for a moment, straightened himself up and said, "I am helping Sir Christopher Wren build St. Paul's Cathedral."

Barclay comments about vv 1-7:

Paul regarded himself as the recipient of a new revelation. Paul didn't discover it; God revealed it to him (God revealed the plan of salvation to us).

Paul regarded himself as the "transmitter of grace". Paul saw his task as that of being a channel of God's grace to men.

It is one of the great facts of the Christian life that we have been given the precious things of Christianity in order to share them with others. It is one of the great warnings of the Christian life that if we keep them to ourselves we lose them.

Man at chapel. Timid knock. No hope. Left with hope.

Paul regarded himself as having the dignity of service.

Service was not a wearisome duty, but a radiant privilege.

Christian service in God's kingdom should be a privilege which we are glad to accept.

Paul regarded himself as a sufferer for Christ.

He did not expect the way of service to be easy; he did not expect the way of loyalty to be trouble-free.

To suffer for Christ is not a penalty; it is our glory, for it is to share in the sufferings of Christ himself and an opportunity to demonstrate the reality of our loyalty to him.

Some Scriptures:

Philippians 1:29... For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake⁸³

Philippans 3:10... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death⁸⁴

Rom 8:17... and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.⁸⁵

2 Cor 11:23-28:

23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches.⁸⁶

for you Gentiles (KJ), for the sake of you Gentiles (NASB)... Possibly a reminder that it was the animosity of the Jews to his Gentile mission which caused his imprisonment.

⁸³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 1:29 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 3:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 8:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 11:22 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Possibly he could mean that the Gentile's spiritual lives somehow benefited because he was bound. v 13 states poignantly that his tribulations are for their glory.

IN GOD'S HANDS

The noted psychotherapist Viktor Frankl maintained that people can endure any "what" so long as they have a "why." He spoke with credibility—he had survived the Holocaust. Paul suffered greatly for his outspoken faith in Jesus... referring to himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles." How could Paul persevere in the face of such suffering? He had a "why" for the "what." Paul knew that his life was in God's hands and that nothing had come into his life that had not first passed through nail-scarred hands. Do you have that confidence? Regard your circumstances as the proving ground of God's great mercy and love.

vv 2-3... Paul is making a rhetorical statement. (NIV) Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace; dispensation (KJ), stewardship (NASB).

Paul assumes they have surely heard that "God's grace was given to him for their benefit. administration means the special stewardship, trust or commission Paul had been given, and the grace and authority he had been given in order to fulfill it.

The Greek word translated administration usually refers to house and management, continuing the image of God's household from 2:19-22.

Paul and other NT writers use this word.

It is rich in meaning for us.

The word household or house is used in NAS here:

Acts 16:15... And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.⁸⁷

Gal 6:10... So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.⁸⁸

⁸⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 16:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ga 6:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Eph 2:19... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household⁸⁹

1 Tim 3:15... but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.⁹⁰

Heb 3:6... but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.⁹¹

1 Peter 2:5... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁹²

1 Peter 4:17... For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?⁹³

From the words in the Greek we get the following ideas:

Residence

Abode

A family (more or less related)

Relative, those of his own house

Reside, dwell, cohabit

Fellow resident

Practical Word Studies in the New Testament has this to say:

Practical Application

The church is the "house" or "household" ... of God." This does not refer to the building of the church, but to the household of the church, to the people of the church. The church is a body of people who have committed themselves to form a family of people, a family centered around God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is a *family of people*...

⁸⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 2:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 3:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 3:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 2:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 4:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- Who believe in God and in His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Who have committed their lives to live for Christ.
- who have based their lives upon the promise of eternal salvation promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- who have committed themselves to live as a family with all other believers.

Simply stated, the church is a body of people who have committed their lives to live as the family of God. God is the Father; Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, but we, the followers of God, are the adopted children of God. Every person who truly follows God is a true member of the church, that is, of the family of God.

John 1:12... But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name⁹⁴

2 Cor 6:17-18...

17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.
"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.

18 "And I will be a father to you,
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"
Says the Lord Almighty.⁹⁵

Galatians 4:4-6...

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son,
born of a woman, born under the Law,
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we
might receive the adoption as sons.
6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into
our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"⁹⁶

All this is a beautiful picture of the first-century Palestinian "household".

Mom and Pop got married and built a simple one-room house.

⁹⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 1:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 6:16 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ga 4:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Children came... As the boys married, each of them built a room on to the house for them and their bride to live in.

Over the years the buildings grew like topsy. There were walls, rooms, courtyards. Aunts, uncles, grandpas and grandmas, kids, adult children (extended family-households) all lived together in the family *insula*.

It was a place of growing, sharing, loving, helping, disciplining, nurturing and being together. What a vivid picture of the church.

In the family, blood is thicker than water. Families stick together; families are loyal to each other. Are we as a church?

Why do we lose that sense of connectedness?

How do we get it back?

- By being intentional about greeting different people each Sunday.
- By praying for each other
- By sharing each other's burdens
- By listening
- By humility
- By helping
- By encouraging
- By loving confrontation
- By unity
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Philippians 2:3-8...

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

4 do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹⁷

Col 3:8-17...

8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

11 a *renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

14 Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

17 Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.⁹⁸

FOR OTHERS

Have you ever considered the fact that everything God gives us as abilities, spiritual gifts, and opportunities for ministry are for the sake of others? After all, if salvation were just for our benefit, God could simply take us to heaven as soon as we believed and give us the greatest blessing of all, eternity with him. The reason he keeps us here is for us to be his agents, his representatives to others. All that we have is a sacred stewardship from him. Just as Jesus laid down his life for us, so we should serve others in his name. What has God

⁹⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 2:2 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 3:7 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

given you—and your church—in terms of spiritual gifts, material wealth, and service opportunities? What specifically are you doing with it? What kind of steward are you?

Paul has already called the fact that the Gentiles could be included in God's grace a mystery (2:11-22).

This mystery was hidden till Christ came.

Paul was shown this mystery by **revelation**.

A "revelation" is a direct communication from God. Paul had refused to believe in Christ and persecuted those who did.

God "persuaded" Paul and revealed the mystery to him.

Christ was the promised messiah of the Jews and the light to the Gentiles.

v 4... Often when a church received a letter it would be read aloud to the assembled congregation.

Many could not read.

There was only one copy.

Paul understood the mystery, because it was revealed to him by God himself.

Phillips renders v 4, "What I have written briefly of this above will explain to you my knowledge of the mystery of Christ."

v 5... God communicated to Israel through the prophets. The people did not always understand the message.

Now the mystery is revealed through the apostle Paul.

Peter also received a revelation of this mystery in Acts 10, showing him that the gospel was for both Jew and Gentile.

Both Peter and Paul received this message.

v 6... In this verse Paul makes it absolutely clear. If you missed my point before, the mystery is that Gentiles and Jews are heirs together in one body, and share in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Paul uses three words to tell us what he means. They are hard to translate.

Paul was fond of compound words.

fellowheirs with the Jews; they share the same spiritual inheritance.

Jews and Gentiles are adopted into the same family.

members together as sharers in the promise. They will be fellow partakers and copartners in receiving the coming blessings promised in God's kingdom.

They are members of the same body.

This unity occurs through the gospel message when they believe. This unity transcends race, culture, gender, age and any other factor that divides people. Only in Christ Jesus could such unity be possible.

partakers of the promise... Once the Gentiles were strangers from the covenants of promise, but now they share on equal terms with Jews the promise of life and salvation.

v 6 (NIV)... This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

v 6 (NASB)... *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel⁹⁹

OUR LIVES BEFORE AND AFTER CHRIST

BEFORE

AFTER

Dead in transgressions.....	Made alive with Christ
Objects of wrath	Shown God's mercy and given salvation
Followed the ways of the world	Stand for Christ and truth
God's enemies	God's children
Enslaved to Satan.....	Free in Christ to love and serve him

(The Life Application Bible Commentary)

v 7... Paul did not seek the office of servant. He received it by by the gift of God's grace... through the working of his power.

Paul had rejected Jesus the messiah.

Paul had actively persecuted Christians.

Paul was not called on the basis of his goodness or faithfulness. Paul realized he could only fulfill his mission through God's grace and power within him.

The Life Application Bible Commentary:

⁹⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 3:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

When Paul became a servant of the gospel, God gave him the ability to share the gospel of Christ effectively. You may not be an apostle or even an evangelist, but God will give you opportunities to tell others about Christ. And with the opportunities he will provide the ability, courage, and power. Make yourself available to God as his servant whenever an opportunity presents itself. As you focus on the other person and his or her needs, God will communicate your caring attitude. Your words will be natural, loving, and compelling.

v 8... Paul describes himself as less than the least of all saints. He meant that God's grace alone had saved him. He didn't deserve it. He was utterly amazed at what God had done.

Paul's special calling was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ¹⁰⁰.

preach was chosen by the early church to mean the proclamation of the gospel.

Paul considered telling others about Christ to be like sharing unsearchable riches.

unsearchable means that the words of God's grace exceed the ability of our minds to understand it.

To Gentiles who had been excluded by the Jews from participation in God's kingdom, these riches were unfathomable.

v 9 (NIV)... and to make plain to everyone the administration [fellowship KJ] of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

(New Revised Standard) and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things¹⁰¹

fellowship (KJ), administration (NASB, NIV) means the carrying out of. This happened as Paul and the other apostles taught God's great purpose in Christ and as the church took root and grew.

Paul understood that he had been born at a specific time to fulfill a specific purpose—revealing this mystery that for ages past was kept hidden in God.

The same God is at work, and according to chapter 1, v 4 His plan was in place before the creation of the world.

¹⁰⁰The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 3:8 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

¹⁰¹The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version, Eph 3:9 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

The phrase by Jesus Christ does not appear in the oldest manuscripts.
We are clearly told in other scriptures, that Jesus Christ created all things.

Colossians 1:12-17:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

The Incomparable Christ

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.¹⁰²

John 1:1-3:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.¹⁰³

John 1:10... He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.¹⁰⁴

1 Cor 8:6... yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.¹⁰⁵

Heb 1:1-2... 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:11 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 1:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 1:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 8:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 1:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "We have not merely been saved that we might escape hell; we have been saved in order that God may present a people which will astonish the whole world."

v 10... To the intent (in order that)... The church, now composed of Jews and Gentiles, displays God's wisdom to the principalities and powers. Paul's use of in heavenly *places* seems to exclude earthly powers. He appears to mean good angels here.

(Some believe he refers to good angels and also to evil demons.)

The NIV Application Commentary has this to say about "in the heavenlies"...

The expression "in the heavenly realms" is difficult. Paul does not mean that spiritual blessings are to be enjoyed later in heaven, for the focus of this text is on the *present* enjoyment of God's gifts. In fact, focus on "getting into heaven" in the future is not the primary concern of the New Testament. The concern is much more for the present life with God and in Christ. While *the coming age* is important in Ephesians, only 5:5 and 6:8 give any focus to gaining future salvation, and both of these verses mention the future only as a prod for present living. Literally, the text reads only "in the heavenlies"; and although this word occurs elsewhere as the adjective "heavenly," it has the sense of "the heavenly realms" only in Ephesians. The term is not, however, merely a synonym for "heaven," as an examination of the four other occurrences in Ephesians shows. This phrase can refer to:

- (1) the place of exaltation for Christ (1:20) and believers (2:6)
- (2) the place for revelation of God's wisdom to the rulers and authorities (3:10)
- (3) more negatively, the place of battle between believers and evil spiritual forces (6:12).

In other words, "heavenly realms" does not refer to a physical location but to a spiritual reality—God's world, in which believers have a share and which evil forces still seek to attack. It includes all of the believer's relation to God and the church's experience. It is a way of saying that this world is not the

only reality. A larger reality exists where Christ is already exalted as Lord, where believers participate in his victory, and where spiritual forces are opposed. Though believers live physically on this earth, they receive spiritual resources and their identity from a higher plane. The spiritual blessings given to Christians are enjoyed in the present life, for they derive from what God has done in Christ *in the heavenlies*.

Ephesians 3:10 assigns a lofty and cosmic role to the church. It is the channel by which God's wisdom is demonstrated "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." As before, "heavenly realms" points not so much to a place as to a spiritual reality, the reality beyond what we see. This description of the church's role has no equivalent elsewhere in Paul or in the New Testament. Several options are possible:

- (1) The church makes known God's wisdom to good angels (see 1 Peter 1:12).
- (2) The church makes known God's wisdom to evil powers in order to bring about their conversion, to announce their defeat, or to cause them to marvel.
- (3) The church makes known God's wisdom to human institutions and structures to transform their actions.
- (4) Some combination of the above.

It seems that angels receive their understanding of God's great mystery from watching humans. Angels and demons cannot comprehend what God has done in giving salvation.

1 Peter 1:12... It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.¹⁰⁷

1 Cor 11:10... Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels.¹⁰⁸

According to the eternal purpose

v 11... God has always been in control.

¹⁰⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 1:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 11:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

He did not bring the plan of salvation as the result of an emergency when Adam sinned.

The central theme of this letter is God's great work of joining Jews and Gentiles together in a unified body (the church).

God could only accept sinful people through a sacrifice that would cover their sins.

Jesus Christ became that sacrifice on the cross.

Acts 2:22-24:

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

23 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.

24 “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.”¹⁰⁹

Luke 22:22... “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”¹¹⁰

v 12... Through Christ we can now approach God with freedom and confidence (boldness and confidence (KJ)).

Most of us would be apprehensive in the presence of a powerful ruler, but faith gives us confidence. The word translated **access** or **approach** implies a formal introduction into the presence of a king.

Thanks to Jesus Christ, Christians can enter directly into God's presence through prayer.

Heb 4:16... Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.¹¹¹

Heb 10:19-22:

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

¹⁰⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 2:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Lk 22:22 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 4:16 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

21 and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,
 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,
 having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies
 washed with pure water.¹¹²

OPEN INVITATION

Suppose you were touring the White House one day and the president himself made an unexpected appearance with your group. You barely have time to regain your composure when he walks straight over to you and says, "I'm free tonight; you want to come back and have dinner?" You would probably find the time to make the return trip. Through Christ, we are given access not to any earthly king or head of state but to God Almighty. And not just *occasional* access when we have something really heavy on our minds. Instead, we have total, constant access to approach God "with freedom and confidence." Take God up on his gracious offer.

v 13 (NIV)... I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Wherefore (KJ), therefore (NIV)... Because of the incredible scope of God's plan and because of the access to Him in freedom and confidence...

Paul asks his readers not to be discouraged because of what he (Paul) was suffering.

Those sufferings were for his Gentile hearers.

They should be regarded as glory.

If Paul had not preached the gospel he would not be in jail.

The Ephesians probably would not have heard the gospel.

Like a mother endures pain to bring new life, Paul suffered to bring them eternal life.

Christ does not tell us obeying Him will be easy. He says, "Take up a cross and follow me.". We should feel honored that others have suffered so we could hear the gospel. We should be willing to suffer for the gospel's sake.

We must think through the reasons for our faith so if we face persecution we will stand true. Paul understood God was in control. He was working His will through Paul's imprisonment and suffering. In this the Ephesian believers could glory.

Col 1:24... Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share

¹¹²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 10:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.¹¹³

Paul's prayer for spiritual fulfillment (3:14-19)

v 14... For this cause... ends the long digression which began with 3:1, where we read the same phrase. Thinking of the extension of divine mercy and saving grace to the Gentiles leads Paul to prayer. The burden of his intercession is that these new Christians might come to experience all of man's God-given spiritual privileges in their fullness.

I bow my knees expresses Paul's attitude of prayer. Kneeling indicates the earnestness and humility that Paul felt as he spoke these words.

It was customary for Jews to pray standing with the hands outstretched toward heaven.

Some scriptures indicating standing are:

Matt 6:5... **When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.**¹¹⁴

Luke 18:11 and 13:

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"¹¹⁵

Some scriptures indicating kneeling are:

Luke 22:41... And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray,¹¹⁶

¹¹³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:24 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Mt 6:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Lk 18:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Lk 22:41 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Acts 7:60... Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.¹¹⁷

Acts 9:40... But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.¹¹⁸

Acts 20:36... When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.¹¹⁹

HEART AND KNEE

In the preceding verses, Paul touched on a number of themes that could elicit different responses from his readers—pride, fear, smugness, gratitude. Paul's own response, however, to what God had done with him and through him, was to kneel before God in humility and adoration. How do you respond to the "highs and lows" of your Christian walk? Do you get ecstatic over good events and depressed over the bad? Learn a lesson from Paul, who experienced highs of grace and glory and lows of suffering and loss. Meet all your circumstances with humility, and trust in God's sovereign goodness, with bended knee and yielded heart.

v 14 (KJ) of our Lord Jesus Christ is not in the oldest texts. It is not bad theology. Paul uses similar language in chapter 1, v 17. It probably did not come from Paul's pen at 3:14.

Don't get mad at the newer translations, which following the oldest manuscripts, leave it out at v 14.

Addressing one's prayer to the father is in keeping with God's plan for His children. When we were born again we were adopted (as sons and daughters) into the family of God (chapter 1, v5).

We can call God "abba, father".

Some think that Paul's manner of addressing the father may be the result of the influence of the Lord's prayer in the early Christian community.

v 15... The Greek is much fuller than the English here. The word **family** is derived from "father".

¹¹⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 7:60 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 9:40 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 20:36 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

It has been suggested that the word translated family could be translated "fatherhood". A suggested translation would be, "from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth receives its name".

The Beacon Bible Commentary:

The fatherhood of God is the source of fellowship and unity in all the orders of finite beings. Every family, every society, which is held together by the tie of a common head derives that which gives it a right to the title from the one father. Martin reminds us that the fatherhood of God is not a mere metaphor drawn from human relationships. The very opposite is the case. The archetype of all fatherhood is seen in the Godhead, and all other fatherhoods are derived from him. Prayer becomes a genuine communion when we realize that God is father in the highest and noblest sense, and he is approachable!

v 16 to 19 are Paul's requests for his people at Ephesus and for us today. It contains some of the most loved verses in the NT. Paul had previously written (1:7, 2:7) of the immeasurable riches of God.

Now he prays that according to the riches of his glory God would grant his requests for:
to be strengthened with might by his Spirit

This word is the opposite of faint or discouraged (NIV), lose heart (NASB) in v 13.

We find the source of this strength in the Holy Spirit.

He, "the Spirit of counsel and might", cleanses and empowers the heart. This is not merely on the surface, but affects the inner man.

Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit may touch "the master spring of the whole life, strengthening and vitalizing it for service to God".

v 17... That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith amplifies and further explains the blessings granted in v 16.

Since Christ and the Holy Spirit are co-equal parts of the Godhead, to be strengthened by the Spirit and to be indwelt by Christ in the heart are not totally different experiences.

The Beacon Bible Commentary:

Quite obviously, enjoying the presence of the Spirit is tantamount to

enjoying the presence of Christ.

[tantamount definition... Equivalent in effect or value, to be equal to]

The word translated "dwell" means permanent residence as opposed to temporary sojourn. One commentator says, "Christ's coming is so deep and great as to constitute a practically new arrival, and remaining where he so arrives not as a guest, precariously detained, but as a master resident in his proper home¹²⁰

in your hearts denotes at the center of the whole personality.

The abiding of Christ is a gift and must be received by faith.

Being strengthened by the Spirit and fully indwelt by Christ will cause us to be rooted and grounded in love.

We see these biological and architectural metaphors also in:

Ephesians 2:21... in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord¹²⁰

Col 2:7... having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and overflowing with gratitude.*¹²¹

Col 1:23 (KJ)... If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister¹²²

rooted brings to mind the stable image of a great tree firmly rooted against storms.

grounded brings to mind the solid foundation of a building.

Literally translated, "having been rooted and having been grounded"—This emphasizes the present result of a past action.

This is like 2:8, you have been saved.

This connects with v 18, suggesting that by being rooted we will then be able to understand the magnitude of God's love.

Paul prayed that the foundation of love would help believers grasp the vastness of Christ's

¹²⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 2:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹²¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 2:7 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹²²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Col 1:23 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

love. *grasp* (NIV), *know* (KJ) indicated reaching out for a goal and holding onto it. We do this, not by ourselves, but with all saints.

The Life Application Bible Commentary:

Christ's love is total, complete, eternal, and all-encompassing. It reaches every corner of our experience. This passage shows that even as we seek to grasp an understanding of Christ's love, we will never understand it completely, for it is beyond our comprehension. It is *wide*—covering the breadth of our own experience and reaching out to the whole world. It is *long*—continuing the length of our lives and on into eternity. It is *high*—rising to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is *deep*—reaching to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. Various attempts have been made to identify the four dimensions—wide, long, high, and deep—with the four arms of the cross, the four dimensions of the heavenly city (Revelation 21:16), or the four dimensions of the universe. Most likely, they should all be taken together as referring to the all-encompassing majesty of the love of God.

John Owen writes, "We are never nearer to Christ than when we find ourselves lost in a holy amazement at his unspeakable love."

PRAYER POWER

How do we get strength to live morally, to be a witness, and to remain united with other believers? We get strength from the powerful Holy Spirit. This power raised Christ from the dead (1:19-20). This power energized Paul's ministry (3:7). This power helps us defeat Satan in battle (6:10-11). How do we gain access to this power? We gain power in prayer. If you want power to live, make prayer a greater priority. When you pray, you will experience God's renovating power.

Paul is praying for the impossible. You and I can never know fully the measure of Christ's love for us.

We can never know completely what is the breadth, the length, and depth and height.

But we can catch glimpses of these as we contemplate Christ's death on the cross. D.L. Moody said, "I know of no truth in the whole Bible that ought to come home to us with such power and tenderness as that of the love of God."

v 19... Paul struggles for us to know the unknowable. Christ's love is unfathomable. Believers cannot rationally explain Christ's love; they can only know it by experiencing it. This knowledge requires a continuous growing experience.

The fullness of God is fully expressed only in Christ (Colossians 2:9-10)...

9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over
all rule and authority¹²³

We must appropriate His presence and power through faith and prayer as we daily live for Him. The ultimate goal is for believers to become like Christ, so filled with Christ that He is seen in us.

vv 20-21... A doxology of praise

As Paul contemplates the wonders he has been writing about, he breaks into a hymn of praise.

In v 20 Paul uses three superlatives to drive home his point. **exceeding abundantly above** everything we would dare to ask, think or imagine.

To the unfathomable depths of Christ's love is added the exceeding abundance of His power.

Believers can claim Christ's great love and know that His power works in us through the Holy Spirit.

Two other doxologies are:

Romans 16:25... Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has

¹²³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 2:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

been kept secret for long ages past¹²⁴

Jude 24... Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy¹²⁵

Unto him *be* glory... God alone deserves glory for He alone is glorious.

glory refers to the wonderful and awe-inspiring but indescribable presence of God Himself. Glory is given to God in the church.

The ability to give glory to God comes only by Christ Jesus. This glory will be made known to all generations, forever and ever.

This doxology—prayer of praise to God—ends part 1 of Ephesians.

In the first section (chapters 1-3) Paul described the timeless role of the church. In part 2 (chapters 4-6) he will explain how we should live. He has built a doctrinal foundation; now he will follow with practical applications of the truths he has presented.

¹²⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 16:25 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹²⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jud 24 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).