

Ephesians chapter 4

At chapter 4 Paul shifts the focus from doctrine to very practical instruction. There is doctrine taught in chapters 4-6, but the main focus is on practical helps for Christian living. Paul speaks here of unity, especially as it relates to the church.

God's answer to the disharmony of the world is Christ. All men become one in unity as members of Christ's body the church.

The church is to function in the world to witness to God's love for men and to proclaim the reconciliation which is offered to all. The church is not the mediator of salvation. She is not the savior of the world. She knows and makes known the savior and salvation.

The task of the church is one of unity. She must exemplify through her members the power and glory of the grace of God.

Each member of the body of Christ must live faithfully with this grand result in view. How do we do?

List some practical ways you and I as members of Christ's body can work for unity.

Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23):

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control

Phil. 2:2-10

Rom. 12

1 Peter 3:8-9

Col. 3

v 1... Paul repeats the fact that he is now the prisoner of the Lord (cf 3:1).

He wants his readers to reflect on their present way of living.

He exhorts us to "walk worthy of the vocation to which we have been called".

walk speaks of the way one conducts their life.

Here Paul calls for us to live in a way that reflects our vocation or calling.

NAS translates, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called¹.

This does not refer to the "call" to ministry.

Moody says, "It is a call that comes to all Christians by the sole fact that they are Christians."

We might think of "conversion" as approximating the idea behind the word "calling".

"Conversion" speaks of the human side in the great change in one's life. calling speaks of the divine side.

The Beacon Bible Commentary says,

The thrust of the verse is simply that they have been graciously invited into a new relationship with God and have not yet entered into all of its benefits. They are under obligation to continue this walk with God and to live out that "call" in such a way as to bring honor to the name of him to whom they belong by promoting peace among men.

In v 2 Paul lists four graces of unity.

The worthy walk which provides the basis of unity evidences itself in at least four graces or virtues:

lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearing one another in love.

These graces are not natural for us. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit to Christ's followers.

Gal. 5:22-23:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²

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

²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ga 5:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The Christian is called to conduct his/her life in conformity to the image of Christ. **lowliness** is translated as "humility".

The Beacon Bible Commentary... "Lowliness is a thankful sense of dependence upon God, and is the opposite of pride and conceit.

Barclay says that every word for humility in Greek has some suggestion of meanness attached to it. Christianity actually coined the word as a good virtue.

The Greek used the word with adjectives that mean slavish, ignoble, of no repute, cringing. In the days before Christ humility was looked on as a cowering, cringing, servile, ignoble quality.

(ignoble)... not noble in birth or position; of low origin or humble condition, dishonorable, base, mean.

Barclay says Christian humility comes from "self-knowledge". It is the virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness in consequence of the truest knowledge of himself.

"To face oneself is the most humiliating thing in the world."

"True humility comes when we face ourselves and see our weakness, our selfishness, our failure in work, in personal relationships and in achievement.

"Christian humility comes from setting life beside the life of Christ and in the light of the demands of God."

A person may think he is something of a scholar till he picks up one of the books of the great scholar.

A man may think himself a fine preacher till he hears one of the princes of the pulpit. It depends on what we compare ourselves to.

The Christian standard is Jesus Christ and the demands of God's perfection—and against that standard there is no room for pride.

Another way of thinking about humility is for one to have a constant sense of one's own "creatureliness". We are creatures, absolutely dependant on God, and for the creature there can be nothing but humility in the presence of the creator.

lowliness is a thankful sense of dependence upon God, and is the opposite of pride and conceit. The posture of humility is that of a man looking upward.

The second virtue Paul lists is **meeekness**, also translated **gentleness** (NASB).

Aristotle defined meekness as "the mean between two extremes".

...the mean between being too angry and never being angry at all.

The man who is "meek" or "gentle" is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.

meekness also speaks of an animal which has been trained and domesticated until it is completely under control.

The meek or gentle man is the man who has every instinct and passion under control. It would not be right to say such a man is entirely self-controlled, for such self-control is beyond human power. It would be right to say such a man is God-controlled.

meekness is that "unresisting, uncomplaining disposition of mind which enables us to bear without irritation or resentment the faults and injuries of others".

Jesus is our supreme example of meekness.

Third Paul lists longsuffering or patience.

The Greek describes the spirit which never gives in and which, because it endures to the end will reap the reward.

A Jewish writer used the word to describe the Romans who were unconquerable; they might lose a battle but never a war.

In the greatest disaster it never occurred to them to admit defeat.

Christian patience is the spirit which never admits defeat, which will not be broken by any misfortune or suffering, by any disappointment or discouragement, but which persists to the end. Longsuffering also defines the characteristic that has patience with men.

This defines the person who has the power to take revenge but does not.

It describes the spirit which refuses to retaliate.

An imperfect analogy:

We may see a puppy and a very large dog together. The puppy yaps and worries the big dog. He bites him. All the time the big dog, who could annihilate the puppy with one snap of his teeth, bears the puppy's impertinence with a forbearing dignity.

longsuffering is the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint. It is the spirit which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without irritation.

Boy, do I need help with that one! The word is used to describe God's feelings toward us. If God had been a man He would long since have wiped out the world because of its disobedience.

The Christian must have the patience towards his fellow men which God has shown to him.

Moule defines longsuffering as "the enduring, unwearable spirit which knows how to outlast pain or provocation in a strength learned only at the redeemer's feet.

The opposite of this virtue is "the short temper". It is interesting that the Latin Vulgate on which the KJ relies heavily translated longsuffering with the Latin *longanimitas*. The Latin word "longanimity" was roughly equivalent to our word "magnanimity".

The dictionary defines magnanimity as "the quality of being magnanimous".

Magnanimous is defined as "noble of mind and heart, generous in forgiving, above revenge or resentment".

"Longanimity" would be the disposition of patiently enduring hardship and abuse with the strong hope of improvement.

Rom. 2:4:

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?³

1 Peter 3:20:

who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*.⁴

forbearing one another in love is the practical outworking of a patient spirit in which we go on loving and respecting others despite their faults and weaknesses.

It is interesting to note that Paul is speaking here not to men in general but to we who are a part of Christ's body the church.

Paul is concerned that we handle the inevitable tensions and conflicts which arise in the church in a Christlike spirit and way.

Beare observes, "The harmony within the fellowship, which is the harbinger of universal harmony, can be maintained only in the measure that all Christians practice the virtues here mentioned".

³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 2:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 3:20 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

love is a uniquely Christian word. The Greek word is *agape*. This word wasn't used much before Christianity used it to describe Godlike unending love. The Greeks had four words for love.

Eros is the love between a man and a maid. It is a sexual love.

Philia describes the warm affection which exists between those who are very near and very dear to each other.

Interesting we use the word "Philadelphia" to describe the "City of Brotherly Love". Unfortunately for anyone who lived there it is anything but a city of brotherly love.

Barb and I lived there before we were married. She was a student nurse. I was a student X-ray technician. It wasn't unusual for murders to occur within blocks of the hospital we were training at.

I digress, I was listing the 4 Greek words for love –

Eros is sexual love

Philia is brotherly love

Storge is the word used to describe family affection.

Agape is translated love or charity in the KJ Bible.

This is the love Paul writes about in 1 Cor. 13.

4 Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant,

5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,

6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away.⁵

It is a love not only of the emotions but of the will.

Barclay comments,

It is the ability to retain unconquerable good will to the unlovely and the unlovable, towards those who do not love us, and even towards whom we do not like. "Agape" is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian

⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 13:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek the highest good of every man no matter what he may be.

v 3... Christians have a unity-keeping responsibility. Paul reminds us that we must "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit".

Endeavouring is better translated with a stronger word like "giving diligence" or "striving earnestly", "spare no effort" (NEB), being diligent (NASB).

Paul exhorts us to give serious attention to preserving the oneness of the church.

William Barclay comments:

These four great virtues of the Christian life—humility, gentleness, patience, love—issue in a fifth, *peace*. It is Paul's advice and urgent request that the people to whom he is writing should eagerly preserve "the sacred oneness" which should characterize the true Church.

Peace may be defined as *right relationships between man and man*. This oneness, this peace, these right relationships can be preserved only in one way. Every one of the four great Christian virtues depends on the obliteration of self. So long as self is at the centre of things, this oneness can never fully exist. In a society where self predominates, men cannot be other than a disintegrated collection of individualistic and warring units. But when self dies and Christ springs to life within our hearts, then comes the peace, the oneness, which is the great hall-mark of the true Church.

George Herbert, "He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself".

The Life Application Bible Commentary...

WHAT A VIRTUE!

Perhaps no other virtue seems so foreign to our culture as patience. Be honest: Do you ever stand by the microwave, tapping your foot impatiently as you wait for it to heat something? practically pull the paper out of the fax machine because it is working too slowly? Swerve between lanes on the

highway in order to get ahead a few car lengths? If these aren't your particular problem areas, do you struggle with impatience in other areas? If you answered no to all the above, give yourself and *F*, for lying. We live in an instant world, and we expect instant results and instant gratification. Yet Paul instructs us to be patient with one another. How? We can start by reflecting on the patience God shows toward us—boundless, unmerited, compassionate—and then letting the same grace flow through us to others.

"We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians." - Francis Shaeffer

vv 4-6... Paul lists seven things which are the essence of the church's oneness. The repetition of the word **one** makes it emphatic. "Christ cannot be divided" "Faith cannot be rent".

There are three groups in the seven basic unities.

First: one body, one Spirit, one hope

The one body is vitalized by the one Spirit and moves progressively towards the one hope.

Second: one Lord, one faith, one baptism

Loyalty to the one Lord gives birth to the one faith and is pointed out particularly by the "one act of baptism".

Last is the one God and Father of all.

Every other unity exists and is sustained because of the gracious action of God. one body... the church, the body of Christ... previously mentioned in ch. 1:23 and ch. 2:16.

Not a Jewish church and a Gentile church, but one church (body) composed of both Jew

and gentile.

Through the power of the cross there can be both a vertical relationship of peace with God and a horizontal relationship of peace with all men.

Paul speaks of this in chapter 2:16.

one Spirit... the Holy Spirit—members are drawn, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is the special seal of God upon members of the church. The grieving of the Holy Spirit is a disastrous thing. Then love, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit disappear, and with them one of the most precious Christian unities.

The Greek word *pneuma* means both Spirit and breath.

The body is dead without breath. The vitalizing breath of the church (Christ's body) is the Spirit. There can be no church without the Spirit.

one hope... Paul has spoken of hope before. His readers were once strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope (2:12). But now they have the Holy Spirit who is a guarantee or foretaste of hope (1:12-14).

Paul prays for a fuller understanding of their hope (1:18).

The hope of our calling is the hope of sharing the glory of our master in the home which He has prepared for us.

1 John 3:2... Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.⁶

John 14:1-3:

- 1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
- 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
- 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.⁷

This hope is not like our use of the word.

"I sure hope it happens, but I don't know if it will."

Christian hope is an expectation of confidence, a certainty, a trust in it happening (not a

⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Jn 3:2 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

hoping or a wishing, but a confidence in its happening).

We are assured of the coming of our great God and savior the Lord Jesus Christ. We are assured of the home that has been prepared for us.

one Lord... The second group begins here. The earliest creedal statement of the church was "Jesus is Lord". See Phil. 2:11... and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father⁸

Rom. 10:9-12:

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him⁹

Christ is Lord of both Jew and Greek.

As master, Christ commands our supreme worship and service, thus shutting out any other loyalties, whether to man or to fabricated, illusionary Gods.

Christ the lord is head of the church.

The Greeks used *kurios* (Lord) to designate a master as opposed to a servant or slave.

It was also the regular designation for the Roman emperor.

Peter didn't understand that you don't use "Lord" and "no" in the same sentence.

Once you say "Lord" He is the boss. He is in charge.

Peter said in John 13, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?... Thou shalt never wash my feet.¹⁰

In Acts 10, v 14 Peter said, Not so, Lord.

Contradiction. You don't say "not so" to the Lord—If He is Lord He demands our faithful obedience.

⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 14:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 2:11 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 10:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Jn 13:6 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

one faith

This may refer to "the act of believing" or "to that in which one believes".

It may describe "the acceptance of Christ as one's personal savior"

or "the faith which was once delivered to the saints"

Since Paul has just mentioned the Lordship of Jesus, he may have in mind the experience of believing in Christ for salvation.

The common joy of forgiveness and adoption also provide a basis for unity in the church.

This "one faith" alone saves; this faith is the one and only way (John 14:6). This one faith binds all believers together.

New Testament... "faith" usually means the complete commitment of the Christian to Jesus Christ.

one baptism

The act of believing is manifested through the act of baptism.

Jesus links faith/baptism in Mark 16:16... **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**¹¹ ...and in Colossians 2:12... buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.¹²

Acts 16:27-33

Baptism replaced circumcision as the initiation rite of the New Order.

Paul here speaks of water baptism.

Christians need only one baptism by which they publicly acknowledge their one faith in one Lord.

Paul writes in 1 Cor. 12:13, For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.¹³

This expression of faith through baptism brings unity to believers.

The early church practiced adult believer's baptism. Many men and women were coming directly from heathenism into faith in Christ.

Believer's baptism implies the person understands and believes when he is baptized.

A Roman soldier needed to take the oath of allegiance to the emperor in order to join the army. Similarly, the way of public confession of Jesus Christ was the only way to enter the

¹¹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Mk 16:16 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

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

Christian church.

v 6...one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all¹⁴ (NRSV)

Paul's focus is on God the Father. In the first century there were many gods. Paul says there is one God. He alone deserves our worship and praise.

Father of all speaks of the fact that He is the creator.

God is sovereign and completely controls His creation.

"God is the ruler over all of His creation. God is through all, actively present and pervasive in every part of His creation. "God in all"... He lives within His people.

Some words about God:

trans-scend-ent

[tran-sen-duhnt]

b. transcending experience; not realizable in human experience.

adjective:

1. going beyond ordinary limits; surpassing; exceeding.

c. (in modern realism) referred to, but beyond, direct apprehension; outside consciousness.

2. superior or supreme.

per·va·sive

[per-vey-siv]

3. Theology. (of the Deity)

transcending the universe, time, etc.

adjective:

4. Philosophy:

spread throughout: The corruption is so pervasive that it is accepted as the way to do business.

a. above all possible modes of the infinite.

God is everywhere.

above all philosophy.

¹³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 12:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁴The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version, Eph 4:6 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

pan·the·ism

[pan-thee-iz-uhm]

noun:

1. the doctrine that God is the transcendent reality of which the material universe and human beings are only manifestations: it involves a denial of God's personality and expresses a tendency to identify God and nature.

2. any religious belief or philosophical doctrine that identifies God with the universe.

u·ni·ver·sal·ism

[yoo-nuh-vur-suh-liz-uhm]

noun:

1. universal character; universality.

2. a universal range of knowledge, interests, or activities.

3. (initial capital letter) the doctrine that emphasizes the universal fatherhood of God and the final salvation of all souls.

om·nip·o·tent

[om-nip-uh-tuhnt]

adjective:

1. almighty or infinite in power, as God.

2. having very great or unlimited authority or power.

noun:

3. an omnipotent being.

4. the Omnipotent, God.

omnipresent

om·ni·pres·ent

[om-nuh-prez-uhnt]

adjective:

present everywhere at the same time:
the omnipresent God.

om-nis-cient

[om-nish-uhnt]

adjective:

1. having complete or unlimited knowledge, awareness, or understanding; perceiving all things.

noun:

2. an omniscient being.

3. the Omniscient, God.

vv 7-10

Paul has listed some of the qualities of the members of Christ's church. Now he will describe their functions in the church.

In v 7 he lays down an essential truth:

That every good thing a man has is the gift of the grace of Christ.

NIV v 7... "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

The church is one unified body, but each member is given different unique gifts. All are important. God did not make us as photocopies of each other. Instead each believer is given grace (one or more gifts) as Christ apportioned it. In His wisdom God gave different gifts to different people. No One has all the gifts. We all need each other as we seek to accomplish the work of the kingdom.

Bishop J. C. Ryle says:

The church of Christ needs servants of all kinds, and instruments of every sort: penknives as well as swords, axes as well as hammers, chisels as well as saws, Marthas as well as Marys, Peters as well as Johns.

Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18 with an interesting difference.

The psalm describes a conquering king. He ascends the steep road of Mount Zion to the holy city. He brings his prisoners chained behind him / Now comes the difference / The psalm speaks of the king receiving gifts. Paul changes it to read GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.

In the OT the conquering king demanded and received gifts from men: In the NT the conquering Christ offers and gives gifts to men.

Then Paul changes thoughts at a word.

The word ASCENDED triggers thoughts of Jesus. Jesus descended into this world when he entered it as a man. Jesus ascended from this world when he left it to return to his glory. Paul says the Christ who ascended and the Christ who descended are the same person.

This means that the Christ of glory is the same as the Jesus who trod the earth.

Still He loves all men.

Still He seeks the sinner.

Still He heals the sufferer.

Still He comforts the sorrowing.

Still He is the friend of outcast men and women.

A Scottish paraphrase says,

Though now ascended upon high
He bends on earth a brother's eye
Partaker of the human name.
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our fellow sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, his agonies and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The man of sorrows has a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief

Now Paul has another thought... v 10... Jesus ascended up on high, but not to leave the world. He ascended to fill the world with His presence. In His flesh He could only be one place at one time. He was limited by His body.

But when he laid the body aside and returned to glory, He was able to be everywhere in all the world through His Spirit. To Paul the ascension of Jesus meant not a Christ-deserted but a Christ-filled world.

v 11... The gifts classified

In First Cor. 12:28 Paul gives another list.

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.¹⁵

This list is somewhat longer. In this list Paul is apparently thinking of those offices necessary for the expansion and nurture of the church.

Christ gave the church:

Apostles: These are the foundation of the church. Included are the eleven men Jesus called. Plus others who are called apostles:

Paul Rom. 1:1

Matthias Acts 1:26

Barnabas Acts 14:14

Jesus' brother James Galatians 1:19

Silas 1 Thess. 2:6

Andronicus and Junia... Romans 16:7

Qualifications seem to include:

To have seen the risen Lord.

To have been sent by Him to preach the gospel.

To be working on behalf of the kingdom, building its foundation (Note Eph. 2:20)

Signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12)

¹⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 12:28 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Prophets are listed next. Those who exhort, encourage and strengthen God's people. Sometimes to "forth-tell the Word of God"

Very like today's preachers.

Sometimes they foretold future events.

Acts 11:27-28:

27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

28 One of them named Agabus stood up and *began* to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign* of Claudius.¹⁶

Acts 21:9-11:

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.

10 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"¹⁷

Often the prophets were itinerant wanderers throughout the church.

Often their message was not the result of thought and study but the direct result of the Holy Spirit.

They often had no homes, families or means of support. They went from church to church proclaiming the will of God as God had told it to them.

The prophets were the first to vanish.

In times of persecution they were first to suffer. They had nowhere to hide. They were often first to die for their faith.

They became a problem. As the church developed local ministers and administrators were put in place. They often resented the traveling prophets who showed up and often disturbed

¹⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 11:26 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

their people. Inevitably bit by bit the prophets faded out.

The office of prophet was often abused.

There was a certain prestige about the office. Some made it an excuse for living a very comfortable life at the expense of the congregations whom they visited.

The *didache*, the teaching of the twelve apostles, dates to about AD 100.

It says one or two days with a congregation, but if he wishes to stay three days he is a false prophet.

If a wandering prophet in a moment of alleged inspiration demands money or a meal, he is a false prophet.

So we see that there were those who abused the office, and there were rules governing their conduct.

As abuses became more widespread the prophets became less and less numerous until finally they ceased to be.

Evangelists were itinerant ministers who went from place to place to win unbelievers and to strengthen the church.

2 Tim. 4:5... But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.¹⁸

Often they were the first to start a church in a particular area.

They were like missionaries today. Often they lacked the prestige and authority of the apostles who had seen the Lord. They took the good news to a world which had never heard it.

Pastors and teachers... This probably speaks of one office, describing one set of people. Barclay says they had the most important job of all. They were not wanderers, but were settled and permanent in the work of one congregation. Barclay says they had a triple function.

(a) They were teachers.

The early church had few books. It would be almost 1,400 years before printing was invented. Every book had to be written by hand. A book the size of the New Testament

¹⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ac 21:8 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Ti 4:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

would cost as much as a whole year's wages for a working man.

So the story of Jesus was transmitted manually by word of mouth. Teachers had the awesome responsibility of being the repositories of the gospel story. It was their job to know and pass along the story of the life of Jesus.

(b) These teachers had to open out the Christian faith to new believers.

People were coming into the church straight from heathenism. They knew literally nothing about Christianity except that Jesus Christ had laid hold upon their hearts.

These teachers had to explain the great doctrines of the Christian faith to them.

We owe these teachers a great debt. It is because of them that the Christian faith remained pure and was not distorted as it was handed down to us.

(c) These teachers were also pastors.

Pastor is Latin for shepherd.

The Christian church was like a tiny island in a vast sea of paganism. The people who came into it were in constant danger of slipping back into heathenism. The duty of the pastor was to shepherd his flock and keep it safe.

The word "shepherd" is an old and honorable one. To the first-century peasant in Bible lands there was no worse tragedy than "sheep without a shepherd". It was the shepherd who literally was life to the sheep. Without him they could not live. The shepherd cared for the flock. Every day each sheep would be summoned to his side by name. The shepherd would lovingly inspect the sheep's eyes, ears, nose, coat and limbs. He would lovingly commune with each animal, anoint wounds with oil, taking off ticks or parasites and generally ensuring that the animal was well and sound. The shepherd would whisper sweet things into the sheep's ears. Then he would send it happily back to the flock.

The shepherd sought out lush grazing places, carefully removed poison plants and led the sheep to quiet waters. Sheep are terrified by swiftly moving water.

He would lead them to shelter and safety at night. If one went astray he went after it till he found it. If need be he defended the flock from human and animal predators. He, if necessary, would gladly lay down his life for his sheep.

Barclay says,

The shepherd of the flock of God is the man who bears God's people on his heart, who feeds them with the truth, who seeks them when they stray away, and who defends them from all that would hurt their faith. And the duty is laid on every Christian that he should be a shepherd to all his brethren.

This describes the pastor's role and responsibility.

Someone has suggested that the first three offices—apostles, prophets and evangelists—apply to the church universal, while the last—pastor, teacher—apply especially to the local church.

Bruce claims that "pastor, teacher" is one office and applies to one class of men. We know that one of the pastor's responsibilities is to teach.

It could also be that **teachers** represents a class of somewhat lesser responsibility than the pastors, but who nevertheless hold a special place in the church.

All five ministries are Spirit-bestowed and given by Christ to His church.

vv 12-16... The purpose of the gifts

The Beacon Bible Commentary points out four dimensions of the divine purpose of the gifts.

(a) First the ministries are to edify or build up the body of Christ.

v 12... This verse comes across better in the newer translations.

The threefold **for** in the KJ gives the impression that a threefold purpose is being expressed.

In the original the stress falls on the last one.

The idea is the 5 offices are given to the church to equip the saints to work to build up the body of Christ.

The NASB translates not "for", "for", "for", but for, for, to... for the equipping of the

saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ¹⁹.

Clearly what Paul is saying is that the pastor teacher is to teach the saints how to build up the body of Christ.

You and I as saints are to be equipped to do works of service, to build each other up.

So often we stand that on its head and expect the pastor to do the building up which clearly we are told to do.

The word Paul uses translated **perfecting** is an interesting one. It means to "adapt or equip".

The Greeks used it in surgery for setting a broken bone or putting a joint back in place.

In politics it describes the bringing together of opposing factions.

It described the mending of nets and the disciplining of an offender till he was fit to take his place in the fellowship again.

The aim is that there be an active and fruitful labor for the Lord with the result that the church will be built up.

(b) Second, these ministerial gifts are given to "foster maturity".

v 13 looks back to v 12 to offer further explanation of the building up of the church.

Paul uses three phrases:

- (1) in the unity of the faith (the means of maturity)
- (2) unto a perfect man (the reality of maturity)
- (3) unto a perfect man (the measure of maturity)

A better translation is (NEB), "So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the son of God—to mature manhood measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ."

the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God²⁰

Unity is the gift of the Spirit... v 3. But faith and knowledge are required to receive it.

unto a perfect man refers to that level of maturity in which God's power is fully manifested in "holiness and righteousness". This will be attained in its fullness only when we

¹⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 4:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

are glorified.

the stature of the fulness of Christ is the yardstick for determining Christian maturity.

The church becomes adult, a perfect man, when it reaches the fullness of Christ. This is the "sum of the qualities which make Christ what He is".

Our goal should be to "be like Christ". As we grow in maturity we grown more like Him. Growth toward maturity is only the growth of individual believers. It is we who must press toward the fulness of Christ.

(c) These ministries are given to insure 'stability' in the church in the face of divergent doctrines and the deceit of men.

One of the clear evidences of immaturity is the inability to withstand intelligently and spiritually the claims of false doctrines.

Paul uses picturesque words for tossed to and fro (The words occur only here in the NT). It means "billow or wave", literally "tossed by waves". Immature Christians are like boats tossed in the storm.

carried about has the idea of violent swinging about. The (NEB) translates "tossed by the waves and whirled about by every fresh gust of teaching".

Beacon Commentary: "The task of ministers is to lay a heavy hand on the rudder of the church, to hold it steady, and to provide doctrinal ballast through a faithful preaching and teaching ministry."

Persons who introduce false teachings not only deceive themselves, but they "lie in wait to deceive others." Another translation, "makes use of every shifting device to mislead" (Weymouth).

These deceivers employ sleight, lit. dice playing.

It came to mean trickery.

Moule states the warning of Paul this way:

For alas, there are those around you who not only do lead you astray, but mean to do it, laying deliberate traps, and arranging well drawn methods, on

²⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 4:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

purpose to guide you away from the Christ they do not love.

(False teachers do not love Christ)

To guard against the subtlety of heresy requires a growing faith and an increasing knowledge of the truth.

Ministers must provide the opportunity for such maturation and thus ensure stability in the church.

(d) Last, these ministries are given to make possible a growth into Christ.

speaking the truth... Paul is thinking of more than talking. He is thinking in terms of living and acting. Dale comments, "Truth was to be the life of all Christians. The revelation of God in Christ was to penetrate and inspire their whole activity. Truth was to become incarnate, personal in them. They were not only to speak, they were to live it."

And this living is to be in love.

Some truth can be harshly confessed and lived. The Christian must always express himself in love.

Some witness is not winsome.

Angle C.D.L... (lost)... said, "need to be ready"

The result will be the progressive movement toward the perfection of Jesus Christ, head of the church.

Note that this is essentially the same as the truth expressed in v 13. This positive action is the best defense against the effects of the error described in v 14.

In v 16 Paul returns to the analogy of the body to emphasize the unity which Christ the head brings to the church.

He is thinking of the human body with its parts...

fitly joined together and compacted

NEB... "bonded and knit together"

NASB... being fitted and held together

ESV... "joined and held together"

joint apparently refers to the ligaments by which various parts of the body are connected. according to the effectual working in the measure of every part²¹

ESV... "when each part is working properly"

Harmony prevails and growth is assured.

Christ is the center and source of all spiritual life.

He gives cohesion and power for regrowth.

This growth results in the edifying or building up of the church in love (See 1:4, 3:17, 4:2, 5:2).

To summarize: Real unity lies within and is the result of a healthy organism created by the Spirit. It is not the work of men. When this unity prevails, participated in by each member and encouraged by faithful ministers, the church grows in symmetry and beauty. This should amaze the unbelievers.

The Christian's ultimate goal is suggested in v 13. **the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**²²

v 17... therefore resumes the thought begun in 1-3.

This **I say and testify** parallels the words "I beseech you" in v 1. The two words are accurately translated in the KJ. Their real meaning does not show through in English.

The meaning is somewhat captured by the RSV, **Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord.**

Bruce's paraphrase reads, "This is what I mean; this is what I urge upon you in the Lord's name"

NIV... "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord"... "in the Lord", in the Lord, "on the Lord's authority"... Paul is identifying himself with the savior, and his exhortation is precisely what Christ would give.

Paul then lists a negative injunction... **walk not as other Gentiles walk... Conduct yourself in a way that will show the real difference that exists between you and your pagan neighbors.**

Then the apostle plunges into a capsule description of the pagan way of life, the life apart from Christ.

the vanity of their mind

mind refers to all aspects of man's being which enable him to recognize moral values and spiritual truth.

²¹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 4:16 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Rom. 1:28... And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper²³

Rom. 7:23... but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members²⁴

1 Tim. 6:5... and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.²⁵

vanity means "purposelessness", "uselessness" or "emptiness".

In context it takes on the connotation of futility, delusion and utter moral failure.

Without the illumination of God's Spirit, man's path leads only to that which frustrates, because he is given over to things devoid of worth or reality.

v 18... Having the understanding darkened,

Here Paul explains what the vanity in v 17 means. It includes the darkening of the understanding.

This is the inward darkness caused by unbelief.

This darkness is contrasted with the inner illumination that Paul prays for in 1:18... "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened"

Paul says of the Gentiles in Romans 1:21, their foolish heart was darkened.

being alienated from the life of God

The present state of man is the result not just of separation from God but of active alienation.

Rom. 5:10 says, For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God²⁶.

Colossians 1:21 says, And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds...²⁷

Estrangement (separation) from God means spiritual death because God is the only source of life for mankind. This state of death and futility the Gentiles are in is not accidental. It is the result of ignorance and blindness of their hearts.

ignorance seems to be that for which the person is responsible.

blindness of their hearts. (the hardness or callousness of their heart) indicates a

²²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 4:13 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

²³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 1:28 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 7:23 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Ti 6:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁶The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Ro 5:10 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

²⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

deliberate setting of the will against every impulse until men become past feeling.

The words used here describe the callous created by constant contact with a foreign substance which produces an insensitivity to pain.

So incessant sinning brings about a hardening of the heart.

The word Paul uses to describe the hardness of their heart is grim and terrifying.

Poros originally meant a stone which was harder than marble.

It came to have certain medical uses.

It was used for the chalk stone which can form in a joint and completely paralyze action.

It was used to describe the callous that forms when a bone that has been broken is reset.

A callous forms which is harder than the bone itself.

Finally the word came to mean the loss of all power of sensation; it described something which had become so hardened, so petrified that it had no power to feel at all.

The terror of sin is its petrifying effect.

No man becomes a great sinner all at once. At first he regards sin with horror. There is remorse and regret. If he continues to sin there comes a time when he loses all sensation and can do the most shameful things without any feeling at all. His conscience is petrified.

v 19... being past feeling

Moral insensibility produces shamelessness, haughtiness before God and man and living without the restraint of conscience.

This results in moral irresponsibility in which sin without shame runs rampant through the life. Paul uses two terrible words to describe the heathen way of life.

The word translated *lasciviousness* in the KJ...

The Greek word describes the man who makes no effort to hide his sin. He does not care how much he shocks public opinion so long as he can gratify his desires. Sin can get such a grip on a man that he is lost to decency and shame.

Barclay translates "lasciviousness" as "shameless wantonness".

The words translated *uncleanness with greediness* are translated by Barclay as "arrogant greediness", "as the accursed love of possessing", as "the unlawful desire for the things which belong to others". It has been defined as the spirit in which a man is always ready to sacrifice his neighbor to his own desires.

In the heathen world Paul saw three terrible things. He saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning; he saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and decency forgotten; he saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as

their desires were satisfied.

Salmond paraphrases the verse as follows: "They gave themselves willfully over to wanton sensuality in order that they might practice every kind of uncleanness and do that with unbridled greedy desire"

v 20... But introduces the kind of life opposite to the heathen life Paul has been describing.

The conjunction distinguishes sharply the description of the old and new life.

ye have not so learned Christ means more than to just know about Christ. It includes that but also means knowing Christ as one's own personal savior.

Paul uses an equivalent phrase in Phil. 3:9-10, And be found in him... That I may know him²⁸. This "learning Christ" includes accepting Him as Messiah and adopting His way of living. Blaikie comments, "He that learns Christ appropriates Him in the efficacy of His atonement, in the power of His Spirit, in the force of His lessons, and in the Spirit of His influence, and finds the whole to be diametrically opposite to the Godless world."

v 21... If introduces a parenthetical, different thought. It does not introduce any doubt about the content. The verse suggests that Christ was the subject and the sum of the preaching which they have heard.

They not only heard Him but they have been taught by Him.

One of the commentaries summarizes, "Christ was the message which had been brought to them; he was the school in which they had been taught. He was the lesson which they had learnt."

the truth is in Jesus... Paul rarely uses Jesus' name alone. Perhaps it is a theological thrust against the Gnostic teachers who taught that Jesus "heavenly Christ" was separated from His humanity.

vv 22, 23, 24 ask us to do something.

vv 22 & 24 use the image of stripping off old clothing and putting on new ones.

v 23 asks us to renew our minds.

v 22... Paul has been talking about the old heathen kind of life they had lived. Now he says strip off that life like you would put off an old suit of clothes. The implication is a change of character.

conversation in (KJ) always means conduct or way or manner of life.

which is corrupt... The verb form "is being corrupted" implies a continual process of

²⁸The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Php 3:9 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

ongoing corruption. To put off this old corrupted self will take conscious, daily decisions to remove anything that supports or feeds the old self's desires.

It has been said about forgiveness, "It is never too early to begin the daily task of beating back the past".

The verb put off is in the aorist tense, indicating a once and for all decision to accept Christ's gift of salvation and cleansing. Although this putting off of the old takes place at conversion, we must drive out the remaining parts of it day by day.

Rom. 6:6... knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin²⁹

Colossians 3:5-10:

- 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.
 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,
 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
 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 him³⁰

James 1:21... Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.³¹

vv 23-24... We cannot put off without "putting on". Jesus talks about seven spirits who are worse than before in Matt. 12:43-45...

- 43 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*.
 44 "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order.
 45 "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of

²⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 6:6 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 3:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jas 1:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."³²

Believers must "put off" the old self. Then they should follow with two specific actions.

- (1) To be renewed in the Spirit of your minds. And...
- (2) To clothe yourselves with the new self.

"to clothe" again is a once and done action. The believer doesn't keep switching back and forth between old and new clothing. The old clothing must be thrown away. Paul knows there will be a continuous struggle.

Romans 7:14-25:

- 14** For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.
- 15** For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate.
- 16** But if I do the very thing I do not want to *do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good.
- 17** So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.
- 18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.
- 19** For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.
- 20** But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.
- 21** I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
- 22** For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
- 23** but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
- 24** Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
- 25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.³³

vv 25-32 (Barclay)... Paul has just told us that when a man becomes a Christian he must

³²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Mt 12:42 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 7:14 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

put off his old life like a coat for which he has no further use.

Now he lists some things which must be banished from the Christian life.

(1) Paul says we must have no more falsehood.

There are more than one kind of lies.

There is the lie of speech.

...the deliberate falsifying of the facts.

To tell the truth demands a deliberate effort.

It is easy to stretch the truth (fishermen!)... to shade the truth... to make the best presentation. We need to be careful to be sure our facts are correct.

There is the lie of silence.

Someone speaks of "the menace of things unsaid".

Sometimes it is possible to by silence give approval to something one knows is wrong.

Maybe we withhold warning or rebuke when we know we should give it.

Paul tells us why we should tell the truth.

We are all members of the same body.

We live in safety only as long as our senses and nerves pass true messages to the brain.

We are all part of one body. That body can only function properly when we speak the truth.

In v 26 Paul tells us we should be angry with the right kind of anger.

Bad temper and irritability are without defense, but there is a righteous anger.

Think of the blazing anger of Wilberforce against the slave trade.

...the anger over labor conditions in the nineteenth century.

...the anger over the use of alcohol.

At times Jesus was terribly and majestically angry. He was angry when religious people and systems took advantage of and hurt the disadvantaged.

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I will shake the world."

Barclay says, "The anger which is selfish and uncontrolled is a sinful and hurting thing, which must be banished from the Christian life. But the selfless anger which is disciplined into the service of Christ and of our fellow men is one of the great dynamic forces of the world."

Paul continues in v 26, let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

Deuteronomy tells us that sunset is the time when wrongs should be made right.

Deut. 24:13 & 15:

13 "When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.

15 "You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.³⁴

Anger allowed to smolder over time may eventually burst into flame and give the devil an opportunity, causing us to sin as we become bitter and resentful.

Radio station in Carlisle... smoldered till open door.

James tells us to **Resist the devil.**

The devil can use our anger to destroy our unity and love.

It is so much better to deal with the situation immediately.

Paul's previous admonition to lovingly speak the truth might just solve the problem.

The longer we put off mending a quarrel, the less likely we will mend it.

The only way to deal with trouble is to do it at once.

The longer it is left, the more bitter it will grow.

Some of us know of grudges and feuds which have gone on for years. This is a disgrace to the love and forgiveness of Christ and should never happen.

Barclay says, "The longer it is left to flourish, the more bitter it will grow. If we have been in the wrong, we must pray to God to give us grace to admit that it was so; and even if we have been right, we must pray to God to give us the graciousness which will enable us to take the first step to put matters right."

The NIV of v 27 is, "and do not give the devil a foothold."

³⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Dt 24:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The NASB... and do not give the devil an opportunity.

An unhealed breach is a magnificent opportunity for the devil to sow dissention.

The Hebrew writer tells us, See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled³⁵. (Heb. 12:15)

There are some interesting scriptures in Deuteronomy.

Moses talking to Israel at Moab says:

Deut. 29:18-21:

18 so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.

19 "It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered *land* with the dry.'

20 "The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

21 "Then the LORD will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law.³⁶

Deut. 32:32-33:

32 "For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,
And from the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of poison,
Their clusters, bitter.

33 "Their wine is the venom of serpents,
And the deadly poison of cobras.³⁷

Barclay suggest another meaning for the phrase "Do not give place to the devil".

The Greek word for devil is also the word for slanderer.

Luther took that to mean, "Give the slanderer no place in your life." Paul may have

³⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Heb 12:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Dt 29:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Dt 32:31 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

wished to say, "Do not slander or give the slanderer place in your life." No one in the world can do more damage than the slanderous tale-bearer.

Barclay says, "There are reputations murdered over teacups every day; and when a man sees a tale-bearer coming, he would do well to shut the door in his face."

v 28 tells us that the man who was a thief should become an honest workman.

Thievery was common in the ancient world. Two places were very bad—the docks and the public baths. These were the clubs of the time. Stealing the belongings of the bathers was one of the most common crimes in any Greek city.

It is interesting that Paul does not say, "Become an honest worker so you can support yourself", but "so you can have to give to those who are needy".

The Christian should not work to amass things but so he can share with those who need.

In v 29 Paul forbids all foul-mouthed speaking; and then states the positive. The Christian should be characterized by words which help his fellow-men.

Moffatt translates Job 4:4, where Eliphaz the Temanite pays Job a tremendous compliment, "Your words, have kept men on their feet."

The NASB translates, Your words have helped the tottering to stand,
And you have strengthened feeble knees.³⁸

Such are the words that every Christian ought to speak.

Do my words help keep men on their feet? Or do they cause them to fall?

It is so easy to use hurtful words, to tear down. Let's build up; let's be encouragers.

v 30 exhorts us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. He is the guide of life. To act contrary to His guidance is to grieve the Spirit and to hurt the heart of God the Father, who through the Spirit sent His Word to us.

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

- By not obeying Him
- By checking Him.
- By speaking evil of Him of His work.

Sealing of the Spirit... See Eph. 1:13.

Ownership, security, identity.

Paul ends with a list of things that must go from life... v 31, and then a summing up of

³⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Job 4:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

some positive virtues in v 32.

v 31... *bitterness*... Greek - long-standing resentment or a spirit that refuses to be reconciled.

Many of us nurse our wrath (hurts) to keep it warm. We brood over the insults and injuries which we have received.

Every Christian should pray for the ability to put those hurts aside... to lay them at the foot of the cross.

So often our problem is we give our hurts to Jesus; but then we rush back and pick them up again.

Holding on to bitterness is like the acid which eats the vessel which contains it.

"It is never too early to begin the task of beating back the past."

"Forgiveness must be fought for and surrendered to daily."

There are outbreaks of passion (Gr. *thumos*), (wrath, KJ) and long-lived anger (Gr. *orgē*) (anger, KJ).

The Greeks defined *thumos* as a fire in straw.

It quickly flares up and quickly dies away. They described *orgē* as habitual anger—The Christian is forbidden both the burst of temper and the long-lived anger.

There is "loud talking" and "insulting language". Barclay says, "Whenever in any discussion or argument we become aware that our voice is raised, it is time to stop."

It would save a great deal of heartbreak in this world if we simply learned to keep our voices down and if, when we had nothing good to say to or about a person, we did not say anything at all. The argument which has to be supported in a shout is no argument; and the dispute which has to be conducted in insults is not an argument but a brawl.

The Life Application Bible Commentary sums up v 31:

- *Bitterness*—a spirit that refuses reconciliation.
- *Rage*—outbursts of anger or quick temper for selfish reasons. This could mean continual and uncontrolled behavior.
- *Anger*—a continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within. This could refer to what is under the surface, while "rage" refers to what bursts out. Anger would destroy harmony and unity among believers.

- *Brawling*—loud self-assertions of angry people determined to make their grievances known.
- *Slander*—destroying another person's good reputation by lying, gossiping, spreading rumors, etc. Malice often manifests itself through slander. This defamation of character destroys human relationships.
- *Malice*—doing evil despite the good that has been received. This word is a general term referring to an evil force that destroys relationships, and it can mean anything from trouble to wickedness. It is a deliberate attempt to harm another person. Thus, *every form of malice* must be destroyed.

Now Paul sums up. We are to be kind. The Greeks said this meant to think as much of our neighbor's affairs as our own.

Kindness means acting charitably and benevolently toward others, as God has done to us. Kindness takes the initiative in responding generously to other's needs.

tender-hearted could be translated "compassionate". It is genuine sensitivity and heartfelt sympathy for the needs of others.

Forgiveness is so important to the Christian. When we begin to understand the great depth of God's forgiveness to us it should cause us to willingly forgive others.

About grieving the Holy Spirit, G. Campbell Morgan says, "How would you like to live with somebody who was everlastingly grieving your heart by his conduct?"

He lives in us! Do we grieve Him by our conduct?

Chapter 5

v 1... The newer translations translate followers as imitators (NKJV, NAS).

Just as children imitate their parents we should be imitators of God.

His love for us led Him to give His Son so we might live.

We imitate God by following His example in Christ, emulating His attributes in our lives.

1 Peter 2:21... For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps³⁹

Matt. 16:24... Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."⁴⁰

The word **be** means "become". Becoming Christlike is a process. Because of our relationship with God through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit we are to become Christlike.

v 2 continues the thought from 5:1.

Paul says we should walk in love. This is God-like *agape* love. We should have that kind of love for others. Christ gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God.

Offering and sacrifice really are the same. Offering usually designates a gift while sacrifice always designates a slain animal as in the OT sacrifices. The sweet-smelling savor or aroma speaks of the acceptability of the sacrifice.

In Gen. 4:5 God did not accept Cain's sacrifice.

God accepted OT sacrifices on the basis of the giver's attitude.

Our attitude should be thanksgiving for the great love and sacrifice Christ made on our behalf. This should cause us to "love one another just as Christ loved us" (John 15:12).

v 3... Paul has described the putting off of the old self and the putting on of the new in 4:25-31.

Now in 3 & 4 he continues to describe actions that are unsuitable for the Christian.

The word **fornication** is the Greek *porneia*, a very broad word that covers all kinds of sexual impurity. The newer translations translate it immorality.

It covers any kind of sexual perversion.

let it not be once named among you (KJ)... "there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality" (NIV).

This tightens the requirement of the law.

³⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 2:21 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Mt 16:24 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The law said, "Thou shalt not commit sexual sins." As long as you don't physically complete the act you had kept the law. You could look at, lust and fantasize and still be keeping the law.

Christ said in Matt. 5 that even to think immoral thoughts about someone is the same as sinning sexually with them.

uncleanness refers to immorality. The NASB translates impurity. Paul is probably emphasizing the warning against immorality already given.

covetousness... Probably by its connotation to greed Paul is relating back to the two words of immorality. All acts of immorality are to gain selfish personal ends regardless of the harm to others. Conduct of this kind eventually destroys all possibilities of genuine love.

Don't let it be said of you.

saints (Christians) will not indulge in these love-destroying things:

v 4 filthiness... lit., "immoral conduct", could also mean "filthy talk".

foolish talking... silly talk (NASB).

(NRSV) Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving.⁴¹

All talk which should not be part of a Christian's lifestyle.

not convenient is "not fitting" the (NEB) says, "These things are out of place".

This passage does not speak against spontaneous Christian gaiety and a sense of humor; it does indicate that Christians should not indulge in "smutty talk". Thanksgiving for God's deliverance from all sin ought to be in their hearts constantly and on their lips often.

vv 5-7... The penalty for perversion of love

Paul gives two exhortations and two penalties.

The two exhortations:

v 6 is the first exhortation: Let no man deceive you with vain words... "shallow

⁴¹The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version, Eph 5:4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

arguments" (NEB).

Apparently this is a warning against those who may say these vices he has been talking about will not affect their community or their personal lives.

v 7 is the second exhortation: "Be not... partakers with such people; who are among the children of disobedience" (6b; cf 2:2)

The two penalties:

v 5... no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God

v 6b... liability to the wrath of God

these things (v 6) would be the evils of vv 3-5.

The tense used suggests that these evil doers do not know the benefits of the kingdom now.

They will not share in the kingdom in the future.

The phrase kingdom of Christ and of God is used only here in the NT.

It does not denote two kingdoms. The kingdom is committed temporarily to Christ now. It is still the kingdom of God.

Col. 1:13... For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son⁴²

1 Cor. 15:24... then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.⁴³

In missing the kingdom these perverters of love fall under the heavy hand of the righteous anger of God. Already they are its objects.

Eph. 2:3... Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.⁴⁴

But in the last day they will feel the full fury of that wrath.

In these verses Paul compares the immoral, impure and greedy (described in 5:3) to idolaters.

Those who consistently engage in these activities are idolaters.

Because they allow their desires to run their lives their desires are their gods.

⁴²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 15:24 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 2:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Anyone who, like these people, has made anything more important than God has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

The Greek words of Christ and of God emphasize the complete unity of the Father and the Son.

vv 8-14... Walking in light

Conducting one's life in love gives a dynamic and provokes action. Love must also have direction.

So Paul says, walk as children of Light.

The language Paul uses is striking.

(RSV) once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord⁴⁵

The picture is of people groping in darkness, but they were also part of that darkness and contributors to this darkness of sin.

Now they are by grace partakers of the light.

Mackay says the exhortation here is "Let the children of the light express their true nature. Let them live in accordance with it."

Christ is the light, and He creates children of light.

John 8:12... Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."⁴⁶

1 John 1:7... but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.⁴⁷

Possessing light or being in the light suggests God's full grace for holy living.

v 9... fruit of the Light

The best manuscripts have "the fruit of the light" instead of "the fruit of the Spirit".

Apparently a copyist, thinking of Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23 thought that a substitution of the word Spirit for light would aid the reader.

The meaning is not changed. God is spirit and God is light. goodness, righteousness and truth characterizing the fruit do not reflect any important differences.

Paul attempts to list the moral significance of light, as against false mystical interpretations. The person who has received the light has an obligation to be Godlike.

⁴⁵The Revised Standard Version, Electronic edition., Eph 5:8 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971).

⁴⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Jn 8:12 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Jn 1:7 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

v 10... The test of light

v 9 is a parenthesis, so v 10 completes the thought begun in v 8.

Proving means either "approve" or "test" as in testing or proving the quality of metals.

The Christian must conduct his life in a morally discriminating way.

We should do all our actions as unto the Lord.

Every action should be made with the thought that "God lives here. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Would Jesus be comfortable doing this thing with me?"

The (NASB) translates v 10, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

The Beacon Bible Commentary: "Correspondence between our actions and the perfect, reasonable will of God insofar as it is known through the illuminating direction of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary if God's blessing is to rest upon our lives."

vv 11-13... The light reproves

fellowship seems to imply "close communion with". The Christian is not warned against any contact with those who are in darkness but rather is admonished from joining in close alliances with them which would tend to cause the darkness to diminish the Christian's light.

NEB translates "Take no part in their works of darkness".

The works are described as unfruitful.

God sees us as having fruit or no fruit.

Evil fruit is no fruit. If fellowship produces nothing of eternal good it is not for Christians. The children of light must reprove or expose the ways of sinful men (darkness).

This can be done in two ways:

1. Oral reproof, pointing out their evil ways with our mouths.

(How do we do that? ...How to avoid "in your face" but yet get the point across? Any ideas?)

2. Living the Christian life before them.

We should do both.

Paul sees a redemptive purpose behind this. It is Paul's hope that the doers of dark deeds will repent and turn to Christ because of the light shed upon their lives by being exposed to the Christian's light.

v 12 shows the exceeding sinfulness of the works of darkness... For it is a shame even to speak of those things

Paul says they are hidden... which are done of them in secret.

v 13... Light exposes darkness. Evil flees from light. "Men loved darkness because their deeds are evil" Malcolm Smith speaks about going to the bottom of his basement steps in NY and watching the cockroaches run when he turned on the light. That is a picture of men loving darkness and fleeing from light.

Paul says that everything exposed by the light becomes visible.

Believers are like rays of light piercing the dark of evil around us.

There is an interesting scriptural picture of this in 2 Cor. 3:17-18...

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.⁴⁸

Rom. 8:29... For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren⁴⁹

v 14 is apparently a quote from an early Christian hymn.

Could have been a hymn used at baptismal services.

The (NEB) sets it in poetic form:

Awake, sleeper
Rise from the dead
And Christ will shine upon you.

⁴⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Co 3:16 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 8:29 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Paul may have been alluding to the OT prophets' warning to Israel to wake from its state of darkness and death. He may be appealing to the Ephesians to wake up, stay alert and realize the dangerous condition into which some of them had been slipping by listening to false teaching.

v 15... Paul warns, walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

circumspectly - "exactly" or "by rule" that is according to a set norm. Other translations are "diligently" or "carefully".

The wise are not intellectuals but those who have received the light and are committed to the truth of God.

v 16... Redeeming (buying up)... not what is paid but making the most of.

time denotes a critical time period which will soon pass away.

The most accurate translation would be "making the most of your opportunity".

Service to God is behind the apostle's thought.

Eerdman says, "The wisdom of their walk would thus consist in their careful endeavor to seize upon every fitting season for doing good and to make their own every possible occasion for the fulfillment of duty."

The precious opportunity to witness for Christ must not be allowed to slip out of our hands because the days are evil.

Phillips translates: "Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days."

v 17... Don't be unwise (dumb, stupid). We get that way by slipping into negligence and inactivity. By knowing and following God's will we will save ourselves and others.

Ultimately the will of God for each of us is our sanctification. 1 Thess. 4:3... For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality⁵⁰ ... Our example is our savior Jesus Christ.

v 18... be filled with the Spirit

Paul may have been thinking of the drunken and debauched ecstasies of the mystery religions.

Drunkenness is the gateway to excess.

Paul exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit.

filled is a present imperative. It could be translated, "Be continually filled with the Spirit" or "Go on being filled with the Spirit".

⁵⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Th 4:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

A paraphrase by Moule:

Let the holy one, your sealer and sanctifier, so surround and possess you that you shall be as it were vessels immersed in his pure flood; and then, yielding your hearts without reserve to him you shall be vessels not only immersed but open; in him, and filled in him, as he continually welcomes, continually occupies and hallows all parts of your nature, all departments of your life.

vv 19-20... Expressing the Spirit's joy

Note the contrast between the drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit.

Spirit-filled men will be heard speaking to one another. In the language of devotion and praise. psalms may refer to the Psalter in the OT. hymns probably refers to early Christian compositions, some of which have been preserved in the NT.

Phil. 2:5-11:

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.
 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.⁵¹

Col. 1:12-18:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

⁵¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Php 2:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

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.
 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.⁵²

Titus 2:11-14:

- 11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,
 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,
 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.⁵³

1 Pet. 3:18-22:

- 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison,
 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water.
 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.⁵⁴

spiritual songs may be spontaneous creations expressing joy and praise at a time of special

⁵²New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Col 1:11 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵³New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Tit 2:10 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁵⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Pe 3:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

outpourings of the Spirit upon the people.

The outcome of this is "thanksgiving" for what God has done for His people through His Son, so the praise is to the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Giving thanks always for all things may mean all the blessings God has given us or literally, all things. We can see a parallel in Phil. 4:6, "In everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

We can be thankful for God's help in the midst of circumstances even when we find it hard to be thankful for the situation.

The person who walks with God can always find some part of any circumstance an occasion for thanksgiving (Rom. 8:28).

v 21... Submitting to one another

Paul's concern for unity breaks through again. When a genuine spirit of thanksgiving prevails among God's people they will willingly submit to one another.

One has suggested "mutual consideration".

Not just spinelessly giving in to others, but the practicing of a strong and sober attitude of respect for self and others.

the fear of God is usually translated the fear of Christ.

fear is not terror but reverence.

Joyful submission to one another is the highest reverence to the head of the body, Christ. This reverence maintains the church in peace and is her greatest strength.

Paul has already stated his desire for all members of the body to be mutually submissive to one another in v 21.

Now in 5:22-6:9 he begins a wide-ranging set of instructions for the "family" or "household" relations.

In Paul's day the family involved not only the parent-child and the husband-wife relationship, but also the master-servant association.

Two major principles guide Paul's discussion.

The first principle is the far-reaching precept of mutual subjection which has already been mentioned.

The modern mind bridles at the idea of submission to anyone. unbridled freedom is the God par excellence for mankind today. The tense in Submitting yourselves in v 21 leaves a degree of choice.

W.O. Carver observes, "Subjection is to be voluntary, personal, and having full ethical value for the one who subjects himself and for others whom he serves in spiritual surrender."

The second principle is that in each relationship the obligation is based on the connection of the believer with the Lord (5:22, 6:1, 5).

Paul believes that if the graces of the lord flourish in the Christian church they most certainly ought to be expected to prosper in the closely-knit life of the individual family.

Paul talks about husbands and wives in vv 22-33.

vv 22-24... The wife's submission

Paul says the wife should submit to her husband's divine ordained leadership. Without this submission that leadership is impossible. The wife is not inferior to her husband either naturally or spiritually.

Paul is recognizing the divinely-ordained hierarchy he wrote about in 1 Cor. chapter 11. God; Christ; man; woman.

The wife is to submit as to the Lord.

In v 23 Paul mentions the divine order.

The husband is the head of the wife like Christ is the head of the church and its savior.

Two important ideas are evident...

1. Headship denotes primarily controlling authority and the right to obedience.
2. Control and obedience take place within a living organism where the two parts are complementary each to the other.

Unity lies at the base of each set of relationships. Not only is the husband the head of the wife, but like Christ is the savior of the church, the husband is the protector and provider for

the wife.

The husband must find the pattern of his conduct in the conduct of Christ toward His church.

v 24 repeats the responsibility of the wives to be subject to their own husbands just as the church is subject unto Christ.

in every thing is interesting and offensive to the liberated woman.

It boils down to priorities.

The woman may function and assume responsibility in society, but if she has accepted before God the responsibility of marriage and of a family, these must be her first concern. When submission takes place within the context of love, it is not grievous nor humiliating, but magnifying.

vv 25-33 speak of the love of husbands.

Now Paul addresses the husbands.

The wife has been asked to submit. Now the husband is asked to love.

Husbands, love your wives

The majestic image of the church as the bride of Christ lies behind the command.

The word **love** is in a tense which implies "continue to love" or "go on loving".

It is God-like *agape* love.

The love which brought husband and wife together must be nurtured and expressed as the years of marriage pass.

Husbands must love their wives even as Christ also loved the church.

(a) Christ's love was a self-giving love... v 25

Christ gave Himself for man's deliverance.

In Gal. 1:4 Paul speaks of "our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins".

In Titus 2:14 he describes Christ as the one who gave Himself for us.

As Christ gave Himself up for His church the husband must be willing to make any sacrifice, even the sacrifice of his own life for the well-being and happiness of His wife.

(b) Christ's love was a sanctifying love (vv 26-27).

Christ's object in sacrificing Himself was the sanctification of the church.

The KJ has That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word⁵⁵. It looks like the two actions happen together.

cleanse is in a tense that indicates past action. A better translation is the NASB that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her.

washing of water by the word... This may refer to baptism. The ancient near eastern brides were prepared for marriage by a ceremonial bath.

by the word (4 possibilities):

1. The words spoken by the new believer confessing his faith in Christ.
2. The marriage vows where love is pledged.
3. The confession at baptism where words of the Bible are repeated by the baptizer and the new believer.
4. The gospel message—being made clear by believing in God's Word given in the gospel message.

The 3rd choice seems most likely here.

We might translate v 26, "Christ sanctified His church by the Word, having cleansed it with the washing of water."

In John 17:17 Christ prayed, **Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**⁵⁶

The Word of God is the means or instrument by which the deeper purification beyond conversion is accomplished.

Barclay remarks, "Real love is the great cleanser and purifier of all life."

v 27... The sanctification of the church makes it possible for Christ to present it to Himself a glorious church.

present is simply Christ setting forth the church for Himself.

Wescott paraphrases not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing as "without one trace

⁵⁵The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 5:26 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁵⁶The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Jn 17:17 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

of defilement or one mark of age".

Wesley interprets as "impurity from any sin".

holy and without blemish repeats the thought of chapter 1 v 4.

(c) Christ's love was sustaining and caring love (vv 28-31).

v 28... Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies.

Not self-love, or love of their bodies...

...But husbands should love their wives "as being their own bodies; as part of their total self, not as another being external to them".

The relationship should be such that **He that loveth his wife loveth himself.**

husband and wife are complementary parts of one personality.

When the husband thinks of his wife as part of himself he will instinctively sustain, protect and tenderly care for her.

v 30... of his flesh, and of his bones are not in the oldest manuscripts.

Some believe a scribe may have added them in anticipation of v 31 which is a quote from Gen. 2:24.

This quotation reinforces the idea of oneness and is expressed in the clause **and they two shall be one flesh.**

The union of Christ with the church is the highest example of relationships, and it suggest to Paul the pattern for the marital relationship.

(d) Christ's love is a mystery (vv 32-33)

v 32... **This is a great mystery** is translated by (NASB) as **This mystery is great...** the NEB "It is a great truth that is hidden here".

Paul clarifies himself, **I speak concerning Christ and the church.** Paul moves from the husband-wife relationship to the lofty relationship of Christ and the church and comes back down in v 32 to the husband-wife relationship.

The husband is to love his wife; the wife is to reverence (respect, fear, reverence). She is to respect him as head of the home and cling to him in faith knowing that he has forsaken "all others" for her.

Chrysostom expresses the meaning here with discerning words:

And of what nature is this fear? It is that she should not gainsay thee, or set herself against thee, or love preeminence; if fear govern to this extent, it is enough. But if thou lovest her, as thou art commanded, thou wilt achieve more than this; nay rather, thou wilt achieve this no longer by fear, but love itself will have its own effect.

Chapter 6, vv 1-4:

Paul now turns to the relationship of parents and children.

With these 4 verses Paul elevates the relationship of parent / child in the Christian home and community.

This was not the case in the ancient world.

The Roman father had absolute power over his children.

- He could punish them in any way he pleased.
- He could sell them as slaves.
- Under certain circumstances he could put them to death.

This power extended throughout his lifetime. Infants were often exposed to die if they were not wanted.

Often older children were turned out to fend for themselves.

Paul's careful delineation of the mutual responsibilities of children and parents shows his viewing children as of infinite value.

1. The obedience of children... vv 1-3

Children, obey your parents... This is a stronger charge than the submission required of the wife.

The word carries the idea of hearing and heeding. in the Lord defines the sphere in which obedience is to take place.

Paul does not specify what to do if the parent asks the child to do something contrary to the law of Christ.

There are two injunctions for this obedience.

First... Paul says "it is right".

This means "righteous". Obedience is well-pleasing to the Lord. Col. 3:20.

This meaning of right is further enforced by quoting the 5th commandment. Righteous men live by God's laws. Children who would be righteous in their relationship with their

parents must keep this law.

Second... Paul says obedience honors one's parents.

The apostle quotes Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16.

Honour thy father and thy mother. There must be actual obedience, not just the will to obey.

first commandment with promise

This has caused some questions since the first commandment also has a promise.

Exod. 20:4-6:

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.⁵⁷

Perhaps Paul is thinking that first here means "first in importance" for children.

Elements from Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16 are stated in the twofold promise.

The idea of prosperity That it may be well with thee comes from Deuteronomy, while long life--mayest live long on the earth--is from Exodus.

We must not press this too far.

Hodge says "that this is a revelation of a general purpose of God, and makes known what will be the usual course of his providence. However it may not be carried out in every life. The general promise is fulfilled in individuals just as far as it will serve for God's glory and their own good."

v 4... The duty of fathers

Children's disobedience can destroy the peace of a Christian home.

Parental insensitivity and harshness can be just as devastating.

⁵⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ex 20:3 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Paul speaks to the father who has been charged with the family's direction and discipline.

First, a negative responsibility... provoke not your children to wrath. To provoke is to "irritate" or "exasperate".

Fathers should not provoke bad passions in their children by severity, injustice, partiality or unreasonable exercise of authority.

Phillips paraphrases, "Fathers, don't overcorrect your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment."

Discipline is necessary, but too much may lead to outright rebellion.

Second, a positive responsibility, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord⁵⁸.

nurture is education in the widest sense, the whole process of instruction or teaching.

Foulkes comments, "The nurture and admonition of the Lord is that which the Lord is able to bring into the life of a child if parents do their work of teaching and training in the word of the Lord."

vv 5-9... Masters – slaves

There were 60 million slaves in the Roman world. These were "living tools" with absolutely no rights or protections under law.

They were property to be abused, used up, thrown out and even killed.

Many slaves were treated humanely, but all were not.

Slaves existed at every level of society.

Doctors, teachers, secretaries, artists, actors and persons related to high-level political positions were enslaved along with common laborers.

Slavery in the Roman world could be the result of:

- Being captured in war.
- Being found guilty of a crime.
- Being sold by one's father.

⁵⁸The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:4 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

- Becoming hopelessly indebted to a creditor.

Paul and Peter speak to the issue of slavery.

We in 21st century America might ask why Paul and Peter did not strongly teach against slavery.

Beare says, "The injunctions... do not imply either approval or condemnation of the institution of slavery in itself, but are based upon the matter-of-fact recognition that it constituted the sociological framework within which many members of the Christian community found their lives actually cast."

One is reminded of our Lord's words that God allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts.

Several reasons have been suggested for the lack of a command to release slaves in Paul's writings.

1. Paul expected the soon return of the Lord and saw no benefit in introducing the massive change needed to address slavery.
3. To encourage the emancipation of slaves on a churchwide scale would have been very subversive to society.
3. To free the slaves would have put them at the mercy of society.

Many of them could not have adjusted to freedom.

Prisoner released took to Subway. He was absolutely overwhelmed with the choices.

4. The slave was allowed the privileges of Christian fellowship and growth in Christ.

These reasons do not completely satisfy.

Bruce observes, "Slavery under the best conditions is slavery nonetheless, and it could not survive where the gospel had free course."

When Paul writes to Philemon asking him to receive Onesimus back he is to be received

Not now as a servant, [slave] but above a servant, [slave] a brother beloved⁵⁹.

v 5... The word obedient is the same strong word Paul uses for the wife.

Readiness to listen, to be teachable and to comply with order constitute the substance of the call to obedience.

masters according to the flesh may mean that duties related to the external and material are the master's responsibility.

Matters "according to the Spirit" are under Christ's direction.

Bruce comments, "The slave-master relationship belongs to the passing temporal order...In the spiritual realm, Christian slaves and masters alike were fellow-servants of one Lord, Jesus Christ." Christ is the higher Master and he oversees the whole life of the slave. While the slave's first loyalty and obedience must be rendered to his God, yet he recognizes this other authority and seeks to render sincere and generous obedience. In the current struggle of enslaved peoples throughout the world, it is imperative that Christians, in their earnestness to right the wrongs, remember that every corrective action must be inspired by the Spirit of the Lord and bathed in love.

vv 5-8... In a series of pithy phrases the apostle characterizes for the slaves what obedience is.

v 5... with fear and trembling

NLT... with deep respect and fear

...Probably refers to an attitude of reverence and honor, a desire to do right.

They were free from serving their masters.

The sense of awe which every Christian should feel toward his maker extends even to the master-slave relationship.

in singleness of your heart... Paul is the only NT writer who uses the word in singleness. It means literally one fold of a piece of paper as opposed to two folds.

The application is for the slave to have a firm, all-inclusive purpose toward his master rather than a divided loyalty.

as unto Christ reminds us that all our work should be done as unto Christ.

⁵⁹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Phm 16 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Not with eyeservice, v 6... This is a word coined by Paul. It expresses the idea of appearing very busy and dependable whenever the boss is watching. Such a person is not honest but is a **menpleaser** and not a servant or slave of Christ doing the will of God from the heart.

As Christ's slaves their love to Christ, rather than external factors, must control their service.

Barclay comments, "The conviction of the Christian workman is that every single piece of work he produces must be good enough to show to God."

With good will doing service (vv 6-7-8).

Only here in NT (good will)

Other translations, "kindly feeling", "cheerful".

An ancient will dated 157 shows a slave master writing, "Release 5 of my slaves because of their good will and affection toward me."

Paul acknowledges that good service will not always be rewarded by the earthly master, but it will not be overlooked by the Lord.

v 8... Every good thing will receive of the Lord its just reward.

The slave can be encouraged by the fact that the final judgement will be impartial so that each person will receive back what his deeds merit whether he be bond or free. Westcott has some sobering words, "The divine judgement lies essentially in each deed of man".

v 9... The forbearance of masters.

Masters are exhorted "to do the same things unto the slaves".

This may refer back to the good will of v 7.

Christian principles are to be observed by masters.

They should show the same goodwill and consideration which are expected from the slaves.

A master must remember Christ's words, **Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them**⁶⁰.

⁶⁰The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Mt 7:12 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

Masters are exhorted to refrain from threatenings. First-century slave owners kept their slaves in their place by employing the fear motive. They often threatened them with physical and material punishment. **forbearing** means to give up the practice of threats.

Take threats away; replace with goodwill and thoughtfulness based on Christian appreciation for each person for a better result.

The Beacon Bible Commentary says:

Threats destroy personal relationships and put people behind the mask of insecurity and fear. Love removes these barriers and creates brotherhood. Depersonalization and tyranny are cut from the same cloth. Tyrannize and you depersonalize. Conversely, personal dignity and freedom saturated with love belong together. Christian grace repudiates threats and tyranny; it provides the basis for personal dignity and freedom.

When tempted to become harsh, masters must remember "that their master also is in heaven", and that there is no respect of persons with him.

They will be rewarded or punished the same as their slaves will be.

Faithfulness and kindness will be rewarded, but disloyalty and treachery will be severely punished whether committed by slave or master.

Beacon Bible Commentary: "The only sound basis for life either on the domestic front or the labor front is a heart-to-heart relationship in which mutual love and respect prevail. This necessitates what Paul earlier declared: We must submit to one another in the fear of God (5:21)."

In the epistle so far Paul has been talking about things that remove strife and produce unity and peace.

He has just been speaking about removing strife and promoting Christian maturity in the domestic relationships in the Christian community.

Now he shifts to the "field of battle". He gives instructions designed to assure the Christian of victory in the battle.

v 10... The source of strength.

Finally... not so much "in conclusion" but "henceforth". "In the future" would be a possible translation. One translation is, "In addition to all". Finally signals Paul's conclusion to the epistle.

Paul wants them to be aware of the spiritual forces arrayed against them.

Their hope lies in being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

The verb for **strong** suggests that they continue to be strengthened by the Lord and that the source of this strength is outside of themselves. It comes from Christ as one lives in union with Him.

Paul has prayed (in 1:19) "that they may be so enlightened that they will comprehend the exceeding greatness of his power" and realize "the working of his mighty power through faith".

In the conflict with the demonic powers Christians must draw immediately and continually upon Christ's power if they would know victory. This is true also of the church as she seeks to stem the tide of evil in the world.

v 11... The armor

Paul implores the reader to Put on the whole armour of God.

The word picture is of the well-equipped Roman soldier which Paul was very familiar with. Even as he writes he is likely chained to a burly Roman legionnaire.

The Greek term used carries the idea of completeness. There are two views with regard to Paul's exhortation:

First... The emphasis is upon the fact that it is God's armor which must be put on.

Isa. 59:17 shows God as clothed with armor.

He put on righteousness like a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing
And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.⁶¹

According to this view the Christian is invited to wear this same protection when he goes out to battle.

Second, the emphasis is not upon the fact of the armor being God's, but upon the element of completeness.

⁶¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Is 59:17 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The idea here is that not only do we need divine equipment, but we need that equipment in its completeness without any part lacking.

Phillips paraphrases, "Thus we must put on God's complete armor."

Probably it is not an either/or but a both/and. Surely Paul's careful listing of the parts lends support to the second view, but the first is also valid.

The purpose of putting on the armor is that there might be defense against the wiles of the devil.

wiles... Other translations, "schemes" or "stratagems". The word is found nowhere else in Greek literature. It is intended to convey the idea of deceitful plans or crafty assaults.

wiles would include temptations to unbelief, to sin, to conformity with the surrounding pagan world which beset the Christian at all times.

Paul himself had extensive experience with the work of the devil. He could say, **we are not ignorant of his devices** (2 Cor. 2:11).

vv 12-13... The enemy

...The devil and the entire host of demonic forces in the universe... Not against human forces. **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood**

If we struggled against human strength human strength would be sufficient. The forces are wicked and spiritual, therefore we need divine, spiritual resources in order to stand.

Paul lists principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, spiritual wickedness in high places.

There are ranks among the host of Satan, but it is difficult to make distinctions between these various ranks.

No matter how stable the lives of God's people, they are never free from subtle attacks of Satan through agencies of the evil power structure.

Phillips paraphrases v 12, "We are up against organizations and powers that control this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil."

Paul teaches us two facts about the powers of evil in the universe:

1. They are personal (Don't let anybody tell you there is no devil).
2. They are well-organized.

The devil does not possess omnipotence, omniscience, nor omnipresence, but he is

organized throughout the world for the one purpose of defeating the people of God.

in high *places* (v 12) is the 5th and last place we see this phrase (translated in heavenly *places* in 1:3, 20, 2:6, 3:10). Here it means the realm of spiritual conflict.

v 12 is a reminder that no Christian is immune from the attacks of the wicked spiritual hosts. v 13 repeats the exhortation of v 11, Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.

The fully armed soldier is to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.⁶²

To withstand is a stronger idea than stand in v 11.

A better translation would be resist (NASB).

This is the picture of the hardened Roman army standing against the enemy. Other armies would break and run, but the Roman soldiers would put up their shields and stand.

That is a picture of our stand against the devil.

the evil day is variously interpreted...

- The day of judgement
- The approach of death
- The period immediately preceding the second coming

Bruce concludes, "The age is evil because of the evil forces which, although vanquished by Christ, are still able to exercise control over a world which will not avail itself of the fruits of Christ's victory. The Christian must take up the armor provided by God, and having fastened it securely about him, go out to resist evil in his time."

v 13c... Here we see the apostle's optimism break through.

and having done all, to stand

having done all might be better translated, "having accomplished all things". The apostle's idea seems to be not having finished putting on the armor, but rather having successfully resisted the enemy.

To resist effectively means that one will not be dislodged from his position and can hold his post in triumph. the apostle never contemplates the possibility of defeat.

In vv 14-17 the pieces of armor are listed.

v 14... the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness

Stand... having your loins girt about with truth⁶³

The free-flowing garments of the east needed to be fastened to allow unhindered movement.

This was done with a belt.

The belt also held the sword and probably other pieces of armor.

truth is more than the human virtue of sincerity and honesty. It could possibly be defined as "the knowledge of and belief in the revealed word of God".

To gird oneself with truth is to appropriate the Word through faith.

Reason, tradition, creeds and philosophies may snap under the stress of battle, but the word of God believed and lived remains intact. Moule says, "To be girded with the belt of truth means to be calm and strong in the reality and simplicity, through grace, of your relations with your king."

the breastplate of righteousness

righteousness is the life of purity and rectitude (conduct according to moral principles) which the new relationship with God creates.

Barclay writes, "When a man is clothed in righteousness he is impregnable. Words are no defense against accusations, but a good life is. The protecting quality of purity and holiness cannot be gainsaid."

A pure heart resents with disgust and scorn the first approaches of temptation and impurity.

v 15... The sandals of the gospel

The specially designed military sandals were fashioned to protect the feet and enable the soldier to keep his balance in rough places. Also they offered ample footing for quick movement.

The Christian warrior must have the protection and mobility which comes with having the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace⁶⁴.

preparation can mean:

1. Preparation in the sense of making ready

⁶²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:13 (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 6:14 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

2. A state of preparedness
3. Foundation or steadfastness
4. Readiness or preparedness of mind.

It is this last meaning that Paul seems to have in mind.

Hodge comments, "As the gospel secures our peace with God, and gives the assurance of his favor, it produces that joyful alacrity [eager readiness] of mind which is essential in the spiritual conflict."

The peace which Paul writes about in v 15 is the peace with God through salvation.

In the background we can discern Isaiah's exclamation, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!⁶⁵ - Isaiah 52:7

Eph. 2:17... And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.⁶⁶

v 16... the shield of faith

Above all (in addition to all the rest)

the shield is not the small circular one sometimes carried by Roman soldiers, but the large oblong shield which the Roman soldier used when the battle was severe. It was carved out of wood and covered with leather to intercept and quench the ignited arrows shot by the enemy. This was the shield used by the infantry to form a "phalanx" with shields joined together and spears overlapping. sometimes the soldiers would hold shields overhead in a formation that was virtually invincible. The Christian carries a shield of faith (saving faith), the faith by which comes the divine forgiveness and the power of a new life. Mackay says, "A Christian's trust must be in God. He must cherish no doubt regarding the basis of his faith and the truth of his cause. He must be a man of intense conviction who has about him that air of calm decision... He knows who he is and to whom he belongs. With such faith every burning missile the enemy hurls can be stopped and extinguished."

the wicked (devil) cannot pierce the soul with his fiery darts and inflame it to sin if the shield of faith is in place.

⁶⁴The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:15 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁶⁵The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Is 52:7 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁶⁶The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 2:17 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

v 17... The helmet of salvation

take the helmet of salvation

take should be "receive". The Roman soldier, after putting on the other pieces of armor "received" from the attendant the helmet. This was specially made and fitted to protect the head.

The salvation we receive from God is our great protection for every worthwhile value in human life.

The helmet symbolizes the protection which participation in God's salvation assures. This salvation embraces both the present and the future.

Westcott says, "The sense of salvation puts life beyond all danger."

the sword of the Spirit

Along with the helmet the soldier received the sword.

This is the only offensive weapon.

the sword of the Spirit could be rendered "the sword which is the property of the Spirit" or "the sword which the Spirit Himself wields".

It seems that the sword of the Spirit is the sword which the Spirit gives.

the word could be the utterance of God which the Spirit puts into the believer's hand to be wielded as a sword.

Jesus said in Matt. 10:19, "Do not take thought what you will speak when you are taken into custody, for it will be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak."

It could also be the holy Scriptures.

Our Lord rebuffed Satan with Scripture.

Wesley comments, "We are to attack Satan as well as secure ourselves; the shield in one hand, and the sword in the other. Whoever fights with the powers of hell will need both."

The Hebrew writer reminds us that the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

With God's Word the Christian can dispel doubts and inflict mortal wounds on temptation.

In vv 18-20 Paul speaks about prayer.

Some commentaries look upon prayer as the seventh piece of the Christian armor. In any event, it is obvious that he is still concerned with the Christian's victory in the struggle.

Praying is connected with all the foregoing commands.

Someone has said, "Each piece put on with prayer, and then continue still in all 'prayer and supplication'". The Christian soldier can stand true, successfully resisting his spiritual foes, only as he remains in the spirit of prayer, ready always to lay his needs before the Lord.

prayer is the general word for intercession.

supplication carries the meaning of "entreaty" or "petition".

Praying always (v 18)... *always* can be translated "in every time or season". It could mean "in the time of conflict". Probably habitual and constant prayer is intended.

Paul exhorts Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17).

Christ says, "Men ought always pray and never lose heart" in Luke 18:1 (Phillips).

Constancy in prayer is imperative for victory.

"pray in the Spirit"

The Holy Spirit is the great inspirer and intercessor. He helps us to formulate our petitions in keeping with the will of God.

Rom. 8:26-27:

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.⁶⁷

"Pray with all perseverance for all saints"

watching... A military term of "keeping awake, alert".

The only way for the Christian to be prepared is to be vigilant in prayer, not permitting themselves to become listless.

perseverance is related to supplication for all saints.

Beare comments, "The unsleeping alertness of the Christian is to be shown especially in

⁶⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Ro 8:26 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

persevering intercession on behalf of all his comrades in the fight."

Unity in the fight against evil is absolutely necessary.

prayer should be unselfish.

Eerdman remarks, "One fights more valiantly and more gallantly when he remembers that he is not alone."

It is comforting to know that others are standing with us in prayer.

In vv 10-18 Paul suggests several key factors in the Christian's warfare.

- Determination and steadfastness (13)
- Truth (14)
- Right conduct (14)
- Peace with God and our fellows (15)
- Faith (15)
- A personal experience of salvation (16)
- Use of the Bible (16)
- Prayer (18)
- Personal witness and intercession for others (18)

"Pray for me"... vv 19-20

Pray not because I am an ambassador in bonds, not for my personal wellbeing and peace; pray rather for the furtherance of the gospel.

He prays for two things:

- Wisdom that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth⁶⁸

He is conscious of the great opportunity which has opened to him. He wants wisdom to be able to speak the right words when the opportunity comes. He wants the words to be God's words.

- He desires boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel.

⁶⁸New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 6:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

...power to declare the truth about God in Christ Jesus, providing salvation for all men.
v 20 repeats the request for boldness.

It adds the unusual designation of the apostle "as an ambassador in bonds".

Literally this phrase reads, "an ambassador in a chain". It probably refers to a wrist chain by which he is handcuffed to a soldier.

The king's leading ambassador is a prisoner. But who is really the prisoner?

Paul is free in Christ. He sees his chains as an opportunity to witness for Christ. He is not looking for sympathy. He seeks prayer only that he would be able to speak boldly what he knows he ought to speak when opportunity is presented.

What a challenge for us!

Final greetings... vv 21-24

Since the letter was apparently a general one designed to circulate among several churches, Paul's customary list of personal greetings is missing. Paul knew that all who read the letter would want to know how he was doing. He says the bearer of the letter, Tychicus, would inform them.

The messenger's commendation... v 21

Tychicus' name appears in several of Paul's letters. We learn a little about him in Acts 20:4.

His home was in Asia. He went with Paul to Jerusalem to take the offering Paul had collected over several years.

We learn from Col. 4:7-9 that Tychichus carried the Colossian letter and possibly the letter to Philemon. he may have delivered the lost letter to the Laodiceans. His name appears in II Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12. Paul calls him a **beloved brother and faithful minister**. The loyalty of Tychicus in serving Paul created a bond of fellowship between them until Paul could call him "a dear brother" and trusted him with this assignment. He could be sent anywhere by Paul, and he would fulfill the task.

- May his tribe increase!
- What a challenge for us.
- How like today. There are so many quiet, faithful, beloved brothers and sisters quietly

doing the work of Christ's kingdom behind the scenes without fanfare or recognition.

The messenger's task (vv 21-22)

Tychicus will convey two pieces of information:

- He will make known Paul's affairs (literally the things concerning me).

Things like the apostle's housing, food and how things are going with him.

- He will give them word about Paul's health.

how I do could be translated, "how I fare" or "how I am". Paul says his messenger will make known to you all things. Tychicus will be prepared to give a full report of these matters.

v 22... I have sent... Paul is sending (present tense)... By the time they read the letter he will have been sent (past tense).

The message concerning the apostle's circumstances will **comfort** their hearts.

They will be strengthened and encouraged as they know that God is providentially caring for Paul.

Benediction... vv 23-24

In closing this majestic letter Paul offers a benedictory prayer in which he mentions the three great qualities of the Christian life of which he has said so much in this epistle.

Paul knows that a person cannot be a Christian without peace, faith and grace. These are not natural human virtues; they are gifts from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace... This is more than simple mental tranquility and composure. It represents a new relationship between God and man. In its essential nature it is reconciliation. Paul says in 2:14, **he is our peace**. To the degree that Christ lives in our heart we have peace.

love with faith suggest that love is the primary virtue. 1 Cor. 13:13... But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.⁶⁹

Love must be accompanied by faithfulness.

Paul lists these virtues together in Eph. 1:15... For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints⁷⁰

Faith in Christ makes one a Christian. It is the love of Christ shed abroad in human hearts that identifies one as a Christian. Faith manifests itself in love.

These qualities are to be given to the brethren, showing Paul's concern that brotherly love remove all barriers between Jew and Gentile, thus creating and maintaining a united people.

Grace

Paul comes full circle. He has opened the letter with grace (chapter 1, v 2). Now he closes it with grace... v 24.

The classic definition of grace is "the unmerited favor of God".

Now Paul asks God to show divine favor to all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity⁷¹.

in sincerity⁷² probably means something like "imperishable" or "undecaying grace".

The RSV translates, love undying, the NASB incorruptible *love*.

Westcott writes that this is a love which is free from every element liable to corruption. The love with which the Spirit fills the cleansed heart is insured against corruption because its source is the pure heart of God. Love is as enduring as God Himself.

Though the word is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts the reader can join some devout copyist who added a ringing **Amen** to the message of Ephesians.

⁶⁹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 13:13 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷⁰New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 1:15 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁷¹The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:24 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

⁷²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:24 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).