

Ephesians Series

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This is the compilation of a series of articles which Athol wrote for the magazine *Spiritual Blessings*. It appeared over 43 issues.

The only changes that have been made are for clarity, things like 'last issue' has been changed to read 'last chapter' and the like.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The importance of a correct understanding of Acts cannot be over-emphasised, for if we go wrong here, we will go wrong in our understanding of everything that comes after the time covered by Acts. Suffice it to say, that the important thing to realise is that, throughout the Book of Acts God is still dealing with His chosen people Israel, and the subject of Acts is not the Church which is His Body, but the Kingdom of Heaven. Brian went to great pains throughout his series to show this clearly, giving the proofs from Scripture that we hope have carried your judgement.

What this means is that the Church of which we are a part, did not commence until AFTER God set aside Israel, and that setting aside was done, not at the beginning of Acts as is commonly believed, but at the end of Acts.

I sometimes think that we believers have become so accustomed to the fact that Israel is off centre stage in God's plan now, that we forget it was ever any different. But from the calling of Abraham up until the end of the Book of Acts, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, and God's dealings with them, are the central theme of Scripture, and the only way that anyone could come to God was through Abraham and his descendants.

Things, however, changed at the end of the book of Acts. If you will re-read Brian's last couple of studies, you will see that it was there in Rome that the final appeal was made through Paul to leaders of Israel, who did not accept the message concerning Jesus, as the Messiah and King of the Kingdom of God, and for the final time Isaiah's prophetic words of doom were pronounced on them.

As we well know, Paul had been brought to Rome as a prisoner following his appeal as a Roman citizen to Caesar. He was now out of reach of Jewish hatred, and after that final appeal to the Jewish leaders of Rome, the book of Acts abruptly finishes with a short statement that Paul preached to all who came to him the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. No longer is it concerning Moses and the things of Israel. And it is at this point that Paul starts to write the last seven of his epistles which have an entirely different tone and message from anything he wrote before.

Before we move on to that however, I want to make a point which, to my mind, is crucial to understanding what happened next, and why.

As I said earlier, up until the end of Acts, Israel was the channel of blessing from God and the way to God. So what was God going to do now that the appointed channel had been cast aside because of their unbelief and the rejection for the second time of Jesus as their Messiah? I appeal to you, dear reader, to think carefully about this matter. In fact, I believe that one of the main reasons for the writing of the Book of Acts was to show why Israel was taken off the scene.

I want you to try to imagine yourself back in the second half of the first century AD. As a Gentile who had been attracted to the monotheistic religion of Israel, and then having responded to the preaching of disciples of Jesus of Nazareth who came not only preaching but performing miracles, you accepted that Jesus was the long promised Messiah, and also that He had died for you on the cross. Your sins were forgiven, and you became A WILD OLIVE BRANCH GRAFTED INTO THE OLIVE TREE OF ISRAEL. And over a number of years letters came from Paul, and others, teaching you and your fellow-believers many wonderful things about your blessings in Christ.

But then, you begin to hear stories about how Paul has dismissed Israel. And horror of horrors, the Roman army attacks Jerusalem and after a terrible siege, breaks into the city and among many unspeakable acts, they raze the Temple, no stone being left on another, as the Lord foretold. The Romans also scattered the Jews, and Jerusalem was left almost deserted. Obviously, it was no longer the centre of the Jewish religion, and the religious activities at the Temple ceased, and have never been resumed.

I hope that you can see the dismay and confusion of the believers at that time? No Israel, no Jerusalem and no Temple. NO OLIVE TREE. Where does that leave the grafted-in branches? What on earth was God going to do now? Had Satan won after all?

One answer to the dilemma that Christendom came up with was that the 'church' had taken Israel's place, and that everything that was Israel's and promised to Israel was now the church's. You will hear this taught in many Christian churches today. In fact, the whole liturgy of a number of Christian churches is nothing more than a slightly modified form of Old Testament rituals. Strange to say, though, while people who believe this teaching are quite happy to take all of Israel's privileges and blessings, they seem to be just as happy to leave Israel's punishments with Israel.

Unfortunately from a number of points of view, believers at large back in the first century had apparently turned away from the one source of Divinely inspired information that would have provided the real answer. That source was Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who alone had been told by the Lord what was going to happen next.

And where do we find the answer that God gave through Paul? Where are we told of the card that God had kept up His sleeve, so to speak, for just this very time? The answer is in the epistles Paul wrote after the end of Acts, starting with Ephesians.

So it is no coincidence that we follow Brian's series on Acts with a study of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, for this epistle reveals the next stage in the revelation of the Plan of God, the part that more than anything else in Scripture, is about us and for us.

There is another point that I think should be made here. If what was happening during the years covered by Acts was to do with Israel and the Kingdom of God, and not the Church which is His Body, then the epistles written by Paul, Peter and others during that time must relate to Israel and the Kingdom, and not to the Church which is His Body.

That is not to say that they are not inspired Scripture, they certainly are. Nor does it mean that we should not read them and learn from them. We certainly should. But it does mean that they are not written expressly to believers today, giving us the rules for our doctrine and practice. I am aware that I may be accused of saying that the only part of the Bible for us are these last seven epistles of Paul. But that is not what I am saying.

Let me give an example of what I mean. We understand that while the Old Testament is profitable and can teach us many interesting and valuable things, it does not lay down the rules for our conduct as believers today. The rules that applied to Israel regarding diet, Sabbath observance, sacrifices etc. are ignored by most of us without a twinge of conscience, because we know that there was a change in the way God handled things, when Christ died on the Cross. To use a Scriptural term there was a change of dispensation.

In the same way, we believe that there was a change in the way God handled things when He set Israel aside at the END of the book of Acts, and that what applied to the believers in the Acts period, does not necessarily apply to believers today. And if I try to bring doctrines or rituals from before Acts 28 over into this dispensation after Acts 28, or conversely, if I try to take some truth or rule from this dispensation after Acts 28 back into the dispensation before Acts 28, then I will only create confusion, and even be in danger of walking unworthily of my calling in Christ Jesus.

This is, probably, the major theme of this magazine, and for want of a better description, we call it 'rightly dividing the Word of Truth' according to Paul's command in 2 Timothy 2:15.

And in the same way that we study and reap rich lessons from the Old Testament, we can also study and reap rich lessons from the Acts epistles, while still recognizing that they do not necessarily give us the rules for our Christian faith and practice today.

I hope therefore, that no reader will think that we throw most of the Bible out, and only keep the last seven epistles of Paul. If any had visited our Sydney meetings in the last 17 months, they would have found us studying the book of Isaiah, and currently we are only up to chapter 28. And in the Newcastle meeting, we have been studying the Book of Hebrews for well over a year, and Hebrews is not one of Paul's last seven epistles.

Are we ever going to get to Ephesians? Yes, soon, and I hope that readers will understand the necessity to set the context and fill in the background. I have been talking about certain epistles written during the Acts period and others written after the Acts period. Maybe some reader is thinking with dismay that all this means it is necessary to establish the precise date when each epistle was written. Well, some study Bibles do in fact give this information, or provide discussion about it. But no, the precise dating doesn't matter. It is simpler than that.

The turning point is the end of the Book of Acts, or as we say for simplicity's sake, Acts 28. The only question that needs to be answered is whether an epistle was written before or after the end of Acts, and you may be relieved to know that while there is controversy and doubt over the actual dates of some epistles, there is absolutely no doubt about whether epistles were written during or after the Acts period.

This question about dating only applies to Paul's writings, because he is the only New Testament writer who has any work written after Acts included in the canon of Scripture. That is, all the writings of Peter, John, Jude etc. all occur during the Acts period.

In case any reader is not sure, the last seven epistles of Paul are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

I have read many different expositors, some of whom are diametrically opposed to our dispensational approach, yet all of them agree that the seven epistles mentioned above were written after the close of Acts.

Ephesians

I must confess to some nervousness about writing this series on Ephesians. I am well aware that I really know so little about it, and I will certainly make mistakes. On the other hand, I believe that it is very important for us all, and trying to explain this epistle is part of being obedient to the Apostle's command to try to make all see just what is the Dispensation of the Mystery. Bible Expositors have always recognised the special place held by Ephesians. It has been called 'the peak of revelation', the capstone of Scripture', 'the profoundest of Paul's epistles', to mention a few.

Dating

Although I said earlier that it is not vital to know the precise date, it is interesting to get something of a general idea about when Paul wrote to his beloved church at Ephesus. Jameison, Fawcett and Brown say AD 62; Conybeare and Howson say spring, AD 62; Dr Bullinger says towards the end of AD 62; the NIV Bible says about AD 60. It will be seen that we cannot be absolutely sure about the date, but we can be sure that it was one of the things the apostle did during the two years mentioned in the last couple of verses of Acts 28.

Many expositors suggest that the epistle to the Colossians was written just before Ephesians. Again this may or may not be true, but what we do know is that Tychicus, accompanied by the runaway but now converted slave Onesimus, carried both the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians from Paul to Ephesus and Colossae. Onesimus had with him the small epistle to Philemon.

It would seem reasonable to say then, that Colossians and Ephesians were written almost at the same time. The two epistles had differing purposes, and while there are many similarities between the two, it is Ephesians which is the more general of the two, and deals with doctrines relating to the Dispensation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body, in a wider sense than Colossians. I suspect it is for this reason that Ephesians is placed first before Philipians and Colossians in the English New Testament.

Outline

Ephesians is only six chapters long, not long at all when compared to some other books in the Bible. And while the chapter and verse divisions are quite artificial and arbitrary, in this case, the outline or structure of the book falls neatly into two halves, dividing conveniently at the end of chapter three.

This structure or outline is taken from the book *'In Heavenly Places'* by Charles Welch, and readers wanting more detail should consult it.

The opening two verses give us Paul's commission and his salutation, and this is balanced by the closing four verses of the book where we have Tychicus' commission, and Paul's closing salutation.

Then the main body of the book of Ephesians can be set out as follows:

Doctrine (1:3–3:13) Practice (4:1–6:20)

1a.The Threefold Charter (1:3–14)

Will of the Father

Work of the Son

Witness of the Spirit

1b.Threefold exhortation (4:1–6)

Walk worthy of Calling

Forbear in love

Keep the unity

2a.Threefold Prayer that ye may know (1:15–19)

Hope

Inheritance

Power

2b.Threefold Measure (4:7–19)

Gift of Christ

Fullness of Christ

Measure of every part

3a.Threefold Union (1:19–2:7)

Quickened together
Raised together
Seated together

3b.Threefold Application (4:20–32)

Put off old man
Put on new man
Put away the lie

4a.Three works (2:8–10)

Not of works
We are His work
Unto good works

4b.Threefold Walk (5:1–6:9)

Walk in love
Walk as light
Walk circumspectly

5a.Threefold Peace (2:11–19)

Far off nigh – peace
Two made one – peace
He came and preached – peace

5b.Threefold Stand (6:10–13)

Stand against the Devil
Withstand evil day
Stand having ‘worked out’

6a.Threefold Union (2:19–22)

Citizens together
Framed together
Builded together

6b.Threefold Equipment (6:14–18)

Girdle and breastplate
Shoes and shield
Helmet and sword

7a.Threefold Equality (3:1–13)

Heirs together
Members together
Partakers together

7b.Threefold Prayer (6:19,20)

Open mouth
Speak boldly
As I ought

THE CENTRAL PRAYER (3:14–21)

That He would grant strength
That ye may be able to comprehend
That ye might be filled unto all the fullness of God

Chapter 2 – A Little More Background

There is one other subject that I think should be discussed before we start to look at Ephesians in detail, and that is the parallels with Paul's epistle to the Colossians. As we noted in the last study, Colossians was written about the same time as Ephesians, and it is still a matter of debate amongst scholars as to which was written first. That is not an issue for us in this series, the important point being that they were written practically simultaneously, and therefore it is natural that we would expect to find similar subjects treated.

This is exactly what we do find, and the interesting thing is that quite often, while many subjects in Ephesians are repeated in Colossians, they are dealt with in a slightly different way. This is very helpful in arriving at the meaning of some passages, or on the other hand, the different treatment gives us a deeper understanding of the subject.

I mention this now because I will be noting some of these passages as we come to them, and readers will then understand why it is being done. Let us look at a couple of examples now. In Ephesians 1:6–10 we read: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

Then in Colossians 1:13–15 we have: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.

Without trying to be exhaustive in treating these two passages, note two common subjects – redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins.

Now look at some of the differences. The Ephesians passage talks about such things as the riches of His grace, the dispensation of the fullness of times, gathering together all things in Christ, and then goes on to such things as the redemption of the purchased possession, and the mighty power of God demonstrated in the raising of Christ from the dead and setting Him in the absolutely superior position in the Heavenly places, where He is the Head of the Church which is His body, and where He who fills all in all is, Himself, filled full by the Church which is His Body.

The Colossians passage, however, speaks of the translation of the believer from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, and goes on to show

Christ as the creator of all things, and the Head of the Body, the Church, and then having the pre-eminence in all things, not only the realm of creation, but also in the spiritual realm. I suggest that as we note the similarities and contrasts in passages such as these, and give them prayerful thought, we will come to a greater and deeper comprehension of what the Lord is telling us than by reading only passages from the one epistle at a time.

A second example is from Ephesians 5:18–20: And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The parallel passage is in Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in

your hearts to the Lord. The only comment I wish to make here is that the Colossians verse helps me to understand better what it means to sing and make melody in my heart to the Lord. I hope that those two examples will suffice for now.

Ephesians 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Paul opens this epistle, as he usually does, and as was the custom in his day, by nominating who the epistle is from and who it is to.

One might expect that we could get through the first verse, especially when it contains such ordinary things, without finding much to comment on, but straight away we are confronted with a number of issues that need consideration. There has never been any argument from anyone down throughout the centuries that it was indeed Paul who wrote Ephesians. We can be grateful for that, because it has been quite fashionable for several centuries, for various scholars to question the authorship of different parts of the Bible. So we can pass on to the next point.

Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. We know from passages such as Galatians chapters 1 and 2, and 1 Corinthians 9, and 2 Corinthians 12, that Paul's apostleship was from time to time under question. He claims that he has fulfilled all the requirements of apostleship such as having seen the Lord, and having been called by Him personally, and also that he has exhibited the marks of an apostle, such as the performing of signs and wonders, the disciplining of believers and others, and having the care of all the churches, rather than being concerned with just one assembly.

I think it can be truthfully said that from the beginning, Paul's ministry was beset by opposition and controversy. And I have found in my own experience over forty years as a Christian, that Paul is still attacked and maligned and opposed, or just ignored, in some Christian circles. It puzzled me when I was younger as to why Paul and his writings aroused so much opposition, and in some cases, outright hatred.

But then I gradually realised that it was only to be expected, as Paul was appointed the Apostle to the Gentiles by the ascended Lord Jesus, and it is in Paul's writings that we find not only the glorious basic truths of our faith, such as justification by faith, but also the further revelations about the Headship of Christ and the Church which is His Body.

We must remember that Satan is a defeated foe and cannot rob believers of their life in Christ. But he can, if we allow him, turn believers away from knowing the deeper truths about God's purposes for His elect, and by so doing, detract somewhat from the glory and honour that belongs to our Lord and Head, and which should come to Him through our faithful walk according to the Word of Truth rightly divided.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:15, that 'all they which are in Asia be turned away from me'. It is not hard to hear the disappointment in his words. It has often been said before, but it bears repeating, that as the church in the wide sense, turned away from Paul, Christendom slipped into the Dark Ages. And it wasn't until Paul's writings – and more importantly the truths they teach – were rediscovered by the early reformers, that the darkness of superstition and corruption in the church receded.

The truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, as taught through Paul, brought salvation and liberty to millions. It still does today, although it seems to me that once more Christendom is turning away from the only one appointed by the Lord as the apostle and teacher of the Gentiles.

Those responsible for the production of this magazine, and I hope, each reader of it, give Paul his proper place, the place given to him by the Lord Jesus. This means that we accept his inspired writings as 'thus and thus sayeth the Lord', and that being the case, as Gentile believers we must not only pay attention

to what he says, but obey his instructions, for he speaks with the authority of the Lord who commissioned him.

The word apostle is familiar to any reader of the Bible, but it is not an English word. It is a Greek word that has come over into English, through its use in the Bible, almost unchanged. It is made up of two parts, a preposition '*apo*' meaning 'from' or 'away from', and a verb '*stello*' meaning 'I send', or as we would put it in English 'to send'.

So an apostle is one sent from another, and in the Scriptural sense, means a messenger who speaks on behalf of, and with the authority of, the one who sends. The word is used in a very restricted sense in classical Greek, which is fortunate, because it has left the way open for the New Testament writers to use the word in their special way, without it having any useless baggage from general usage attached to it.

The way the Holy Spirit uses the word in Scripture is what is important, so let us look at a few examples. We find the word in its verbal form in Matthew 10:5: These twelve Jesus SENT forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

We could translate this as 'These twelve Jesus apostled...' except that some might think it meant that the Lord gave them an important position. He did that, of course, but the meaning is as we have it translated in our English Bibles, that is, they were sent out as His emissaries or envoys, and the account shows that they indeed went with His power and authority.

We find the word used again in Mark 1:2 where it is applied to John the Baptist: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I SEND my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. John was sent from God as the forerunner of the Messiah, and so we could rightly call John the Baptist an apostle. I don't mean to suggest by this that John was one of the Twelve.

Romans 10:15 gives another example: And how shall they preach, except they be SENT? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Except they be apostled! The quote from Isaiah 52:7 presents a lovely picture of part of an apostle's work.

The word is used of Paul in Acts 26:17, where Paul recounts for King Agrippa the experience of his conversion and call by the Lord many years before: Delivering thee from the People, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I SEND thee. These are not all the occurrences of the word, but I think they are enough to show its meaning.

There are several other references which we must note to complete the picture. Firstly, please read for yourself 1 John 4:9–14. I will quote several phrases from this passage:

verse 9 – God sent His only begotten Son into the world.

verse 10 – God...loved us...and sent His Son.

verse 14 --The Father sent the Son.

In each of the above cases, the word 'sent' is the correct grammatical form of the Greek word '*apostello*'.

Now please look at Hebrews 3:1: Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ. Above all others, the Lord Jesus Christ is THE APOSTLE. All others who claim the title of apostle, whether they be of the Twelve, or the later order of

apostles beginning with Paul, commissioned by the ascended Lord, each take their authority and power from Him, and He is their example supreme.

So, all these thoughts should be in our minds when we read Paul's words in the opening verse of Ephesians, or any of his other epistles, where he claims the title and position of Apostle.

I would like to remind readers now, of a point made by Brian in his series on Acts. One of the responsibilities of an apostle was the disciplining of people whether they were believers or just unbelieving members of Israel.

We see Peter exercise this authority when he brings about the immediate deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In Paul's case it is demonstrated when he strikes Elymas the sorcerer blind in Acts 13:4–12. Then there is the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:20, whom Paul handed over to Satan for a while. This is one side of an apostle's work that receives little attention.

Paul claims not only to be an apostle – that by itself would not mean much – but an apostle of Jesus Christ. It is significant that in the Greek texts the words 'Jesus Christ' are in the reverse order – 'Christ Jesus'. There are many occasions in the *Authorised Version* (AV) where this is the case. And sometimes it is the other way around – where they have 'Christ Jesus' it should be 'Jesus Christ'. So what, some reader may be thinking. If, with me, you believe that the words of Scripture are inspired by the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, then it follows that if the Spirit chooses to have Jesus Christ in some instances and Christ Jesus in others, we should pause, heed and consider.

For some unaccountable reason, the words of an old advertisement for a shoe polish came into my mind a little while ago. Speaking of a pair of shoes, the ad said: 'They are well worn, but they have worn well.' No English speaker needs to be told what the difference is between well worn and worn well. I use this only as an example of how the meaning can change when the same words are used in a different order.

Readers who have a *Companion Bible* will find notes in the margins at the appropriate places where you will be referred to an Appendix dealing with the subject. But let me state the case briefly. When the order of the words is 'Jesus Christ', the emphasis is on the first word 'Jesus'. Jesus was His name as the Word become flesh, while He tabernacled amongst His people, and was humble amongst them and indeed humiliated by them. This order stresses the lowly Jesus who was indeed the Christ, the Messiah of Israel, and was as such later exalted by God. But the emphasis is not on the later exaltation, but on the lowly position.

When I was a child, I thought that the word Christ was the Lord's surname. My name was Athol Walter, and my friend's name was Bill James, and Jesus' name was Jesus Christ. But I learned as I grew up, that the word 'Christ' is a title. In fact, like apostle, it is a Greek word brought over into English. They say '*Christo's*', we say 'Christ'. *Christos*, as many readers will know, is Greek for the Hebrew word that comes into English as 'Messiah'. And the meaning of the two words is 'The Anointed One'. And the Messiah, God's Anointed, is the Deliverer, sent (there is that word again!) by God to deliver and save and restore the people of Israel.

Now when the word order is reversed – Christ Jesus – the emphasis is still on the first word, but this time it is the word Christ, or Messiah. So the meaning is not Jesus the lowly one who was the Messiah, but the exalted and risen Messiah, who in the days of His flesh was the lowly Jesus.

I hope that what I have said makes some sense to you, and I would like to suggest that whenever you read the words 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus' in Paul's writings, that you do a little digging and make sure just which way the words were written by the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

I said 'in Paul's writings' in the last paragraph, because it is only Paul who uses the term 'Christ Jesus'. If any reader wishes to check this out, you will need to use the revised version of your Interlinear Greek, or English translations made from the revised text. And it is interesting to note that the term is not used in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Given that these facts are true, it means that the term 'Christ Jesus' is not used in parts of Scripture that relate to the nation of Israel, but only in the parts of Scripture that relate either to the remnant of Israel, who occupy a special place, or to the Church which is His Body, whose members also occupy a special, though different, place. I leave you to a prayerful consideration of this matter.

The next phrase Paul uses is 'by the will of God'. This is milder than the opening to Galatians (which I hope you will look at), where he is making a very strong case for his independent apostleship. Galatians was written quite early in his ministry, and there were then many who were only too happy to spread all sorts of untruths about Paul. In most of the other epistles which he writes by himself, he uses the same or a similar phrase to this one in Ephesians.

The last part of verse one mentions the addressees '...to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus'. The last two words are in the right order this time.

Readers may be aware that in some early copies of this epistle the word 'Ephesus' is left out, and this has caused some teachers to say that Ephesians is a circular letter, and the space was left for the names of different churches to be inserted. I don't intend to go into this point, as it is not of great significance to us. Any reader wishing to follow it up will find a fairly full discussion of it on pages 14–16 in Charles Welch's book *'In Heavenly Places'*. This book is available from the BBFA Book Agent and is recommended.

I think that we can take it that the letter was addressed by Paul to the believers in the assembly at Ephesus, and I intend to proceed on that basis.

Let me quote Charles Welch in the above mentioned book: 'We are not...very concerned about the precise geographical destination of this letter, its importance for us is that, while originally addressed by Paul to a specific company, it was given by inspiration of God, and preserved for all time because it was the Divine intention that this letter should form a part of Holy Scripture. The addressees therefore are a wider company than the believers who lived in Ephesus, or who lived at the time of writing'.

In Ephesians 2:11,12, we read that Paul is talking to Gentiles who were at one time without hope, without Christ and without God. Paul tells them that once they would have been called the Uncircumcision, aliens and strangers. And whether our readers realise it or not, that is exactly the position we were in before the grace of God brought us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. So we can rightly take the epistle to be referring to us.

Now we must look at the terms 'saints' and 'the faithful in Christ Jesus'. It has become the practise of some denominations over the centuries to canonise certain people, or in other words, to officially designate them as saints. But this is not the way the word is used in the New Testament, nor was it the practise of the early church.

One of the strengths of the English language is that it is so rich in synonyms, that is, it has many different words which can be used for the same or similar things. But this can be a problem, especially when we are not as familiar with our language as we should be. It means that we can miss some point in Scripture

because we do not know that the same subject is being spoken about, in spite of different words being used.

And the subject of 'saints' in the New Testament is a case in point. I was well into adulthood before I realised the connection between the words 'saint, sanctification and sanctify'. They are really only different forms of the same word. Further, the words righteousness and sanctification are practically synonymous. But while we can say in English that someone has been sanctified, we can't say that they have been righteous-ified, although the meaning is exactly the same. We would have to say that they have been made righteous. And another word that comes into this is holiness. The Greek word translated 'saint' is '*hagios*'. The same word is also translated as 'holy'.

There is no problem with understanding the word 'faithful'. Our only problem is being it. But the two words 'saints' and 'faithful' – I should use the full phrase – 'faithful in Christ Jesus', complement each other and must be taken together. They suggest the twofold aspect of our Christian experience. Our life in Christ is not, and never can be, in question. We are redeemed and sanctified (that is, made saints) by the finished work of Christ, and by nothing else. But salvation is unto good works, and we are expected by the Lord, to walk worthily of Him and His calling of us, or in other words to be faithful.

In the New Testament sense, every believer is a saint, but it is possible for a saint to walk in an unfaithful manner, or in other words, to be a bad saint. But the bad saint is still a saint. This epistle, however, is addressed not only to saints, but to saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus. And as we go through the epistle, we will see more and more that being faithful in Christ Jesus is all wrapped up with walking worthily of Him who is not only our Saviour, and not only our Lord, but who is also Head of the Church which is His Body, of which we, by the grace of God, are a small part.

Chapter 3 -- The Church's One Foundation

We did not quite finish the introductory salutation in our last chapter, so there is a little more to say about it before we proceed. Paul wraps up his opening greetings by wishing them grace and peace. Grace is an extremely important word in the Christian's vocabulary, and also in Paul's epistles in general and Ephesians in particular. I think, however, that we should recognise that in these opening verses, Paul is following the custom of his time in addressing a letter. When we write to someone named Mr. Smith, we happily (and perhaps unthinkingly) start off by writing 'Dear Mr. Smith'. And in many cases, we may never have met Mr. Smith before. Yet, we don't hesitate to address this stranger as 'Dear' simply because it is the custom.

So apart from a couple of comments, we will leave a more detailed examination of the word 'grace' until we come to it in the context of the letter. The Greeks' customary form of greeting in Paul's day was the word 'grace'. The Jews, however, would greet you with the word 'shalom', that is, they would wish you peace. And in Paul's greeting, dealing as he must with both Jews and Greeks – and Greek speakers of other nationalities – he combines the two greetings into one.

The Greek word for grace is *charis*, from which we derive such words as 'charisma' and 'charismatic'. The Greek word for peace is *irene* which we sometimes use as a woman's name.

In the first study in this series, I presented an outline of the epistle which was designed to show the balance between the various sections. I realise that some of our readers may not be too familiar with the subject of structures in Scripture, so to give a little idea of what it is about, and how a search for the underlying structure can help, I will use the balancing points that there are between the opening and closing salutations of Ephesians.

The two sections are 1:1,2 and 6:21–24. In the first section, we have the subject of Paul's appointment by, and service for the Lord. He talks about his apostleship. In the closing section, we have another servant of the Lord mentioned, Tychicus, and mention is made of his service (a faithful minister) and appointment (in the Lord).

Back in the opening verses, we have Paul's greetings to the saints and the faithful. In the closing verses, we have his greetings to those who love the Lord Christ Jesus in all sincerity. There is also the mention of Tychicus being a 'faithful' minister echoing the 'faithful' saints at the beginning.

And when he greets them in the opening verses, he prays for grace and peace for them. At the end, he prays for peace to the brethren, love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1:2) and finally, in 6:24, that grace would be with all who love our Lord Christ Jesus in sincerity.

The question may arise in some reader's mind as to the significance of the foregoing. Two things come quickly to mind. Firstly, I find my memory being greatly helped by spending a little time considering both the similar and contrasting thoughts. And secondly, it seems to me that the Holy Spirit emphasises points by either their repetition or contrast in the parallel sections. Others undoubtedly have keener minds than I and may not need the help, but I find I need things hammered home a number of times before I start to get the message.

While we may not refer to balancing points in the structures all the time in our studies, we will certainly do it from time to time.

We now come to the next section, which is from verse 3 to verse 14 of chapter 1. If you will refer to the outline (from my first study), you will see that the balancing section is 4:1–6. I will leave you to do the comparison for yourself.

I am faced with a dilemma as we come to these verses. I gave this study the title 'The Charter of The Church', and my dilemma is whether to talk about which church I mean at this point, or wait until we get down to the end of the chapter where the Church in question is given its name. In view of the rather staggering things that are said of this company (church) in the verses under review, I think I must say something about it now.

The moment I wrote 'which church I mean' in the preceding paragraph, I inferred that there is more than one church I am not talking here of denominations. We will often ask someone which church they belong to, when we should have asked which denomination. Another misuse of language which is confusing, is when someone asks us what is our religion. While it could be used correctly now with our multicultural society, in the past the question usually referred to our denomination.

The correct answer to the question as to our religion is, 'I am a Christian.' The correct answer to the question as to our denomination is, 'I am a Baptist or Anglican or Roman Catholic or whatever, as the case may be.' But if you ask me what church I belong to, my answer will be, 'I am a member of the Church which is His Body.' There is a strongly held belief amongst many believers that the New Testament speaks only of one church And I have known some lovely folk to become very agitated when presented with the fact that the Bible speaks of a number of churches. I hope that you will keep an open mind about the matter until I have presented the Scriptural evidence.

The Winding Road To Church

The quirks of language that twist and shape words as they move from one language to another is something I find very interesting. And the word 'church' is a good example. Let's follow this winding road. The word 'church' comes from the Middle English word *chirche* or *cherche*, which in turn was

adapted or adopted from the Anglo-saxon *circe* or *cyrce*. This was how the Anglo-Saxons brought the word into their tongue from Late Greek the word in that language being *kyriakon*, which comes from *kyriake*.

There was another word used with it originally, that was dropped in usage over time but we need to supply that word in our minds. It is *doma* which means 'house', and the two words '*kyriake doma*' mean the Lord's House. *Kyriake* in its turn is a form of the word *kyrios*, which means 'Lord' or 'Master', and that is a title often given to the Lord Christ Jesus.

So the original expression the Lord's house, *kyriake doma*, after a rather meandering journey, becomes for us, the word 'church'. The Scottish word *kirk* is even closer to the original 'kyriake'. And we now use the word 'church' to mean either a building, the people who meet in it, or even the organisation who owns the building. I hope you found that interesting. But here comes the harder part.

The Greek word that is translated 'church' in our Bibles is not *kyriakon* at all. It is, as many of you know, the word *ekklesia*, which is a familiar word, even though we change the double 'kk' to double 'cc'. We speak of things ecclesiastical, and know that they relate to church matters.

There is only one instance in the New Testament where the word church is not the translation of *ekklesia*, and that is in Acts 19:37, where the Greek reads literally, 'robbers of temples', not 'churches' as in the AV. But what did the word mean when Paul and his fellow New Testament writers used it?

The word *ekklesia* occurs in the New Testament 115 times, and there are only three times where it is not translated 'church'. The word used in those three exceptions is the word 'assembly'. That word brings us very close to the real meaning of *ekklesia*, but let us look at some examples. It is the way the Scripture uses a word that is the important thing.

The first time the word is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 16:18 where the Lord says: 'And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.' This is a difficult verse for some, and at first glance it may appear to contradict what I am trying to say. But stay with me for a while. The only other occurrence of 'church' in the Gospels is two chapters further on, Matthew 18:17: 'And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' Please read the context of this verse, before you decide whether it is speaking of the assembly of believers today.

I will have to be selective now.

Acts 5:11: 'And great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things.'

Acts 18:22: 'And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church he went down
to Antioch.'

Acts 19:32: 'Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly (*ekklesia*) was confused. Look also at verses 39 and 41 of this same chapter. These three verses are very important to our understanding of the word 'church'.

Romans 16:5: 'Likewise greet the church that is in their house.'

1 Corinthians 1:1,2: 'Paul unto the church of God which is at Corinth.'

Ephesians 1:22,23: 'And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things

to the church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'

Well, we could go on multiplying references while not deepening our understanding much. But back to Acts for one last verse. Acts 7:38: 'This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel

which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.' This quote comes from Stephen's defence before the Sanhedrin just prior to his death.

The charge against him was very serious, and I doubt that Stephen would have been inclined to play with words. I think we can also take it as read that Stephen would have been given the words to say in this instance, in accordance with the Lord's promise in Matthew 10:16–20. So, when he speaks of the church in the wilderness, we can take it that both he and the Holy Spirit means what he said.

What is the church in the wilderness to which he refers? It is the nation of Israel, redeemed out of Egypt, and brought by the power and guidance of God to Mount Sinai where they were to be given the Law which would mark them out as separate from the other nations, and dedicated unto God.

Now think about those verses from Acts 19. In verse 32 we read 'the assembly was confused'. It is interesting that the translators have shied away from using the word church in the three verses in this chapter that refer to the assembly in the amphitheatre. As I mentioned above, in every other case in the NT, they translate ekklesia as church, But of course, these verses do not refer to the assembly of the Lord's people, so maybe they thought they could not use 'church' here.

This raises another point. Believers throughout the centuries have taken over ordinary words, and imbued them with special significance because of their sacred associations. 'Church' is one such word. As far as the meaning behind the word is concerned, and leaving aside the special atmosphere Christians have built around it, we could use the word church in these verses of Acts 19 perfectly legitimately. In one sense, it is a shame that the translators did not do so, because it tends to veil the truth from us somewhat.

I suggest that we should at least think the word 'assembly' in our minds whenever we hear the word 'church', for that is what the word means. A church is an assembly, a gathering together of a group of people for some common purpose, and the other important meaning behind the Greek word 'ekklesia' is that the group of people so gathered were called out for that purpose.

So it was with Israel back in the days following the exodus. They were indeed the church in the wilderness. They had been called out of Egypt, away from the other people in Egypt, to be a special assembly for God.

The townspeople in Ephesus, stirred up by Demetrius the silversmith, came together in defence of their goddess Diana, and when they assembled in the theatre, they were a church.

But back to the New Testament 'churches' or 'assemblies'. We would say that for someone to be a member of 'the Church', that is, a member of the company of believers, there must be first of all a recognition of the work of the Lord on the Cross, and a personal acceptance of that.

But what about Matthew 16:18, where the Lord says that on the confession of Himself as the Messiah, He was going to build His 'church'? Peter had just made a great statement of faith that brought forth the Lord's response.

Then just a few verses down, when the Lord starts to tell the disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and die, it is obvious that such an idea was totally foreign to them, as we can see from Peter's outspoken remonstrance with the Lord.

And in chapter 18 you will remember, the Lord speaks about them taking their disputes to the 'church', as if it was a well known structure in their midst. It was indeed. It was the synagogue, where the Jewish people met for their psalm singing and the reading and exposition of their Scriptures.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for assembly or congregation as it is often translated is *qahal*, and when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek that word was translated by 'synagogue'. When the various authors of the New Testament documents were inspired to write their works, however, they referred to the assembly of believers as the, or in some instances an 'ecclesia'.

So how many churches, or different assemblies are there in the New Testament? That is not easy to answer, but for our purposes we can recognise the following.

Firstly, the nation of Israel is recognised as an 'assembly', distinct from the other nations around them. One of its titles is the Kingdom of God or Heaven. We must distinguish this company from our 'church', and recognise that most of what is in the Gospels belongs to that company of the Lord's people.

Then there is the 'assembly' of those who accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah in the days of His earthly ministry, before the Cross and certainly before the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Then there was a new 'assembly' formed on the Day of Pentecost, which was still linked with Israel and Old Testament prophecies. This group, however, was called out from among the largely unbelieving nation of Israel, and is called amongst other things, 'the Church of God and 'the Bride of the Lamb'.

And then there is the 'Church which is His Body', which came into existence only after the divorcing of Israel at the end of the Book of Acts. This assembly is not connected with Abraham, Moses or Israel. It is a company in which Jews and Gentiles are in complete equality, unlike the 'church' of the Acts period. Not only have the Jews lost all their national and dispensational privileges, but the Gentile has lost all of his dispensational disadvantages, which kept him on the outside, to some extent, back in the Acts assemblies. There are more differences and distinctions, but we hope to show these things from the Word as we go along.

So when we refer to the 'Church' spoken of in Ephesians, we mean the 'Church which is His Body', which is a completely separate company from any of the other assemblies mentioned earlier in the Bible. There will be much more on this later.

Ephesians 1:3–14

Let us examine then, verses 3–14 of Ephesians 1. As you read through these verses, I want you to notice a theme that is repeated three times. In verse 6 we have 'To the praise of the glory of His grace...' 'Then in verse 12 'that we should be to the praise of His Glory And finally, at the end of verse 14 we read, 'unto the praise of His glory.'

Each of these statements belongs to its own section of the passage, and I want to refer you back to the headings given in the outline of the book, which summarise each section for us. They are:

1. The Will of the Father, verses 3–6
2. The Work. of the Son, verses 7–12
3. The Witness of the Spirit, verses 13,14

Verse 3 starts with the words 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us'. The word 'blessed' here is not the same as the word used in Matthew 5 for instance. It is the Greek word *eulogia*, and it is not hard to see the English word *eulogy* in it. *Eulogia* means 'good speaking', and while this thought does not exhaust the meaning of the word by any means, it is a lovely thought to realise that we could translate the verse this way: 'Speak well of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has spoken well of us.'

Paul tells us in Hebrews 1 that in the last days God spoke in 'His Son'. It is no accident that one of the most important titles of the Lord is 'The Word'. And in Romans 8 we are presented with the courtroom scene, where the advocate (I think the prosecutor is meant) is none other than the One who died for us. And rather than bring up the record of our sins, He speaks on our behalf. It is not possible for Him to bring up our past record, as once we have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, our sins are no more. They have been forgotten, never to be remembered against us any more.

Surely He has spoken very well of us. What do our lives and witness say of Him?

It may seem a little strange that Paul refers to God as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Some sects, who deny the Deity of Christ, use this verse to bolster their case. I don't think their use of it in that way is valid.

It is interesting to look at the closing verses of the epistle again. In 6:23, we have: 'Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. That is just a little different, isn't it? I am not suggesting that we should change the translation of 1:3, but I think the two statements go together.

One other thought on this. In the Old Testament, we read of 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. But once the great day of atonement had come in reality and the true Lamb of God had paid the price for the sins of the world God is no longer called by the OT title, but He becomes 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Blessed

Now the next point. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. The Greek here actually says: 'He has blessed us with every blessing that is spiritual.' There may not be a great difference between the two statements, but to say every blessing that is spiritual, is just a little more precise and definite than all spiritual blessings.

We can rest assured that even though we may know and understand only a fraction of the spiritual blessings available, every single spiritual blessing there is, is ours in Christ Jesus. What is the point about these blessings being spiritual? Are not all blessings spiritual? The answer to that last question is no.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were told that if they would keep the Law and walk uprightly and faithfully according to its precepts, God would bless them. In what way would they be blessed?

Deuteronomy 28 gives us the answer. Let me summarise. If they were obedient to God they would be blessed in their cities and their fields. They would have lots of children; their livestock would be healthy and have lots of offspring; their crops would grow prolifically; their enemies would be powerless against them, and they would be held in high regard by the nations of the world. It is summed up in verse 5 by the sentence: 'Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store'.

Let me ask you a question. What was the sphere of blessing for the people of Israel? In other words, where will they enjoy their blessings? That's an easy one to answer. In the land that the Lord promised their ancestor Abraham. And if you don't believe that is to be literally fulfilled, then you will be extremely puzzled by all the dust being raised in the Middle East. But how fitting it is. Their place of blessing is the land, and their blessings are physical blessings, to do with the land, and life on this earth.

We will find out, however, that the sphere of blessing for the Church which is His Body, is not a land on earth, but rather heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers. That is a spiritual realm, as

opposed to the earthly realm of Israel. What good would blessings of basket and store be to those whose place of blessing is in that heavenly realm? None whatsoever.

But each to his own. God suits the blessing to the place, and even though I cannot explain what every spiritual blessing is, I am confident that the Lord who loves me and who gave Himself for me, will provide not only everything I need, but every wonderful thing that is suited exactly to the place of blessing in which He puts me.

Chapter 4 -- To Worlds Unknown

We concluded our last chapter by comparing the all spiritual blessings of Ephesians with the earthly blessings promised to Israel, and the comment was made that in each case, the blessings promised and indeed given by a gracious God match the sphere or position in which those blessings will be enjoyed.

We have yet to examine the phrase 'in heavenly places', but before we come to that, one or two other comments on the word spiritual.

Spiritual versus Carnal?

As with the word 'church', this word 'spiritual' has come to have a very special place in the believer's vocabulary – and rightly so. But that doesn't make a correct understanding of it automatic. Too often our conception of Scriptural truth is coloured by denominational teaching, by reading we may have done, even by statements in favourite hymns, but any of these could be faulty.

The important thing for those who wish to walk worthy of their high calling in Christ Jesus is to see how the Scriptures use a word, and let that be the sole guide for us. Always the catch cry must be, 'What does the Bible say about it?'

The word 'spiritual' is a translation of the Greek word '*pneuma*', which means 'to breathe', the noun form being of course, 'breath'. This is why we call the tubes of rubber we ride around on in our cars and bikes pneumatic tyres. They are filled with air, the stuff we breathe. It is really quite amazing just how many words we have taken over from Greek into our language without much change at all.

The Hebrew word (in the Old Testament) that was translated '*pneuma*' is '*nephesh*', and like '*pneuma*' is translated 'breath' and also 'spirit' and 'soul'. Readers who may wish to go further with these two words will find help in the *Companion Bible*, Appendices 9, 13, 101 and 110. It is not a small subject, let me tell you.

For our purposes, it will suffice if we stay with the New Testament, and look at some examples of the word spiritual there. I hope that you will open your Bible and read not only the verses I mention, but also the contexts.

We tend to think that if a thing is spiritual, it must of necessity be good, but in this very epistle we are studying, in chapter 6:12, we read about 'spiritual wickedness'. It is at moments like these that we usually react in one of two ways, We can either say, 'Well, now, there is a new thought. It differs from what I have been taught, but let's see where it leads.' Or we might say, 'Well, that doesn't line up with what I believe. I don't want to have anything more to do with this', and then close the book along with our minds. I sincerely hope your reaction will be the first one.

If the Bible can speak about spiritual wickedness, then it follows that the word spiritual does not always refer to 'good things'. That means we must take some care.

But look again at Ephesians 6:12, for the verse helps us some more. It sets the word spiritual over against flesh and blood, and that is an important point to remember.

Let's go further. Romans 7:14 says, 'For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.' And then Romans 15:27 tells us, 'For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.'

So spiritual is also the opposite of carnal. Every time I read or hear the word carnal, I can't help but remember a debate between two Christian teachers that I heard some years back. One of the men was very heavily into spiritualising Scripture, and for him the word 'carnal' was a very dirty word indeed. He used it often in his speeches, and he would almost shout it, and his facial expression and tone of voice left us in no doubt that, for him, anything carnal was worse than sin and to be excised ruthlessly from the Christian's life and thought.

Well, I am sorry to have to challenge that line of thinking, but if we let God's Word speak for itself, we must recognise that carnal things are not always bad, otherwise how can Paul exhort the Gentile believers in Rome to share their carnal things with their Jewish brethren in Israel who were suffering hardship at the time. These days, we would probably replace the phrase 'carnal things' with 'worldly goods' or some such, for that is what Paul is talking about.

Paul presents us with another contrast in 1 Corinthians 15:44, where he speaks of our physical bodies like this: 'It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.'

The next verse is very important, and I would love to get into it, but I must resist the temptation because it will take us too far afield. Except to say that where we read that Adam was made a living soul, the word 'soul' is exactly the same word in the Greek as the word 'natural' in the preceding verse. Of course, one is a noun, the other is an adjective, but what Paul literally wrote in verse 44 was: 'It is sown a soulish body'. I know that soulish is not really a word, but how else can it be expressed? I leave it there for now.

So, we have learned that the Scriptures use the word spiritual as the opposite of flesh and blood, of natural, of carnal or fleshly. And just as spiritual is not always referring to something good, neither is carnal always bad.

For another example of carnal things not always being bad, we need only think back to our discussion of the earthly realm of Israel's blessings, as opposed to the spiritual blessings of the Church which is His Body in heavenly places far above all.

God promised the faithful Israelite peace and prosperity in the land given to his forefather Abraham. These are earthly blessings – indeed, in the light of what we have seen above, we could call them carnal blessings. Are they bad, and to be shunned by the people of Israel because they are not 'spiritual'? Certainly not. They are promised by God as the reward for obedience to the Law of Moses, and while that dispensation of law is not in operation now, I believe the time is coming when it will once more become the hope of the people of Israel. And that means that the promises of blessing relating to that dispensation will also operate once again.

Would you look at Psalm 128. Only 6 short verses, telling how the faithful Jew would be blessed. I can read those verses with interest and faith, knowing them to be the inspired word of God, but they do not speak directly to me, nor are they telling me about my spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places. But that does not invalidate them for those to whom they belong. I do not have to try to spiritualise

them in some way to make them fit my sphere of blessing. I can leave them right where they are, and leave them to whom they belong without doing any injustice to God's Word, and without losing anything in my own spiritual life, either now or in the future.

Well, perhaps enough about spiritual and spiritual blessings. What does Paul tell us next? Nothing less than that every spiritual blessing is ours in heavenly places in Christ. There is more in the next verse, but we will chew over this piece for a while.

'In Christ'

We should note first of all, and it should be printed in capitals and underlined in red ink and whatever else will make us take notice, that we have these wonderful riches of grace IN CHRIST. This is Paul's constant theme – Christ is ALL and without Him we are nothing and have nothing. So here it is 'in Christ' verse 5, 'by Jesus Christ' verse 6, 'in the Beloved' verse 7, 'In whom' (Christ again) verse 10, 'in Christ, even in Him' verse 11 'In whom', verse 12 'in Christ'; and so it goes on.

There is only one Lord and that is Jesus Christ. There is only one Saviour and that is Jesus Christ. There is only one mediator and that is Jesus Christ. There is only one name by which anyone can be saved, and that name is Jesus Christ. There is only one right and true way to God, only one door through which we can pass, and that way, that door, is Jesus Christ. Do I need to go on?

It makes no difference whether the Bible is referring to the redeemed of Israel, or the redeemed of the New Jerusalem, or the redeemed of the Church which is His Body, there is only one foundation for all these divisions in the family of God, and that foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. His spotless life, His death in our place, His resurrection and His ascension to the heavenly places at the right hand of God has secured every blessing and privilege for God's people, regardless of the dispensational place of blessing to which they have been destined by the love and grace of God.

Heavenly Places

When we think about the phrase 'in heavenly places', we must be aware of several things. The Greek of the original is '*en tois epouraniois*'. My *Interlinear Greek New Testament* tells me that this is literally 'in the heavenlies. While there is no word for places in the Greek, it has to be added in English to make the sense.

It is one of the special things about Ephesians, that this phrase 'in heavenly places' occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Some people have reacted to this by pointing out the many places where the word 'heavenly' occurs, but that is not what was said. The phrase we are looking at – in heavenly places – is unique to Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, and that point should make us pause a bit.

I think it is important to realise that it refers to a PLACE. It is not some abstract spiritual, concept. It answers the question WHERE?

Where will the redeemed and faithful Israelite enjoy his/her blessings?
In the land.

Where will the overcomer spoken of in Revelation and other places, enjoy his/her blessings?
In the New Jerusalem.

Where will the member of the Church which is His Body, enjoy his/her blessings?
In heavenly places.

Do you think I am being fanciful here? I hope not. But if so, consider two passages of Scripture. Firstly, Matthew 5:5, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' And secondly, Philippians 3:18–20,

and I quote from the New English Bible, 'For as I have often told you, and now tell you with tears in my eyes, there are many whose way of life makes them enemies of the cross of Christ. They are heading for destruction, appetite is their god, and they glory in their shame...

We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

When Christ was speaking to His followers in Israel, He told them they could look forward to inheriting the earth. I suspect that the word 'earth' there should be translated 'land', but we can leave that aside for now. Then in Philippians, Paul tells his converts that they are citizens of heaven. I have had people tell me that these two things mean one and the same. I'm sorry, but if inheriting the earth or the land means the same as being citizens of heaven, then we may as well close the Book, and go off and play bowls or something.

Then Colossians 3:1 has a bearing on this also. 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, (where is that, Paul?) where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God'. You know, of course, that Ephesians is going to instruct us that being at the right hand of God is the same as being in heavenly places.

I said earlier that the words 'heavens' and 'heavenlies' occurs many times throughout Scripture. For instance, we read of 'our heavenly Father', and even 'our Father in Heaven'. The word in these cases is not '*epouraniois*', as in Ephesians but the simpler word '*ouraniois*'. For the sake of Greek scholars who may read this, I must state that I know the endings of these words change according to case and gender etc.

As can be easily seen, the word heavenlies in Ephesians has two letters in front of it that the other word does not have. The letters are *ep* and it is a contraction of the preposition *epi* which means above or upon. Our Bibles generally ignore the difference, but to give the word its full power we should translate it as the above heavens, or the super heavens. It is not easy to find a satisfactory English equivalent, but we should keep in mind that the word has an added dimension to it.

Further down in the chapter, at 1:20, we are told that Christ was raised from the dead by God's power, and seated at his own (that is, God's) right hand in the heavenly places, far above all. We will come to these overwhelming statements in due course, but when we consider what is said in these verses towards the end of the chapter, we shouldn't wonder that the place is referred to as the '*epouraniois*', the 'above-heavens'.

The occurrences of 'in heavenly places' are, as I said before, all in Ephesians. They are 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12. Please refer to them all. You will see that in 6:10, the translators have written 'high places', but you can rest assured that the phrase in the Greek is exactly the same as the others. This is a little example that shows you can't always trust the translators.

I mentioned Colossians 3:1 above, but we need to bring it to mind again. The phrase, in heavenly places, does not occur there, but we read that the things above which we are to seek after, are where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and we know from the references in Ephesians that this is synonymous with heavenly places.

Now I would like you to go to Hebrews 4:14. Here we are told that our great High Priest (the Lord Jesus Christ) has passed into the heavens. My margin and later translations tell me this should read, passed THROUGH the heavens. Then Hebrews 7:26 says that Christ is made higher than the heavens. Well, that

fits what we have seen already. But then in Hebrews 9:24 we read that Christ has entered into heaven itself.

To some this seems like a contradiction. How can He be passed through the heavens, be made higher than the heavens, be seated at the right of God in the above heavens, and yet be in heaven?

The Bible speaks of more than one heaven. If you look at Genesis 1, you will see how there are differences made. The first verse speaks of heaven, which I think is the dwelling place of God, the heavenly places of Ephesians. Then in verses 7 and 8, we read that God made a firmament above the earth, and it was called heaven. This is the heavens in which birds and aeroplanes fly. Then, we go outside at night and look up into the sky and see all the stars lighting up the heavens. No birds there, it is too high or far for them. No God dwelling there either, His dwelling place is far beyond.

So Christ can be in Heaven, the dwelling place of the Holy God, and still have passed through the heavens, the lesser heavens of the universe and the earth's atmosphere.

Well, to say that we are a little out of our depth (or out of our atmosphere) is a real understatement. But whether we understand the different heavens that God has made or not, we can rest assured, on the absolute integrity of His Word, that the member of the Church which is His Body, is blessed with every blessing that is spiritual in the heavenly places far above all, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

What other calling in Scripture compares with this? Is this not grace? Yes, indeed, but it is more than that. It is the riches of His grace.

Chapter 5 – The Foundation of the World

In our last study, we gave some thought to what it means to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and found that there is much more in those phrases than a casual reading might suggest. As I have wrestled with the meaning of these verses, I sometimes wonder just how much Paul understood when he wrote them. I suppose that he would have understood it, having the benefit of divine revelation. I think, though, that he might have been a little overwhelmed by the tremendous things contained in this revelation of the new part of God's plan – a part that had not been revealed hitherto.

As mind boggling as these things that we have already considered are, there is more to come – revelation of truths so different and so much beyond any expectations that we could have, it is no wonder that many of the Lord's people seem to balk at it.

We must remind ourselves, however, that these things were written for our learning, and more than that, they were written for us to believe and accept, so let us come to this part of God's Word with due humility, and courage to step out in faith onto what may be unknown waters. The Lord will provide!

Verse 4 reads in part: 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.' I propose to leave 'According as He hath chosen us in Him' for the present. It is not that I wish to avoid the subject, but it is connected with what comes in verse 5. This tells us that the Father has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, and that will keep us occupied for a little while, I can assure you. So, if you will allow me, I will leave the chosen part of it for now and move to the time when He chose us, namely, 'before the foundation of the world'.

Please note that the phrase 'before the foundation of the world' answers the question of when the Father chose us. It refers to a period before a particular moment or event in time, and a correct

understanding of what is referred to by the foundation of the world will help us not only here in Ephesians, but with many other parts of Scripture as well.

On the face of it, it seems perfectly natural and feasible that God did something before the foundation of the world. We know that God is eternal, having neither beginning nor end, so He was there before the beginning, or foundation, of the world. And of course, the Bible commences with the simple, yet profound, statement that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Yes, we could indeed refer to that as the foundation of the earth.

But what does the original say? The Greek word in Ephesians 1:4 translated as 'foundation' is *katabole*. *Kata* is a preposition meaning down, and *bole* is a form of the word *ballo* meaning to throw. This is the word that gives us our word ball. So simply, *katabole* means a throwing down, and many Bible scholars say that is precisely what is done with a foundation, it is laid, or 'thrown down'. Perhaps.

In line with our belief that the Scripture is its own interpreter, and that we must note how a particular word is used in the Bible, let us be good Bereans and check it out for ourselves. According to Cruden's Concordance, the word 'foundation' occurs over 20 times in the New Testament. For a reason that will become clear shortly, we will confine ourselves to Paul's epistles for now.

Here are some of the references:

Romans 15:20: Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10–12: According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon...For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones...

Hebrews 6:1: Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

Hebrews 11:10: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The above are not all the occurrences in the New Testament by any means, but with the exception of one verse which we will come to shortly, they are sufficient for our purpose. The point that concerns us now is that in each of the verses mentioned above, the word foundation is never the translation of *katabole*. No, not once. The Greek word used in those verses, and others that I have not quoted, is *themelion*, which indeed does mean a foundation in the way we understand it.

The reason I quoted only from Paul's writings is to show that he knew and used the normal word for foundation. In fact, he actually uses *themelion* in Ephesians. It comes in 2:20, the exception mentioned above, where we read: 'And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.'

Now let's use the common sense that God has given us, and I'm sure He expects us to use it too. If Paul knew and used the word *themelion* that means a foundation in the sense that we understand a foundation, he must have something other than an ordinary foundation in mind when he uses a word other than *themelion*. So let's move on a bit further.

Perhaps I should give the complete references to the occurrences of both *themelion* and *katabole* for those who do not have a concordance that shows the different Greek words used.

Themelion in the New Testament: Luke 6:48, 49; 14:29; Acts 16:26; Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11, 12; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 6:19; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 6:1; 11:10; Revelation 21:14, 19.

This list is for the noun. I am not concerned with the verb at the moment.

I will divide the next list into two, which will save some repetition, the two lists being

1. From or Since the foundation (*katabole*) of the world, and
2. Before the foundation (*katabole*) of the world.

Katabole in the New Testament

1. Matthew 13:35, 25:34; Luke 11:50; Hebrews 4:3, 9:26, 11:11 (this is interesting!); Revelation 13:8, 17:8.
2. John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20.

A word about concordances. Without denigrating *Cruden's Concordance* (I have one and use it), it must be said that if you wish to look behind the English words used to the Hebrew or Greek, then Cruden's cannot help you. It was not designed for that. To go further in your study, you will need to have one of the following: *Strongs Exhaustive Concordance* or *Youngs Analytical Concordance*.

In addition, a book which is the most helpful in this regard is *The Englishman's Greek Concordance* by Wigram. There is an edition of this book put out called the *New Englishman's Greek Concordance* by the same author, and that one has the key numbers linking it to the lexicon in Strong's Concordance. If any reader wishes to get hold of any of these books, and has difficulty, get in touch with David Tavender, the Berean Book agent, whose address you will find on the back page of this magazine.

So back to our two words for foundation. I must point out that in Hebrews 6:1, where we read 'not laying again the foundation', while the word foundation is *themelion*, the word laying is *kataballo*, the verbal form of *katabole*. I am sure in my own mind that this does not affect the conclusion that I am presenting.

Readers will be aware that we often refer to the *Septuagint* (LXX), a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) into Greek made several centuries before Christ. This was done partly for the benefit of Jews living outside Israel who could no longer understand their mother tongue. We refer to this translation because the Greek they used is very much the same language that the New Testament was written in, and so it provides a bridge for us between the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament.

Now the word *kataballo* (the verbal form) occurs a number of times in the LXX, so let us see where it is used. I will select just a few to save wearying you.

Kataballo in the LXX:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 2 Chronicles 32:21 | They SLEW him there with a sword. |
| Job 12:14 | Behold, he BREAKETH DOWN and it cannot be built again. |
| Job 16:15 | He BREAKETH me with breach upon breach. |
| Proverbs 7:26 | She hath cast down many wounded. |
| Proverbs 5:28 | Like a city that is BROKEN DOWN, and without walls. |
| Isaiah 26:5 | The lofty city he LAYETH IT LOW. |
| Ezekiel 26:4 | They SHALL DESTROY the walls of Tyrus, and BREAK DOWN her towers. |

It can be said without fear of contradiction that every occurrence of *kataballo* in the LXX means overthrow, a destructive throwing down, not throwing down in the sense of laying a foundation. And what is more, each occurrence comes in a context of battle, of siege, of judgement and of destruction which further convinces me that in Ephesians 1:4, Paul is not talking of laying the foundation of the world, but rather of some event which could be called the overthrowing of the world in a destructive sense.

I suppose we must now ask whether there is an event in Biblical history that could be called the overthrow of the world. The answer to that is a definite yes. Some may have already thought of Noah's flood, and that certainly was a judgement of destruction on the world. But we need to go back further in time.

Back in the list of occurrences of the phrase 'the foundation of the world', there was one in Luke 11:50. You did look it up, didn't you? Just in case, I will quote it, together with the verse after it: 'That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; FROM THE BLOOD OF ABEL...'

The period of time referred to in Scripture as FROM the foundation of the world takes us back to the murder of Abel at least. This terrible event happened long before Noah's flood. And have you noticed that our phrase in Ephesians 1:4 is BEFORE the foundation of the world? I had an earnest gentleman tell me on one occasion that FROM the foundation of the world and BEFORE the foundation of the world meant one and the same thing, but surely, if words mean anything at all, that cannot be right.

As an example, let me talk about Paul Keating, our Prime Minister. If I compare the way things have been from or since the election of Mr. Keating, with how they were before the election of Mr Keating, no one in their normal senses would say those two periods were one and the same. In the same way, the period called 'before the foundation of the world' must be earlier, and different, to the period called from the foundation of the world. I'm sorry to labour the point, but it is very important.

So what happened before the murder of Abel that could be called the foundation, or as we have seen, the overthrow of the world? In the opening verse of Genesis 1, we are told that when He began His work, God created the heaven and the earth, that the earth was without form and void, and that darkness was on the face of the deep.

The words 'without form and void' are in the Hebrew '*tohu va bohu*'. Just keep the two words *tohu* and *bohu* in mind. Now consider Isaiah 45:18: For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it NOT IN VAIN, He formed it to be established.

The words IN VAIN are, in the Hebrew, *tohu*. So we have these two seemingly opposite statements of Scripture. Genesis 1 tells us that the world was without form (*tohu*), while Isaiah 45 tells us that God did not create the world in vain (*tohu*). So if it was not without form to start with, it must have become without form subsequently.

The word *tohu* means to be waste, a desert. It is variously translated as 'without form', 'waste', 'vain' (which originally meant empty), 'vanity', 'nothing', 'wilderness', 'empty place', 'confusion' and 'thing of naught'. The word is never used in a constructive sense, but always in a destructive way, referring to things wasted and spoiled. Moses, of course, wrote Genesis 1. He also wrote Deuteronomy, and in chapter 32 he talks of Israel wandering in the waste and howling wilderness. The word 'waste' is *tohu* and I think we can expect the word to have the same meaning in both places.

Bohu, the other word from Genesis 1:2, means to be empty, as a house that is vacant. This word is used only three times in Scripture, and it is always paired with *tohu*. The three references are Genesis 1:2, Isaiah 34:11, and Jeremiah 4:23. Please look at each reference.

In the two references in Isaiah and Jeremiah, it is easily seen that the context is one of judgement and punishment. In Isaiah 34, we read such terms as indignation, fury, utterly destroy, slaughter, the host of heaven being dissolved, a sword bathed in heaven, curse, judgement, the day of the Lord's vengeance, streams turned to pitch, dust to brimstone, the land becoming burning pitch that shall not be quenched night or day, and it shall lie waste.

If you read all of Jeremiah 4, you will find a similar picture. Going over to the word *tohu* by itself, in Isaiah 24, the prophet speaks of the city of confusion (*tohu*), and surrounding this, we have such words describing the earth as 'empty', 'waste', 'turned upside down', 'utterly spoiled', 'utterly broken down', and 'clean dissolved'. And in verse 10, the prophet makes the word *tohu* carry a meaning almost the same as *BOHU* when he says that 'every house is shut up'.

I hope that enough has been said to show that in all their other occurrences, the words *tohu* and *bohu* refer to judgment, punishment and destruction. Should we expect Genesis 1:2 to be different? I don't think so. But what brought about the punishment in Genesis 1?

Isaiah 24 can help us further here. In verse 20 and 21 we read: The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

Here we are told that two groups are to be punished in 'that day'. One group is referred to as the high ones on high, while in contrast, the other group is the kings upon the earth. This gives us a push in the direction we seek.

We know that there was rebellion in Heaven, and Satan and his followers suffered a punishment long before Adam made his appearance on the earth. See for example, 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12:7.

Ezekiel 28:11–19 speaks of a personage called the king of Tyre, who from what is said, is more than human. I believe that these verses give us a little glimpse into the position, the sin and the fall of Satan.

While the Scriptures do not explicitly teach that the downfall of Satan, which apparently involved the earth in some way, was the event called the overthrow of the earth, I believe that this is the only other calamity that Scripture knows of before the appearance of Adam, and the subsequent murder of Abel.

I think there is sufficient evidence from the allusions and the type teaching of the Old Testament to warrant this belief. And given that we have the evidence of the usage of the words without form and void throughout the Old Testament as referring to a wasted and desolate condition as the result of judgement, I believe that Genesis 1:2 tells us that after the original creation, and connected with the punishment of Satan, the earth became wasted, desolate and empty.

I also believe that the correct translation of Ephesians 1:4 is that we have been chosen in Him (Christ) before the overthrow of the world, that is, God chose the members of the church which is His body, before the rebellion and fall of Satan.

It is also the teaching of Ephesians and Colossians that the existence of a company called the Church which is His Body in the plan of God was kept a secret, hidden by God in Himself, until the divorcing of

the nation of Israel at the end of the Book of Acts. It was only when that had happened that Paul was permitted to reveal this new and hitherto secret part of God's plan.

This has been a rather deep study, but I hope you have been able to stay with me. To conclude, I would like to say something about the three occurrences of the phrase 'before the foundation (overthrow) of the world'.

Firstly, we have in John 17:24 these words: 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: FOR THOU LOVEDST ME BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.'

Secondly, 1 Peter 1:19,20: '(...ye were redeemed...) with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb WITHOUT BLEMISH AND WITHOUT SPOT, who verily was FOREORDAINED BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD...'

And thirdly, in Ephesians, the company called the Church which is His Body is said to have been chosen BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD IN LOVE (1:4) and to be BLAMELESS (5:27).

This company of believers is so closely identified with their Lord and Head that the very terms used to describe Him in the period before the foundation of the world are used of us. He was loved; we were chosen in love. He was without blemish and spotless; we are to be, by God's grace, blameless.

And in case some of our readers are like I was, who didn't know the connection until it was pointed out, 'blameless' and 'without blemish' are exactly the same thing.

As I look at myself, and think of my life as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, I know only too well that I have blemishes. But it is the nature of God's love and grace that when I came in penitence and faith, and said amen to the Gospel that was preached to me, the sin was forgiven, its power in my life was broken, the record put behind Him, and He sees me now, in Christ, as being blameless.

No wonder I know myself to be greatly loved.

Chapter 6 – Chosen In Him

The subject of God's choice of us, whether in the period designated 'before the overthrow of the world' or at any other time, is another deep subject, and one which often causes divisions among the Lord's people. I pray that we may be able to discuss the question openly and profitably, and urge you, my readers, to again exercise the Berean spirit, and search and see whether these things are so.

Before launching into that subject, though, let us look at the other things told us by these words. Even though we are tackling these verses almost word by word, we must not lose sight of the continuity of the apostle's thought. The word 'according' or simply 'as' links what is said here with the preceding verse, which told us that God the Father had blessed us with every blessing that is spiritual in the above -- heavens, and this blessing is in accordance with a choice He made before the overthrow of the world.

I can't help suspecting that not only is the choice in accordance with the blessing, but, conversely, the blessing is in accordance with the choosing. Notice it is God the Father, specifically, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has done the blessing, and who has made the choice. Notice also that the choice is in Him, that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ. In a very real and important sense we can say that the choice has little to do with us, and everything to do with Christ.

I know that many believers often puzzle over this choice of God's. 'Why me?' is a fairly common question. And some believers, who think that our interpretation of the Church which is His Body as a separate company blessed in the Heavenly Places far above other sections of God's overall family, is pure fantasy, sometimes say to us: 'Why you? What makes you think you're so special?'

About all I can say to that is: 'Good question. I don't know why God chose me in this way. All I really do know is that it is stated in the Scriptures, and I have said Amen in my heart to it, and I have an assurance from the Spirit that it is true.'

I am quite prepared to agree with anyone that I am not worthy of God's love and grace. Even in the realm of having been forgiven and made a new creation in Christ Jesus, I have to say I am totally undeserving of it. But, thank God, that did not stop me responding to the Gospel message and believing it, and then getting the assurance that it was true. And there are acquaintances of mine who do not believe, who say pretty much the same thing when I try to present the Gospel to them. 'What makes you so special? Why do you think you are better than me to say that I need to be saved, or whatever you call it?'

And as much as we try to tell them we are not better and we are no more special, they do not believe it and cannot see it. So it seems to me that I am wasting my time in one sense, trying to convince someone that I don't think I am better than they are, when I claim to be a member of a different company or calling of God's when I speak to them about the Dispensation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body.

The truth is that none of us deserve grace and favour in any way from God. He chose to bring about redemption and all that goes with it for His own purposes, purposes which I think are deeply rooted in His love. And in the same way that my response to the Gospel and subsequent translation into the Kingdom of His dear Son does not make me better or more deserving than someone who has not responded to the Gospel, so my acceptance of the Gospel concerning the Dispensation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body does not make me a better or superior person to those who do not accept it.

So back to verse 4. The choice is made in Him, in our Saviour, our Lord and our Head. This is in line with everything that is said in the New Testament, and also taught in type in the Old Testament in so many ways. Christ is all and in all, and all we have and are is in Him, is of Him and because of Him. Without Him I am and have nothing.

No wonder the central position, and so many aspects of the Lord's being and work, are under attack, even from 'church' people. Satan is well aware that He cannot take our life in Christ away from us, but He knows that He can stop glory accruing to Christ if he can turn believers away from understanding the truth of the Lord's position as Head of the Body.

If a believer does not have something of a right concept of that truth, then it seems to me that his subsequent walk will be confused, to say the least. And a confused walk will not give to the Lord the full glory that is rightfully His.

The words 'choose, chose, chosen' have no special or deep meaning behind them. They are used in Scripture in exactly the same way that we use them today in our everyday speech. The dictionary says of the word choose: to select in preference; to decide or desire. So there is no mystery here. The difficulty with this subject comes from what the Scriptures say about God's choices.

The Greek word that means to choose is *eklego*, and is related to *eklektos* 'elect' and *ekloge* 'election'. It would be linguistically correct to substitute *elect*, *elected* and *election* for such words as *choose*, *chose* and *chosen*.

In the very next verse, and also verse 11, we meet the word 'predestinate', which although a different word from *choose* or *elect*, is nevertheless part of the overall subject. The subjects of election and predestination are vexed ones amongst believers, and yet are most important and must be faced. Let's try to do so with open minds and charitable spirits.

I think it is not too sweeping a statement to say that the great body of believers is divided into two main camps on the matters of election and predestination. One is either a Calvinist or on the other hand, an Arminian. Perhaps it is not quite that cut and dried, for some believers would occupy a middle ground.

Perhaps a little church history is called for here. During the reformation, when the Bible started to become available to the people and open discussion was encouraged, this subject of God's election was one that was wrestled with.

Undoubtedly it had been discussed long before that, but mainly among priests and the scholars who could read, and who had access to the Bible which was largely denied to the masses. And two men arose whose names have been linked with the two approaches to the subject. One was Jean Calvin, a Frenchman who later lived in Switzerland, and the other was a Dutchman, Jakob Harmensen. He is usually known by the Latin form of his name, Arminius.

So from these two men and the doctrines they formulated, we have the terms Calvinism and Arminianism. These men were contemporaries, living in the mid-sixteenth century. There is no way that we either can, or wish, to go through all the teachings of these men.

For our purpose, it is sufficient to state briefly what they taught about election and predestination.

Calvin taught that it is God alone who chooses or elects those who are to be saved, and conversely, it is God's predetermined choice as to who will be passed over and not saved. The individual concerned has no choice in the matter, it is all of God. This also applies to the ultimate state of a believer and his sphere of blessing.

Arminius taught that God's choice of who would be saved was according to His foreknowledge of who would respond to the Gospel. He said there is nothing in Scripture about predestination to death. He also taught that all the passages concerning election are written to or about those who are already saved.

Now, it is not hard to compile a long list of Bible references from both Old and New Testaments which show that 'God is sovereign, that whatever He wills must come to pass, that He chose, He predestinated, He willed that certain men should be saved, become members of an elect nation, or members of an elect church' (Welch, *In Heavenly Places*, p.40.)

On the other hand, it is no harder to compile an equally long list of references from both Old and New Testaments which show that 'man has freedom of choice, that salvation is to be preached without reservations, that God loved 'the world' and not only 'the elect', that the word 'whosoever' must not be shorn of its meaning to suit a narrow decretive doctrine etc.' (Welch, *In Heavenly Places*, p.40.)

I know it is a generalisation, but for many, their position is largely determined by that of their denomination. I was brought up in a Salvation Army family, and was converted in that denomination,

and served wholeheartedly in it for many years. The Army's doctrine is Arminian. Why? Because the Salvation Army had its roots in the Methodist Church, and Methodist doctrine was Arminian. It was Arminian because John Wesley was an Arminian, and not a Calvinist.

Baptists on the other hand, tend to be Calvinists, because that is the doctrinal position of that denomination. Around thirty years ago, as I got further into Bible study for myself, I saw that the Scriptures were not thoroughly Arminian, and I had to modify my beliefs. But I also see that the Scriptures are not thoroughly Calvinist, so I presently hold a middle position.

I remember talking to a Baptist minister some years back and was surprised to find that he was an ardent Arminian, and I think he (knowing my Salvationist background) was surprised to find that I had become more Calvinistic. We both enjoyed not only our discussions, but the ironic humour of the situation. It shows that there are exceptions to the general rule.

I would like to quote, in part, an excerpt from the writings of a man named Grant. I don't know anything more about him than that. But again, it is quoted in the book *'In Heavenly Places'*, p. 39. He says: 'I should desire...to state the argument on both sides, and leave the conclusion to others; with (Isaac) Watts, to pronounce, that since we are assured by reason and Scripture, both of human freewill and Divine foreknowledge, we may justly believe them both; and to say with Simeon(?), that Calvinists would wish Scripture to contain fewer Arminian likelihoods and Arminians fewer Calvinistic ones.

It seems clear, however, that we must accept from the way such words as 'choose, elect and election' are used in the Scriptures, that such choice comes from God and cannot be changed by any human. But having said that, we must say a little more.

Romans 8:29 tells us that: 'For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.' Then in 1 Peter 1:2 we have: 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God.' I believe that the word foreknowledge, and all it implies, must be given its place in the subjects of election and predestination, otherwise there will an imbalance. And why must it be considered like this? Because the Bible links it up with those subjects.

The two verses quoted above leave us in no doubt that the election of God is according to His foreknowledge. I have been told very forcibly in past discussions with people who I would consider to be extreme Calvinists, that foreknowledge and predestination are the same thing. While I could not accept that, once I understood that that was where they thought, I could see why they believed what they did. But to say that foreknowledge is the same as predestination is to make nonsense of Romans 8:29. If their contention is true, then the verse means: 'For whom He foreknew, them He also did foreknow.' Or the other way: For whom He did predestinate, them He also did predestinate.

And the little word 'also' in that verse is very telling. It means that the thing stated first is something different to that stated last. We don't use the word 'also' when we are talking about the same things.

The next point in the argument by the folk mentioned above was that, because foreknowledge and predestination (and election) are one and the same, if God foreknows something, then it is inevitable and unchangeable. Sounds reasonable, doesn't it. But what saith the Scripture?

Please turn to 1 Samuel 23 and read the whole chapter. As you will gather from the context, these events occurred during the time when King Saul was hounding David all around the mountains of Judah and elsewhere. In the first five verses, we have David inquiring of the Lord as to whether he should go and save the people in the village of Keilah. The Lord told David that he should go to Keilah and that He (the Lord) would deliver the Philistines into his (David's) hand.

Did it happen as the Lord had foreknown and foretold? Yes, it did, and that in spite of the doubts of David's men. But then the situation changes. Saul learns that David is at Keilah and makes plans to go and capture him. Read verse 7–13.

David once more inquires of the Lord as to what he should do. He asked two specific questions:

- 1: Will Saul come to Keilah, and
- 2: Will the men of Keilah deliver me up to Saul?

The answer to both questions was yes. In plain words, Saul would come to Keilah, and then the men of Keilah would hand David over to Saul. Remember that those were the words of the Lord. David had asked what would happen and the Lord said those two things would happen.

But neither of those things happened. Saul did not come to Keilah and the men of Keilah did not hand David over to him. But God had foretold those things would happen, had He not? And if foreknowledge and predestination are one and the same thing, then those two things should have happened without fail. But they didn't happen, so obviously foreknowledge is not the same as predestination.

Look at the passage again. In between the foretelling of those events by the Lord, and their not happening, was the choice made by David. David, as a human being, a moral agent, could make a choice. God had foretold him what would happen – that is, it would happen like that IF David stayed in Keilah. But David chose not to stay in Keilah, and it would seem that his choice negated the foreknowledge of God. Not really. You see, there was a third question that he could have asked the Lord, which in reality, he had no need to ask. The third question? 'Will I stay here and be captured by Saul?' The Lord also foreknew the answer to that one.

To say that God is sovereign and His will is irresistible may be true, even though some Arminians may not like it. But it is not the whole truth. God, of His own will and for His own purposes, made humans as free moral agents. In other words, we exercise our power of choice. And this is true, even though some Calvinists may not like it. This is the big IF that is introduced into the equation, and if it is not allowed for, then I think that truth will be distorted.

What each reader must decide personally here is whether the foreknowledge of God in itself makes something inevitable, and is the predetermining factor. I don't believe it is, nor do I believe the Scriptures teach that it is.

But what I believe the Scriptures do teach and therefore is true, is that on the basis of that foreknowledge, God can in all justice predestinate whatever suits His purposes. His foreknowledge must be perfect, given His omnipotence and His omniscience.

So He knew, even long before He started to put His plan of salvation into effect, and indeed, long before the foundation or the overthrow of the world, that I would, at the age of 14, respond in a very simple, innocent yet sincere way to the Gospel preached to me.

He foreknew my decision to enter the Salvation Army ministry.

He knew long before it happened that the Salvation Army would appoint my wife and me to a small country town in Victoria, where the local doctor was in possession of the truth of the Mystery and the dividing line at Acts 28.

He well knew that the doctor lived just across the road from the house in which we would live, and that our paths would inevitably cross.

And knowing so long ago that I would accept the Gospel of the Mystery as it was preached to me by that doctor, my Saviour and Lord predetermined that I would belong to that part of His great family that He called the Church which is His Body.

It was not God's choice that I should be part of Israel. I would be born a Gentile in the country of Australia that was unknown for thousands of years. It was not His choice that I would belong to the company that Scripture calls the Bride of the Lamb.

No, He watched over me as I made a meandering journey through some of that territory. I was interested in British Israelism for a time, then Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement as it is now called, and also looked at the teaching that the Church is the Body and Bride of Christ, but none of these things drew me.

No, He had pre-determined that I would be part of the calling called the Church which is His Body, and although it took about twenty years, that's where I arrived.

Well, back to Ephesians 1:4. It was God's purpose that He would redeem His people through the work of the One who would be known as the Lamb of God. All those who would respond in faith to that Gospel were foreknown. And on the basis of that foreknowledge, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ elected to place some of those believers in a special company which He chose to call the Church which is His Body.

I think it is faithful to Scripture to say that whether we consider the position of Abel at the dawn of human history, or Abraham a couple of millennia later, or David another thousand years after that, or Peter, Paul, John or myself, all our standing with God – regardless of whatever sphere of blessing or company of His family He has chosen to place us each in – is in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Abel put his hand on the head of the lamb he brought in sacrifice, I am sure he was looking forward to the One who was to come. The Lord said that Abraham saw His (Christ's) day and rejoiced. John 8:56. And obviously, since the Lord lived on this earth and gave Himself to be the propitiation for our sins, we look to Him as the author and finisher of our faith too.

Indeed, our Lord and Head is all and in all. Every blessing that is spiritual is ours in Him. When God chose us as members of His Body back before the dawn of human history, that choice was in Him and because of Him. He was the lamb foreordained before the overthrow of the world (1 Peter 1:19,20), and He is also the Lamb slain from the overthrow of the world (Revelation 13:8). Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Although we dealt with it in a previous study, we should remember that this great blessing and the choosing of us by God was to the end that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Is there one of us who can come up to that standard?

Would any of us be foolhardy enough to claim that we have achieved it? I can't claim that. We would do well to heed Luke 17:10, and say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'

But that is not the end of the story, thank God. We read in Colossians 1:12 words of great encouragement, 'Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'

We seldom use the word 'meet' in this sense these days, so to put it into modern words, we could say that the Father has made us suitable, or fitted us, to participate in the inheritance of the saints in light.

And while our workmanship for Him may not amount to much, Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...' The word ordained comes in the remainder of that verse, but we will leave it until we reach that section.

Perhaps we can do no better than conclude by giving thanks that firstly He foreknew us, then chose us and marked out beforehand just where we should fit in His grand scheme, and what we should be as we find our living and being in our Saviour, Lord and Head, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 7 – Holy and Without Blame

The fourth verse of Ephesians chapter 1 has already taken us into some very deep and rich areas, but it has more for us yet.

We have been taught so far by these few verses that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us, in Christ, with every blessing that is spiritual; that this sphere of wondrous blessings is called the heavenly places far above all other realms; and all this is in accordance with the choice He made back before the overthrow of the world. How easy it is to write those words, but how hard to comprehend the depths of their meaning! May the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth.

The next point that is made in verse 4 is the purpose, the object, of all this great work by our loving Heavenly Father for us. To quote the AV: '...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'

As we well know, it is the little words that we use that are so important – words like and, but, yes, no, not, if, so, and to the case in point, that. Many of these small words can carry many different meanings, and it is something of a testimony to the powers of the brains God gave us, that we handle these different meanings in the hurley burley of our everyday speech without even thinking consciously about it. The word THAT is one such word.

I have a concise Macquarie dictionary, concise meaning that it is not the big one, so it is abridged to some extent, and yet it gives thirteen different meanings for the word that. The one that is relevant to us now is this: to introduce a clause...expressing cause or reason, purpose or aim, result or consequence. And that is exactly what the word THAT at the beginning of our clause in verse four does. It introduces a clause expressing the reason or purpose of the previously stated actions. To make the meaning transparently clear, we could say this: 'Our Heavenly Father chose us before the overthrow of the world, and blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the above heavens, in order that (or so that) we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'

I keep repeating the whole sentence, rather than just saying something like 'that we should be holy and without blame'. If we stop there, it is rather frightening. Holy and without blame? I know I am not holy and without blame, and I suspect that you might know the same thing about yourself. So we need to keep reminding ourselves that we can only be holy and without blame this side of the resurrection IN HIM.

Actually, there are two more statements following in verses 5 and 6 that we should be aware of, for they are linked to this one. They are; 'having predestinated us unto the adoption of children' and 'wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' We will come to these statements in due course.

Now let's look at the closing thoughts in verse 4 more closely. 'So that we should be holy and without blemish'. Notice first of all that we have both the positive and negative sides of the subject stated here. To be holy is positive; to be without blemish is negative. Both sides are important, although it seemed that when I was a young Christian, it was the negative side that was emphasised.

Holiness in my denomination, seemed to consist of things we DIDN'T DO, such as, not drinking alcohol, not smoking, not dancing or going to the pictures, not swearing, not wearing make-up (for the girls) and so on. Well, the NOTS have their place in a holy walk, but holiness, or being holy, is much more than that. The Scriptural concept of Holiness is to be pure and set apart for God, or consecrated to God. To be pure implies being without blemish. Perhaps I should say here also, that without blemish is exactly the same as without blame or unblameable.

I now want to take something of a sideways leap, and go to Ezekiel chapter 28, for reasons which I hope will become clear later. Please read the chapter. You will find it is dealing with people in Tyre firstly, and then Zidon, or Sidon, as we would say now.

In verses 1–10 we read about someone called the PRINCE of Tyre. This prince was obviously a great man, but the important point is that he was indeed nothing more than a man. Verse 2: 'Yet thou art a man and not God.' Verse 9: 'Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man and no God in the hand of him that slayeth thee.' Quite a telling argument.

But we have a change in verses 11–19. Here we are told of the KING of Tyre, and if you look carefully at what is said, I think you will see that the king of Tyre is more than a man. It seems to me that we are given a small glimpse into the state of things before the overthrow of the world, and are allowed to see something of the position and glory of the one who came to be called Satan, before he was cast out from that position. We also get a clear indication of his sin that caused the downfall.

As I look at the things that are said of this being in his unfallen state, I get tingling feelings up my spine, as the titles and descriptions used are those that we know belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at what is said:

Verse 12: Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Verse 13: Every precious stone was thy covering. (Makes us think of the 'shining one' of Genesis 3.)

Verse 14: Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth, and I (God) have set (or appointed) thee so. (Atonement in the Old Testament is spoken of as the covering. Today, we speak of the Blood covering our sins.) Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Verse 15. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, TILL (Note the little word that changes the whole thing) iniquity was found in thee.

The last part of verse 15 cannot be applied to Christ, of course. Rather, it is important because of the contrast. But note just a few parallels with the Lord. As this anointed cherub is once said to have sealed up the sum, Ephesians 1:10 tells us that in a future dispensation, God will gather together in one all things in Christ. We could quite correctly write that as God heading up, or summing up, all things in Christ. The word anointed in verse 14 is the word that gives us Messiah. And Christ is called God's Anointed One more than once.

But then we have the contrast. The King of Tyre was tested in some way, and found to have iniquity in him. His downfall involved the overthrow of the world, as we have touched on earlier. Then, after the 6 days (re)creation of the world for the habitation of Adam, Adam was tested and he failed as well. Then, in the fullness of time, the second Adam came. He also was tested, but unlike the previous two mentioned, He was found to be without sin, and we could say, without blemish.

Back to Ezekiel 28. Look at what is said of that anointed cherub once he had fallen.

Verse 16: '...the multitude of thy merchandise...have filled thee with violence, and thou hast sinned;

therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God.'

Verse 17: Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness; I will cast thee to the ground...

Verse 18: 'Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic: therefore I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee...'

However much we may be puzzled by some of these allusions and references, I think it is clear that this King of Tyre had to do with sacred and holy things. The words 'merchandise' and 'traffic' should not side-track us. His merchandise and his trafficking were in the holy things of God, such things as the anointing, the covering, the holy mountain, the stones of fire and the sanctuary, and he was expelled from the dwelling place of God, the heavenly places far above all, because of it.

By the way, the reference in verse 13 to this anointed cherub having been in Eden, the garden of God, does not refer to Adam's Eden on earth. I believe that this garden of Eden that Ezekiel mentions is the heavenly Eden on which the earthly one was patterned.

In thinking of the trafficking in holy things of which the King of Tyre was guilty, I find myself thinking of the Lord's reaction when He found the money-changers and others defiling the Temple with their trafficking in holy things.

I am aware that what they were doing was a long way below what is described in Ezekiel 28, but I think it is only different in degree, and I can understand something of the violence of the Lord's reaction. And what are His words in John 2:16? 'Make not my Father's house an house of MERCHANDISE.'

When we read in Zechariah about the restoration of Israel (and consequently, the restoration of the Temple and its worship), we find in 14:21 that there will be no more Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts. Have you ever wondered about that? Well, when you learn that the word Canaanite is translated as 'trafficker' in Isaiah 23:8, and 'merchant' in Hosea 12:7 and Job 41:6, the connection may be a little more obvious.

(In case any one is unaware of it, Isaiah 14:12–15 gives a little more information about Satan's fall.)

We should remember that the Bible also tells us that when Satan fell from heaven, he took a third of the angels with him. These all forfeited their place in the above heavens, leaving a gap, and it is not until we get to Ephesians and Colossians that we read of any company which is appointed by God to those heavenly places.

If, then, it is true that the Church which is His Body is destined to fill the gap in Heaven left by the expulsion of Satan and those angels who went with him, is it any wonder that we find such an insistence on holiness for this company? I think that it is quite in keeping with all that we have seen so far, and indeed, this insistence on holiness in itself is a further proof of the unique composition and position of the Church of Ephesians.

To go back to Ephesians 1:4, way back before the overthrow of the world when God chose every member of the Church which is His Body, it was His express purpose that they should be holy and without blemish before Him in love. And in contrast to that great one who lost his place, we cannot claim to be perfect in our wisdom or beauty, or say that we are capable of providing a covering for any sin however small, or that we have walked up and down amongst the stones of fire.

Not us. The description given of us by the Apostle is that we were Gentiles, Uncircumcised, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (which had been, up till then, the only channel of God's blessing), strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Not a promising description, is it?

Fortunately, there follows two of those little words that are so important. BUT NOW. Things changed because of the blood of Christ, and we who were once far off, have been made nigh, and wonder of wonders, we have been given a place far above the commonwealth of Israel and her blessings.

We have been seated with Christ in those heavenly realms far above all principalities and powers – and unbelievable as it seems, nevertheless it is written – at the very right hand of God Himself (1:20; 2:6). Does it come as any surprise then that the company who will occupy such a position should be holy and without blemish? No, I think not. The words holy and without blame come again in 5:27 and Colossians 1:22. Ephesians 5:27 says: '(So) that He (Christ) may present it (the Church) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.'

Surely this verse disposes of any lingering idea we may harbour that we can get to the holy and without blemish state by our own strength or efforts. It is the Son's sacrifice (verse 25) of Himself for the church that accomplishes the Father's object for that church. It is in Him, by Him and for Him that all this has been done. His holiness, His perfection, is imputed to us in exactly the same way as His righteousness is. The Father sees us not in the state of sinfulness in which we find ourselves, but in the glorious standing of righteousness and holiness, pure and without blame, that has come to us through the blood of the spotless Lamb of God.

The reference in Colossians is even more pointed and personal. I suggest you read verse 12–22. On the basis of the peace made by His blood on the cross, He has not only reconciled all things in the universe, but even ourselves, who were alienated and enemies in our minds. And why? In order to present us holy and unblameable and (there is an extra here just in case we haven't got the message yet) unproveable in His sight.

Notice how the will of the Father and the work of the Son is all in accord. In verse 12 Paul gives thanks to the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who has delivered us from darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.

I am sure you have guessed, if you didn't know already, the words holy and without blemish in Ephesians 5:27, and the words holy and unblameable in Colossians 1:22 are exactly the same Greek words as are used in Ephesians 1:4.

We have looked at 1 Peter 1:19,20 previously, but we need to come to it again now, for it reminds us that the child of God is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb WITHOUT BLEMISH and WITHOUT SPOT, Who verily was foreordained BEFORE THE OVERTHROW OF THE WORLD.

How marvellous, how overwhelming, and how humbling to see that not only is the Saviour's state of purity and blamelessness accorded to the Members of the Body, but as He is the Lamb foreordained from before the overthrow of the world, so have we been chosen before the overthrow of the world.

How complete and unassailable is our standing in Him! It is written clearly on the pages of our Bibles, and yet there are still those amongst our Christian acquaintances who will try to tell us that we need something more.

My brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, let me assure you that we do not need any rite or ritual, any symbol or ceremony, any sacrament or office to secure or enhance our standing in Christ Jesus. We have everything we can possibly need in our Saviour, our Lord and our Head, and we have it not by the good graces of the Bishop, or the Moderator, or the Pastor or the Captain.

It is all ours freely and permanently by the grace of God and through faith – the faith and faithfulness of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

But there is more. Did you notice the expression ‘who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light’ in Colossians 1:13? This use of the word ‘meet’ is largely gone from colloquial English. Some of the younger people today would not understand what it meant.

So what have the later translations got?

New English Bible: ‘Give thanks to the Father who has made you fit to share the heritage of God’s people in the realm of light.’

New International Version: ‘Give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.’

Personally, I think that something like ‘who has made you suitable to share the inheritance of the Saints’ is very clear. In our natural state, we were unfitted, unqualified, unsuited for the realm of the redeemed in the kingdom of light, but God the Father, through the willing and obedient sacrifice of the Son, fitted us, or made us suitable to take our pre-ordained place in the special sphere of blessing.

Two more phrases need our attention before we can leave this fourth verse of Ephesians 1, and even then we will have left quite a bit unsaid. The first phrase is ‘before Him.’ The Greek term translated ‘before Him’ is quite a strong term. And we need to know that ‘before Him’ in Ephesians 1:4, and ‘in His sight’ in Colossians 1:22, translate exactly the same two Greek words.

Paul uses a similar phrase ‘before God’ in 2 Corinthians 2:17, where he is defending his work and witness as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He claims that he and his co-workers are not as those who corrupt (literally ‘traffic’ or ‘hawk’. We might say ‘peddle’ these days.) and misuse the Word of God, but rather he uses it as of God, in the sight of God we speak (he says) in Christ.

I think you will understand that Paul is not being flippant here. As a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he would use the name of God very carefully, and it is a measure of the depth of his feeling, that he claims that what he says, he says before God in the sight of God in Christ.

Remember that we are discussing the object or purpose of the Father in ‘traffic’ or ‘hawk’. We might say ‘peddle’ these days.) and misuse the Word of God, but rather he uses it as of God, in the sight of God we speak (he says) in Christ.

I think you will understand that Paul is not being flippant here. As a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he would use the name of God very carefully, and it is a measure of the depth of his feeling, that he claims that what he says, he says before God in the sight of God in Christ.

Remember that we are discussing the object or purpose of the Father. Sin just cannot be tolerated in His presence, and indeed His holiness would burn it out of existence immediately. But the day is coming, when you and I will stand before Him. We will indeed be in His presence, or in His sight as the translators put it in Colossians.

That will surely test the covering that we have to the limit. If there is any failing in what the Lord has done for us, it will be discovered on that day. And if His righteousness and purity is not sufficient, then there is nothing in our own lives that could protect and save us from the inevitable end.

I am not suggesting, of course, that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ can fail in any way. The perfectness of that work has already been well attested by God Himself. I am only trying to drive home to us all just how wonderful, indeed how incredible, is the great work of salvation done for us by the One who took our place on the Cross and in the grave. And I am trying to make sure that you will not gloss over those two little words 'before Him' and not realise something of their significance.

In a recent study meeting, we were looking at Isaiah's call in the sixth chapter of that great book. When Isaiah, in his vision, saw the Lord in the Temple high and lifted up, he promptly fell apart, to use a modern expression. He also immediately became aware of his sinfulness.

Job had a similar experience. He had been saying for some time that he wished for the opportunity to speak to God face to face, for then he would sort out the mistake that he was certain God was making. Finally, the Lord breaks through and says, 'Where is this bag of wind who wants to argue with me?' (very loose paraphrase by A.W.) And what does Job do? He claps his hand over his mouth and says: 'I have already said too much. I am vile. Now that I have seen you face to face, I know that I am nothing.'

Daniel was one whose personal righteousness might have had some standing before God, but when he saw the Lord in a vision, his legs went to water and he collapsed.

And in the opening chapters of Revelation we read of John receiving a vision of Christ. Now this was the beloved disciple, who would lean back on the Lord when they were reclining at their meals. So he had been very close to the Lord during the Lord's earthly ministry. Yet, when he sees the Risen Lord in His glory, it knocks him flat to the ground. 'As though dead', says John.

The high priest in Old Testament times went into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy seat once a year. And the accounts make it clear that he went in in fear for his own life. Yet we can approach the throne of grace with boldness and confidence because the veil that previously denied access has been done away with, and also because we are now accepted in the Beloved. May we come, by the grace of God, to some understanding of these great privileges we have in Christ Jesus.

The last phrase in 1:4 of Ephesians is 'in love'. While we can make some great claims for the Church which is His Body based on these epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, we cannot claim to be the only ones whom God has loved. His whole plan of redemption stems from His love. One of the best known of all Scriptural verses, John 3:16, tells us: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

And in Deuteronomy 7:6-8, when Moses is telling the people why God has chosen them he says, among other things: 'The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people...but because the Lord loved you.' I am sure the same could be said of us.

Why did God love us? Well, not because we were bigger, or better, or prettier, or stronger, or wiser, or purer than anyone else, but simply because He loved us. As Charles Welch says, it is arguing in a circle. He loves us because He loved us.

But does the phrase 'in love' just refer to God's love for us? Could it not be saying that we must come before Him in love, that is, with our whole beings swamped with love for Him for all His grace and love to us?

There are plenty of references throughout the Bible telling us that our walk must be in love, that we must love others above ourselves, that we must speak the truth in love. So I think it is not too far afield to suggest that all our living and working for Him must be wrapped up and presented to Him in love.

The words 'in love' occur six times in this epistle as follows:

- Verse 1:4: The Father's motive
- Verse 3:17: Rooted and grounded (figures of growth and building)
- Verse 4:2: Forbearing one another in love
- Verse 4:15: Being true in love
- Verse 4:16: Increase and edification (figures of growth and building)
- Verse 5:2: The children's walk. (Be ye imitators of God: 5:1)

This outline is from Charles Welch: *'In Heavenly Places'*, p. 76. I will leave you to study the parallels for yourself.

It is interesting to note the mixture of doctrinal statements about God's love with admonitions about our love for fellow believers as well as God. God's motive was and is love. Can ours be anything less, or anything else?

Chapter 8 – Predestinated Unto Adoption

As we move into verse 5 of Ephesians 1, we need to remember the thoughts of verse 4. There we were told that the Father had chosen us in Christ before the overthrow of the world, in order that we should be holy and unblameable before Him in love, and now verse 5, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Again, we are confronted with deep truths that will challenge our understanding.

As I look over the verses of this passage, I wonder if, rather than the thoughts following in a straight line as we read them, we have a number of statements that relate to the statement in verse 3, that God has blessed us with every blessing that is spiritual in the heavenly places.

If that is the case, then we could set it out like this:

- 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (1st blessing)
- ...according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world; (2nd blessing)
- ...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; (3rd blessing)
- ...having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise and glory of his grace; (4th blessing)
- ...wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood,
- the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (5th blessing)
- ...wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...'

And so we could go on. I am not sure that this is the way it should be, but, as I said before, I wonder about it. You may not agree with the way I have divided the thoughts, but I offer it for consideration.

The first statement in verse 5 tells us that God the Father predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. You will recall I discussed the subject of predestination in study No. 6, and I do not wish to cover all that ground again. There are, however, several further points I would like to make.

For some reason or other, we tend to think of 'destiny' when we hear or see the word predestination. But look at the word. Pre-destination, not pre-destiny. Readers who have listened to Charles Welch's tape recordings may have heard his little word play about predestination.

I think it is worth quoting: 'To meet your Waterloo may be your destiny, but to be met at Waterloo simply means that you have arrived at your destination.' I hope your knowledge of history and geography is sufficient for you to appreciate the allusions in that quote.

The Greek word that is translated 'predestination' in verse 5 is *proorizo*, and is made up of the two words *pro* and *horizo*. *pro* means 'before', while *horizo* is translated in the New Testament as 'determinate', 'ordain', 'limit' and 'declare'. As you look at the word *horizo* I'm sure you will not be surprised when I tell you that it gives us our word 'horizon'.

Horizon has no element of fate or destiny in it, and simply means the 'boundary' where the earth appears to meet the sky. Now this thought of 'boundary' in the word horizon helps, I think, in understanding the meaning of *proorizo*. It means to set the boundary or limit beforehand. And whatever you may think setting the boundary beforehand means in relation to the subjects of salvation and eternal life, remember that Scripture always links predestination with God's foreknowledge.

The word 'predestination' occurs twice in Ephesians, here in verse 5, and also in verse 11 of this same chapter. In verse 5 it is linked with adoption while in verse 11 it is linked with inheritance. And as we focus now on adoption, please also hold the thought of inheritance in your mind.

Adoption is another one of those subjects in which a correct understanding is necessary for it affects the interpretation of a number of Bible passages. As with so much in Scripture, our biggest difficulty is to unlearn what we have already been taught, or think we know. Adoption has been in our news of late, with some disturbing revelations about the way adoptions have been handled in some places in our country. And it has become important in the last few decades for some people who have been adopted, and also for mothers who have given children up for adoption, to try to find each other.

Yes, we say to ourselves, we know what adoption means. It is where some couple or person take a baby that cannot be raised by its natural parents for one reason or another, and give it a good home, their name and a better upbringing and education than it could have otherwise expected. Certainly, that is what adoption means to us, but that is not what Paul and His fellow citizens thought when they used the word 'adoption'.

The Greek word translated 'adoption' is *huiiothesia*. This is another of those compound words, made up of *huios* (a son), and *thesis* (to place or constitute). So *huiiothesia* means 'to place as a son'. And this, when rightly understood, has nothing to do with our conception of adoption.

Paul is the only writer in the New Testament to use the word, and it occurs in the following places:

- Romans 8:15: Ye have received the spirit of adoption
- Romans 8:23: Waiting for the adoption
- Romans 9:4: To whom pertaineth the adoption
- Galatians 4:5: That we might receive the adoption of sons
- Ephesians 1:5: Unto the adoption of children.

We must remember that when Paul wrote the epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, the laws and customs that prevailed and with which he and his readers were familiar, were Greek and Roman. And to them, adoption was a very different matter to what we think of as adoption. We could simply say

that to Paul and his readers, adoption was the placing of someone as the son. While we have said it all, it still does not mean much to us.

I sometimes jokingly refer to our eldest son as 'my son and heir'. It really is a joke, as not only is there very little to be inherited, but also in our wills, our estate is divided equally amongst all our children. It is not very common nowadays that an eldest son in a family inherits all the property, but it used to be the case. The eldest son often got the lot, and any brothers and sisters would have to come to him with cap in hand for anything he might care to give them.

Back in Roman and Greek times it was even more pronounced than that. Back then, the way for a father to name his heir was to adopt the person as his son, and we could say there, his first-born son. The Romans particularly often adopted someone from outside their family to be their son and heir, and even slaves were chosen. It is interesting to note that with the Caesars, the succession never passed to a natural son. Apart from the cases where it was taken by force, it always went to someone who had been adopted, or 'placed as the son'.

In Roman law, a father had complete power over his family, and could inflict whatever punishment he thought fit on his children. He even had the power of life or death over them. Children could not inherit. A father could sell his children into slavery, but he lost his power over them, if he sold them three times. So it came about, that when adopting one of his natural sons as his heir, a man would go through a ceremony of selling his son three times. Then he would legally place him as his heir, and the son could then inherit at the appropriate time.

Another feature of law at that time was that although a father could disinherit his natural son, he could never disinherit the adopted son. And the one adopted took precedence over the other children, even if the adopted one was an outsider.

The customs were not entirely the same as this back in the book of Genesis, but it was true way back then that the one chosen as the heir took precedence over the others, and Joseph is a case in point. As has been said many times before, Jacob's gift of the multi-coloured coat to Joseph was not just a gift. It was the badge of office if you like, or the token that Jacob had 'adopted' Joseph as his first-born son. In other words, Jacob in this way named Joseph as his heir, and as such Joseph would take precedence over his brothers.

This is the reason Joseph's brothers became so angry. He was son No. 11, but their father had gone over all of them, and chosen No. 11 to be No. 1. We should give those ten older brothers a little credit. They were not guilty of petty jealousy because Joseph was getting a nice present or two. Joseph had been promoted above and ahead of them, and when he became the head of the tribe, they would be dependent on him for their wealth, and also they would be required to obey him.

In addition to becoming the head of the tribe on Jacob's death, he would also receive twice as much as his brothers from the father's estate (the double portion). And God saw to it that this happened, for Joseph has two tribes descended from him, whereas the others have only one.

Turning back to New Testament times, it is quite obvious that the terms 'son' and 'heir' are interchangeable. This reminds me that the usual English translation of Ephesians 1:5, namely, 'the adoption of children' is incorrect. There is no word for children in the Greek. What Paul wrote was, 'Having predestinated us unto the placing as sons', and after what we have learned about their laws and customs, we know that to be placed as a son meant that the one so placed would receive the inheritance.

Remember? I asked you to keep the thought of inheritance in mind. Verse 5 tells us that the Father has predestinated us unto the placing of sons, and then in verse 11, we find that we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

To make sure that I have got the point across, let me say it this way. To receive the adoption, or to be placed as a son and to obtain an inheritance is really all one and the same thing.

Another thought arises from all this, and it is applicable to the Romans and Galatians passages as well as these verses in Ephesians. As far as Scripture is concerned, there is a vast difference in being a child of God than being a son of God.

Before I go further, I must have you understand that these terms are not sexist. I am not trying to be politically correct here, but trying to point out that it makes no difference whether we are females or males. It has got nothing to do with being girls and boys, or women and men. If we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then at that moment we became children of God.

But there is a further step, and that is becoming an heir of God. The Authorised Version, as well as some other translations, do not always help in this regard. For instance:

John 1:12 in the AV says:

‘But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.’

But the Greek reads

‘...to them gave he power to become children of God...’

In Philippians 2:15, the AV has:

‘That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God...’

‘But the Greek reads ‘children of God’.

1 John 3: 1 and 2 is another example. In both verses the AV speaks of believers as sons of God, whereas John wrote the word children in both cases.

There are undoubtedly depths of truth here that are beyond my understanding at present, but we can hold fast to the declared truth in Ephesians 1:5 that those whom the Father chose long before the overthrow of the world, He blessed in a peculiar and wonderful way, and He marked us out to be placed as sons, that is, to receive an inheritance from Him at the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was done in accordance to the good pleasure of His will, and for the purpose that we might be to the praise of His glory of His grace.

Before we move on to the next phrase: ‘the good pleasure of His will’, there is one other aspect of adoption that should be mentioned. Please keep in mind that the term ‘adoption’ in Scripture means the placing as a son.

There are three separate companies in the Bible who are said to have received the adoption from God. This means that God has marked out three different companies as His firstborn, or His heir. Let’s deal with this little problem first. Your reaction might be that someone cannot have more than one firstborn, but that is not so. We don’t need to refer to the fact of people remarrying two and three times or more these days. We can simply think of cases where a man marries, has a child or children, and then his wife dies. He marries again, and may have a child by the second wife. He now has two firstborns. A similar thing could happen to a woman.

I am not suggesting that God has gone through something like this to end up with three firstborns. Not at all. I am only demonstrating that the idea of more than one firstborn is not so strange as we might at first think.

I am well aware that God uses figures of speech to help make His plan and purposes clear to us, but nevertheless, the Scripture does make it clear that God has more than one family. I refer to different companies called out by God at different times for different purposes according to the working of His plans at that particular time. Now, let's consider some verses of Scripture.

In Romans chapters 9–11 Paul deals with the problem of Israel after the flesh. I am not going into all that now, but rather direct you to verses 4 and 5 of chapter 9 where we read: 'Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the ADOPTION, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, blessed for ever. Amen.'

I'm glad that the Holy Spirit saw fit to spell it out in so much detail, otherwise many believers today would try to put themselves in that group. Indeed, indeed, there are some who do just that. But look at the words. This group being spoken of cannot possibly be spiritualised to make them the 'church'. This is Israel the nation of whom Paul is speaking. No Gentile had the glory and the covenants or the law, or the service of God (in the Temple), or the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), and Christ certainly did not descend from our nation. It is Israel, and Israel alone, who here Paul says has the adoption. Is there Scripture to support this? Indeed there is.

There are very pertinent words in Exodus 4:22,23: 'And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, EVEN MY FIRSTBORN: and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that He may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.' As we well know, that is eventually exactly what happened. So without any ambiguity, the Lord calls the people of Israel His firstborn son. Indeed, they have the adoption.

The next place we read about a company having an adoption is in Galatians 4. By the way, notice the references to heirs, children, slaves and sons in this chapter.

But look at verses 4–6:

'But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent His Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father'.

To whom is the apostle speaking? Those who once were under the law, but who have come out from it. They were the ones who, because of faith like Abraham's, were children of the free woman (Sarah) rather than the bondwoman (Hagar). They were no longer part of the earthly people whose centre was Jerusalem on the earth, but of a calling whose centre was the New Jerusalem which was to come down from Heaven onto the earth.

In other words, these are the Jews who believed that Jesus was indeed their Messiah, and made the rocky transition from the bondage of the Law of Moses to the freedom of being in Christ. These were later joined by Gentiles who believed during the Acts period. This is the company that is said to be the spiritual children of Abraham. They are also called God's firstborn, that is, they have an adoption.

We read of the third group in Ephesians, of course. We have already seen something of the uniqueness of this company, but there are more astounding things to come in the next verses and chapters. This company has no connection whatever with Abraham or Israel. It has no covenants, no law, no fathers, in

fact, in chapter 2, the members of this group are described as aliens, strangers, hopeless and without God. But what glory has been given to this group.

Chosen in Christ before the overthrow of the world, and as we will see before we get much further, they are destined for a very different sphere of blessing. No earthly Jerusalem here, not even the New Jerusalem. No connection with anything of Israel at all. Simply, said to be seated even now, with Christ, in the heavenly places at the very right hand of God. This group also is God's firstborn. They have an adoption.

The words that contain these overwhelming truths are simple, ordinary words. You will find them in any reasonable dictionary. But as simple as the words are, they speak of truth that is almost inconceivable. But they are written, and are as much part of Scripture as Matthew 5 or Romans 8 or Galatians 4. Do you believe this testimony of Scripture? Or are you saying something like, This is not right? Dear reader, you are faced with a momentous choice.

Paul then goes on to say that the predestining of the believer unto the placing as sons by Jesus Christ is according to the good pleasure of His will. The question of why God does this or that often arises in the minds of His children, and sometimes the answer is simply because it pleased Him to do it. If you are a parent, you will no doubt remember times when your child was pressing you for an answer as to why you gave them a certain decision – one they didn't like, perhaps. And sometimes the only answer you could, or would, give them, was that you simply wanted it that way. And that was a legitimate answer, even if the child could not see it at the time.

So with our Heavenly Father. We puzzle over the possible reasons for His actions, and because of our limited viewpoint and understanding, we have no hope of understanding even if He explained it. So sometimes because of that I think, and also because sometimes it is the only reason, He simply tells us that His motive is the good pleasure of His will.

Good pleasure in the Greek is one word – *eudokia*. It is another compound word made up of *eu* (well) and *dokeo* (to think). The underlying thought of *dokeo* though is 'to seem' so *eudokia* is basically that which seems good.

Now if we were depending on the good pleasure of someone like Adolf Hitler or some other deranged tyrant, we would have cause to wonder just how long the good pleasure would last. But fortunately, the good pleasure is of God who changes not, so we can launch out with confidence in what He says, because we know that if it seemed good to Him to day, it will also seem good to Him tomorrow.

It may be helpful to see a few of the nine occurrences of *eudokia* in the New Testament.

Matthew 11:25,26 says: 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

Romans 10:1: 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.' Can you pick which word is *eudokia* here? Well, we could also write the verse like this: 'Brethren, my heart's good pleasure...'

And one more:

Philippians 1:15: 'Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will'.

Maybe that is enough for this time. Now I can't answer for you, but I have to say that it does my heart good to sit back and contemplate that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ has loved me, and

chosen me, and blessed me so wonderfully, and has placed me as one of His sons and heirs all because of the good pleasure of His will. It worries me not one scrap that I can't explain the whys and the wherefores. He said it, so it is done, and it only remains for me to bask in the warmth and wonder of all He has given me because of His good pleasure.

Chapter 9 – One of the Family

As we move on to verse six of this first chapter of Ephesians, we come to the conclusion of the first section of the chapter which has been dealing with the 'Will of The Father'. And what wondrous things have been revealed to us as we have explored something of what Paul has said about that Will.

The end of this section is marked by the phrase 'To the praise of the glory of His grace', and as I noted in an earlier study, similar words come in verse 12: 'That we should be to the praise of his glory', where again it marks the transition into the third section dealing with the 'Witness of the Spirit'. The second section, beginning at verse 7, deals with the 'Work of the Son'.

But first we must look at verse 6. This verse reminds us (and I think we need reminding often) that all the wonderful things that we have read in the proceeding verses have been done not so much for us but rather to the praise of His grace. Part of our lot as humans is that we are self-centred to say the least. We tend to relate everything to ourselves in some way or another. I sometimes wonder if this trait is a corruption of some lovely characteristic that God intended for His unfallen people, or is it just something that has come about as a result of man's sin and now causes us all sorts of problems.

Well, I'm not sure about that but I mention it here to make the point that contrary to what we may have been taught and what we may naturally like to think, all the great acts of God and the conflict of the ages that has been raging since the overthrow of the world, really is not just for our benefit, nor is it just on our behalf. We certainly are players in the great drama but there is much more going on than just our salvation, as wondrous as that is. I think it is necessary and good for our spiritual health, to know and be reminded on a regular basis, that all of God's great work is not for our glory, but ultimately for His glory.

When everything is said and done, it is God's glory, position, authority, prestige and power that has been challenged and attacked by the work of Satan. So when the final victory is brought about – and there is no doubt that it will be, then God will be seen to have been vindicated in every way and we will then understand in a way that is impossible for us now, just how it has all been to the praise of the glory of His grace. Yet all that makes it even more remarkable and marvellous that, in His grace, He has found a place for us, who, as chapter 2 tells us, were without hope, without any place and even without God. Wondrous grace indeed.

The next part of the verse says: 'Wherein (literally, in which) he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Accepted in the Beloved! What a lovely statement. I love the sound of the words and the way they flow. They are very euphonious to my ear (now there's a word for you to look up). But even more wonderful than the sound of the words is the truth they convey. Accepted in the Beloved. Surely this is the very crux of the Gospel, no matter what aspect of the Gospel you may be considering.

In an earlier study, I pointed out how often words such as 'in Christ' or 'in Him', or some such, occur throughout these verses and I make no apology for emphasising the point again. Just as in these first six verses alone we have 'in Christ Jesus'; 'in Christ'; 'in Him'; 'by Jesus Christ', and 'accepted in the Beloved'. And even though the subject changes at verse 7 from the 'Will of the Father' to the 'Work of the Son' we find that this theme of 'in Christ' continues. More on that later.

In Matthew's Gospel there are three times when Christ is referred to as the Beloved Son and I think it is helpful to set them before you.

Matthew 3:17: 'And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'.

Matthew 12:18: 'Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles'. (Please read the context as well.)

Matthew 17:5: 'While he yet spake, behold, a white cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice from out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'

I will leave you to contemplate those verses at your leisure.

Coming back to Ephesians, I want you to notice that in Colossians, which in many ways parallels Ephesians, we do not find the words 'the Beloved'. But don't worry, for the thought is there in chapter 1:13, where we read 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' I am a little sorry that the Authorised Version does not translate these verses literally for what Paul wrote was this 'and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.' And there are some more beautiful words – the Son of his love.

I noted earlier that the word 'wherein' in verse 6 is literally 'in which' in the Greek. An English reader might wonder for a moment just what the word 'which' refers to but there is no doubt in the Greek. Nouns, adjectives, etc. in Greek have gender and the gender of the word 'which' is feminine. The word 'grace' is also feminine and this fact ties the two words together. It is in the grace of the Father that we have been made accepted in the Beloved.

I want to look just a little more deeply at this sentence for there is a rich truth embedded in it. While we read in English, 'Wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved', a believer in the Ephesian assembly at the time Paul sent this letter to them would have read 'wherein he has greatly graced us in the Beloved'.

The Greek word translated 'made us accepted' occurs in the New Testament only one other time and it comes in Luke 1:28: 'These are the words of the angel to Mary: 'Hail thou that art HIGHLY FAVOURED...among women.' For what it is worth, this word is never used in classical Greek. It is used once by a Greek translator of the Old Testament but apart from that, these are the only two times it appears in any writing.

While we do not worship Mary, we certainly recognise her unique position and privilege. She was used by God in a way that that no other woman has been or ever could be used. Through her the embryo prophesied in Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled. 'Highly favoured' or 'greatly graced', the Scriptures say of her.

And the only time this word is used of anyone else is when Paul tells us that in the wonderful grace of God the Father, we once despised and almost forgotten Gentiles, have been highly favoured in the Son of His love. We could spend a long time writing about what it means to be accepted in the Beloved but I think two verses of a hymn by Catesby Paget that we often sing says it better than I can.

'So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be.
For in the person of his Son,
I am near as He.

So dear, so very near to God,
More dear I could not be.
The love wherewith He loves the Son.

Such is His love to me.

What unutterable grace is ours, not only that such words can be written about us but that they are true! Praise be to God. And just to finish off this part of our study, let me point out that we read about the riches of the Lord's grace elsewhere in Scripture but it is ONLY in Ephesians that we read of the exceeding riches of His grace and the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Now from verses 7 to 11 the subject is the Work of the Son and here too we will find truth expressed that will challenge our minds to comprehend it and our faith to accept it.

The first statement refers to redemption. Let me caution you. The very next phrase says 'the forgiveness of sins', and it is so easy for us to assume that redemption and forgiveness are one and the same. They are not and we need to apply the principle of right division and understand the difference. Certainly, they and the other things which are involved in the work of the Son are part of the overall work of salvation but we lose much right truth if we jumble these parts all together as if they are synonyms. So we will think about redemption for a little while, keeping it separate from forgiveness of sins.

Redemption is not a term used by ordinary people very much at all, although you might hear accountants and other financial types talk about the redemption price of some bonds or other. If you look up your dictionary, you will find that the word redeem means to buy something back that has been sold or pawned or perhaps given away. So it is a term well understood in financial circles. And if you try and tell an accountant that redeeming something has to do with salvation, he might, unless he happened to be a well instructed Christian believer, look at you as though you were off the planet a little.

But it is a very common concept right throughout the Bible, not only the thought of God redeeming His people but also of goods or people such as slaves being redeemed, or in other words, bought back and in the case of those who had been in bondage, then being set free. Now already the images that I have been conjuring up should have your minds going quite a number of different passages of Scripture.

Someone once said that the redemption of the sinner by God is so costly, that it must be free. When I was a very small child I knew that salvation was free because it was God's gift. I understood very little about it all at that time but I did know what free meant. It didn't cost anything. If I wanted this salvation (whatever it was), I would not have to part with any of the little pocket money my parents let me have. That's what free meant.

And, of course, it has been my great privilege to often preach the Gospel since then and stress the fact that it is obtained without money and without price. I said that above, that as a child, I thought that salvation didn't cost anything but I have since learned that is only partly true. It comes to us without price but its cost to God who provided it is beyond the ability of this world or anyone in it to pay.

And how grateful we should be to our Heavenly Father for this freely given gift of life, for his redemption of us from the bondage of death and sin. In Psalm 49, verses 7 and 8 we read: 'Alas! No man can ever ransom himself nor pay God the price of that release; his ransom would cost too much, for ever beyond his power to pay...' *New English Bible*

Then again Paul lays down the challenge in 1 Corinthians 6:19,20: 'What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God...'

And we could not go on without looking at Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:18,19: 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or without spot.' This constant emphasis in both Old and New Testaments on the necessity for sin to be dealt with by the shedding of blood is something that causes revulsion with some people. Certainly, it is not a pleasant subject but neither is sin. Humans, with their fallen and sinful nature, naturally tend to underestimate the seriousness of sin but those of us who are children of God must fully understand and acknowledge God's estimation of and attitude to sin.

Back in the early days of human history God said very clearly to Adam, 'In the day that you eat of the fruit thereof (that is, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you will surely die.' That was the one restriction placed on Adam, and as we well know, that was the one point that Satan attacked when he approached Eve.

Out of many important truths to come out of these events, the one to be emphasised in this context, is that after Adam and Eve had broken the restriction placed on them, in other words had sinned, God dealt with that sin by the sacrifice of two animals. In other words He shed blood.

If any reader wonders where this idea of two animals being sacrificed in the Garden of Eden comes from, let me remind you that God took away the covering of leaves that Adam and Eve had provided for themselves and clothed them with animal skins. I believe that this is telling us that two animals were killed and sacrificed and then skinned. I think we are also meant to see that those two animals were slain in the place of Adam and Eve.

Immediately sin entered the picture God covers it with blood. Why? Because the life (of a person or animal) is in the blood. Adam should have died that day and I believe he would have died that day, if it had not been for the free salvation that God, in His foreknowledge, had already planned for. And that plan called for a lamb, without spot or blemish, to die for the sins of the world and undo all the dreadful results of Adam's sin.

Therefore in every book of the Bible, this principle that for sin to be properly dealt with, there must be the shedding of blood, or in other words the death of the victim, is either stated or implied. And it is clearly stated in Ephesians:

1:7: 'In whom we have redemption through His blood.'

2:13: 'But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.'

There are two similar statements in Colossians.

So redemption is provided through the Lamb of God who would shed His blood, or in other words, die in the place of the guilty. And this required a human who had never sinned in any way. The Lamb had to be without spot or blemish.

But why did it have to be a human? God had, for centuries, been happy with animal sacrifices hadn't He? Well, yes and no. At best the animal sacrifices were only poor substitutes. They were pictures (the Scriptural word is 'types') that prefigured the real Lamb of God whose sacrifice took away the sins of the world. As Hebrews 10:4 tells us, 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.'

The main reason, however, why the sacrifice had to be human is deeper than that. In the Old Testament the subject of redemption is put forward in a number of ways. But several important principles stand out.

First of all, the one who would redeem had two jobs to do. The first was to buy back the lost person or property and the second was to avenge the death or injury of the person concerned. Now these two sides of redemption did not go together.

The second principle that stands out is that the redeemer–avenger had to be a near kinsman. Not just anyone could take on themselves the role of redeemer. the redeemer had to be ‘one of the family.’ And in fact, in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for redeemer literally means ‘kinsman–redeemer’ So this is why it is not ultimately possible for bulls and goats to be used as the substitutes for humans. the Law of God, indeed, the Holiness of God demands that it must be a human who makes the redemption.

We have an example of at least some of these points in Gen. 14, where Uncle Abraham not only rescued Lot from those who had taken him and others captive but he also avenged the deed by killing those involved and taking their goods as spoils. If Lot had not been his nephew, Abraham would not have lifted a finger.

But come back to God’s way of dealing with the problem of sin. For Him to provide a way out for those who would accept it and also without compromising His own laws and righteousness, a sinless man had to be found. (I hope that God saying the sacrifice had to be male does not upset the women. If that is a problem for you, you will need to take it up with God whenever you get the opportunity.)

Now if we think about it for a moment of two we will see that God had a real problem here. Where would He find such a person, someone who had no sins of his own and therefore not be dying for himself? God’s answer was a special baby, a miracle baby really. The virgin conception allowed that baby to escape the fallen nature bequeathed to the rest of us by Adam. So that was the first hurdle overcome.

But then, He had to live a sinless life, which in spite of some cruel testings, He did. And this One, known as Jesus of Nazareth to the world but the Lord Jesus Christ to those of us who have come under the shelter of His shed blood, paid the price of sin, HE DIED AS IF HE HAD BEEN THE GUILTY ONE, and in that way redeemed us, or bought us back from the power of sin and death and translated us into the kingdom of the Beloved Son of God.

What a plan! What a magnificent purpose! No wonder Paul told us back in verse 3 to speak well of the Father who has spoken well of us in Christ. And it is for all these reasons that I love the lines of the old Gospel song that say:

‘Tell me the story slowly
That I might take it in
That wonderful redemption
God’s remedy for sin.

Tell me the story often
For I forget so soon
The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon.

Chapter 10 – Redemption and Forgiveness

At the conclusion of our last study, I thought that I had perhaps gone on bit too long about redemption. But thinking back over it, I have come to the conclusion that there are still several other things that simply must be said before we go on to the subject of forgiveness of sins, so I hope you will forgive me for that.

I mentioned the teaching in the Old Testament about the Kinsman–redeemer, and pointed out that the other side of that subject was the Kinsman–avenger. Abraham, or Abram as he was then, gave us an example of it, when he rescued Lot from being carried away into slavery and avenged the assault.

I did not mention, however, that the most perfect picture of the kinsman–redeemer is presented in the Book of Ruth, where Boaz, the near–kinsman of Naomi and Ruth, not only redeems the inheritance of land that would otherwise have been lost to them, but he marries Ruth, the widow of his dead kinsman, and the first son of that marriage would be considered the son of the dead man, not Boaz, and he would inherit the land in question.

There is a great deal of rich teaching in that little book, and I would urge you all to read it again and look for the type–teaching it contains. I do not intend to go through it all here, as I think it would take us too far afield.

But it is the Exodus, probably, that is the greatest type of redemption, and it brings out the complete truth about redemption more than any other part of the history of the people of God. I mean by that, that when we read about the deliverance of the people of Israel in the Book of Exodus there are two aspects to it, if we have the eyes to see. On the one hand they were delivered from slavery in Egypt and all that it stood for. I hope New Testament references about Egypt being the house of death, etc. come to your mind.

As we well know, God didn't bring them through the Red Sea, and having got them all safely on the other side, leave them there saying, 'Well, you have been delivered, you're out of Egypt now. Best of luck, I'll be on my way.' No, because the exodus – the coming out – was only half of their redemption. There was also the eisodus – the coming in – that is, their ultimate installation into the promised land.

The agents through whom God brought about this great act of redemption were two men – kinsmen because they were both Israelites – the one named Moses and the other Joshua. Now, we generally do not think of Joshua when we think of the exodus but he and his work are part of the overall scheme. As you are no doubt aware, the Hebrew name Joshua becomes Jesus in Greek, and I think it was no accident that it was a man by the name of Joshua who brought the people into the promised land. (Read what Stephen has to say about it all in Acts 7.)

So there are the two aspects of redemption, the COMING OUT FROM sin and death, and then the COMING IN TO all that God has in store for us.

And we have these two aspects here in Ephesians 1:

Verse 7 is the first part, redemption by blood, and coupled with this we have the forgiveness of sins, and then down in verse 14 we get the other side – the *eisodus*. This verse speaks about the redemption of the purchased possession, and this too is said to be to the praise of His glory.

We have it in the parallel passage in Colossians 1:13 which I will quote again: 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, (the first part) and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (the second part). That sums it up very nicely. From – into. We can't have the 'into' without the 'from', and the 'from' without the 'into' is incomplete.

No matter what our dispensational sphere of blessing might be, all of Adam's race are shut up to this fact. The only way out from the condemnation of sin and death is by blood. Not the blood of bullocks or goats or lambs. These are only types, which, while pointing to the real thing, cannot of themselves bring about redemption. But the blood which has made it a reality is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who on the one hand is truly God, but on the other is truly man. Therefore He is OUR KINSMAN.

Hebrews 10:1–7 not only tells us that animal sacrifices cannot redeem us, but at that very point, we are told that a body had been prepared for the Redeemer.

Then we read that the One for whom the body was prepared said, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. Here we are back to Abraham and Isaac again. They two went to the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, the father willing to give the son, though it broke his heart, and the son willing to be sacrificed in spite of all the horrors it entailed.

And, says Hebrews 10:10, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. As Colossians has it, we are complete in Him. I know I have been quoting hymns a bit, but some of the old hymn writers certainly had got hold of the truth, and another verse has just popped into my mind.

What could your Redeemer do
More than He hath done for you?
To procure your peace with God.

Could He more than shed His blood?
After all His waste of love
All His drawings from above.

Why will you your Lord deny
Why, poor sinner, will you die?

So, let's leave the subject of redemption, and move on to the next phrase in Ephesians 1:7: '...the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...'

There are a number of Hebrew and Greek words used for 'forgiveness', but as I know that long lists of foreign words are tedious to some readers, I will spare you as much of it as I can.

It is, however, necessary and helpful for us to know that the various meanings behind the words so used are: 'to send away'; 'to cover' (not as in cover up, but as to cover with insurance); 'to lift up, to bear or to carry'. The word used in our text in Ephesians carries two main thoughts, namely, a discharge, such as in setting a prisoner free, and the remission of a debt. If we want one word to cover it all, then 'release' is perhaps the best word. But please remember, that we can be released from a debt as well as prison.

Again, the Old Testament gives us a wonderful example of the principle of forgiveness of sins, meaning our release. Leviticus 25 gives the details of what is termed the Year of Jubilee from verse 8 on. An equally accurate translation, and maybe a better one for the sake of our understanding, would be the Year of Release.

Readers may have some concept of what took place in this year that followed the seventh Sabbatical year. Note first, though, that verse 10 says: 'And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof...' Please, please, read the whole passage.

So, it was the time of liberty or release. Everyone who had gone into slavery for whatever reason was released to return to his family, and every piece of land that had been sold returned freely to the original family. This last point has to be understood in connection with the portioning of the land to each tribe and family when the people first came into the land after the wanderings in the wilderness following the exodus. In other words, each family had their own piece of the promised land, and no

matter what had happened in the meantime, in the great year of Jubilee, each family got their original possession back and they could make a fresh start. Imagine the turmoil such a system would create for the Reserve Bank and its manipulation of interest rates!

So, slaves were freed or released, and alienated land returned to its original owners. But there is more. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that 'debtors are freed from their debts'. What famous line does that make you think of? 'Forgive us (release us from) our debts, as we forgive others their debts to us.'

Now, all these thoughts should be in our minds as we read Ephesians 1:7: 'the forgiveness of sins'. One of the most important aspects of our forgiveness is illuminated by the way in which slaves were set free in New Testament times. By the way, wherever you read 'servant' in the New Testament, the better translation is 'slave'.

When Paul tells us that we are no longer the servants of sin, but are now the servants of Christ, he used the word slaves in both instances. To our minds, a servant is a fairly free agent, but as slaves of our Lord and Head we may not have as much freedom as we would like to think.

This raises an important point to consider. We have not been set free from our slavery to sin and death to do just what we like. We have been freed to serve our new Master. And as surely as the sun will set tonight and rise again tomorrow morning, we slaves of Christ will one day be called to give an account of how we served.

Back to Paul's day. It had become customary for slaves to be freed by selling them to one god or another. Here is an account relating to Jewish practice dated A.D. 81:

'Among the various ways that the manumission (the release) of a slave could take place by ancient law, we find the solemn rite and fictitious purchase of the slave by some divinity. The owner comes with the slave to the temple, sells him there to the god, and receives the purchase money from the temple treasury, the slave having previously paid it in there out of his savings. The slave is now the property of the god; not however, a slave of the temple, but a protégé of the god. Against all the world, especially his former master, he is a completely free man; at the utmost a few pious obligations to his old master are imposed upon him.'

A record of an actual transaction goes like this: 'Date. Apollo the Pythian (the god) BOUGHT from Sosibus...FOR FREEDOM a female slave, whose name is Nic'a...WITH A PRICE...the price he hath received. The purchase, however, Nic'a hath committed unto Apollo, FOR FREEDOM.' (I have added the capital letters to emphasise the words, concepts and terms which Paul uses in his epistles. I hope you recognise these terms.)

So the two thoughts that should be uppermost in our minds as we read about forgiveness of sins in Ephesians are firstly, the release from bondage to sin, and secondly, the release from our debts incurred as slaves of sin. Christ has forgiven us in both cases.

But as well as the word meaning release, Paul uses another word in Ephesians and Colossians which is translated 'forgive', and this is the word '*charizomai*'. This word is based on '*charis*' which as many will know means 'grace', and it is from this word that we get such English words as 'charisma' and 'charismatic'. We find this 'grace' word in Ephesians 4:32 among other places: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.' For what it is worth, we could write the verse this way: 'gracing one another, even as God in Christ has graced you.'

(If you check the verse for yourself, you will note that I have changed it slightly. The AV says: As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, but Paul actually wrote, As God in Christ hath forgiven you.)

The basic meaning of 'charis' is to give, based on the thought of being gracious to someone and giving them something. It is used that way in the New Testament, e.g. Luke 7:21, but as Paul and others developed Christian doctrine, the word was forced to take on a fuller meaning. It is sometimes translated 'freely give', but came to mean 'forgive completely'.

Another point worth noting is that '*aphesis*', the word translated 'forgive' in Ephesians 1:7 is never used of forgiveness of man by man. It is only used of forgiveness given by God to man. On the other hand, '*charizomai*' is used of forgiveness given by both God and man.

We have something similar in English with the two words 'forgive' and 'pardon'. While it is not true in every case, pardon tends to be the more formal word associated with forgiveness of someone who has transgressed against the crown or the state, while forgiveness is the word we use when dealing with transgressions between ourselves. We would find it rather odd indeed, if the judge in some dramatic criminal trial was to lean over the bench, smile benignly on the prisoner, and say: 'Go free, my man. You are forgiven.' I guess my illustration is not really apt, for it is not up to a judge to pardon a criminal. That is the prerogative of the parliament through the governor.

Do you remember the case of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain? When the Northern Territory authorities were faced with more evidence than they could ignore any longer, they tried to give the Chamberlains a pardon. This was refused because for the Chamberlains to accept a pardon, was to admit guilt on their part. There was no way the authorities could be gracious to them, because they had not offended. They were finally pronounced not guilty.

To come back to our study, though, God pardons us, while we graciously forgive each other. This opens the gate to a side-track, which I believe is important enough to follow.

I referred earlier to one line in the Lord's Prayer, where the Lord taught His disciples to pray for the Father to forgive them according as they had forgiven anyone else who had sinned against them. This was quite correct in that dispensation, when they were under Law, and when their Hope was the Kingdom of Heaven.

We find the Lord expressing the principle in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18. As you may remember, the king had very graciously forgiven this servant a great debt that he owed, but when the king found out that the same servant had not forgiven one of his fellows a small debt, the king's pardon was rescinded and the servant was thrown into prison. The principle is stated clearly in Matthew 18:35: 'So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.'

I don't know about you, but I do not believe that this applies in this present dispensation of the grace of God. I certainly don't act as if it does, anyway. And from my observations of my fellow believers over 50 years, they don't either. If we believed that this is what God will do to us, then none of us would ever go to sleep at night without making sure we had forgiven every one who had offended us.

The truth is, consciously or not, we act in the light of the truth for today which we find in Ephesians 4:32, which is the exact opposite of the principle expounded in the Kingdom prayer the Lord taught His disciples. The truth for us is this: 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.'

We are not to forgive in order that we might be forgiven. Rather we are to forgive one another because God in Christ has already forgiven us all our sins, and I believe that means sins past, present and future.

And perhaps the most important point is that there is no threat of the pardon being rescinded if we fail to forgive any of our fellow-believers.

While this is, or I think should be, a tremendous relief it does not mean that we can be careless about it. Our Father expects us to forgive those who transgress against us in some way. But if, through ignorance or wilfulness we do not, His forgiveness of us remains firm and sure. No wonder Paul says that all this is according to the riches of His grace. Rich grace indeed.

Verse 8 goes on to say that God, in pouring out the riches of His grace, hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. This opens up new areas which, because of their depth and importance, we will leave to our next chapter to consider. In the meantime, we give thanks to God for the unspeakable gift of His Son and the riches of grace that are ours so freely in Him.

Chapter 11 – Abundance and Mystery of God’s Will

So far in our study of the first chapter of Ephesians, we have seen that God has blessed us with every blessing that is spiritual in the Heavenlies in Christ, has chosen us in Him (Christ) before the overthrow of the world, and this was in order that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. He marked us out beforehand to be placed as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, and this was according to the good pleasure of His will and to the praise of the glory of His grace.

In that grace, Paul says, we have been made accepted in the Beloved, and have received redemption through the blood of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, all of which is said to be according to the riches His grace. When I read through that list quickly, it leaves me rather breathless, and I find my mind reeling a little at the immensity of it all. Riches of grace indeed! Have we the faith to believe it all, and accept it from the gracious hand of our loving Heavenly Father?

As I said, these are riches of grace. But if we struggle to comprehend and accept these riches of grace, what will we do when we get to chapter 2? There in verses 4–7 we read: ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the EXCEEDING riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus’.

It might be best if we cross our bridges one at a time, and deal with those things when we come to them. But it might help to prepare our minds, if while we struggle with the introductory themes of the epistle, we hold the thought that there is much more to come.

The subject of God’s will has come up now several times in the verses that we have been looking at, and it is appropriate that we give it some consideration. In verse 1, we had ‘by the will of God’; verse 5, ‘according to the good pleasure of His will’, and in verse 9 we come to ‘the mystery of His will’.

It might appear to the English reader that the phrase ‘the will of God’ can have only one meaning. Surely, if the God and Creator of the universe wills something, that is the end of it. It will happen and nothing can change or prevent it. If only it were that simple. There is more than one word that is translated into English as ‘will’ as in ‘the will of God’. And, it is one of the principles of Berean Bible study that it is the way in which the Scriptures use a word that determines its meaning, not what some dictionary or concordance might say about it, as helpful as those books may be.

So let’s look at a few verses which have this word in them that Paul uses here. (For readers so inclined, the two words are *thelema* and *boulema*. There is a discussion of these two words in Appendix 102 in the *Companion Bible*. *thelema* is the word used in Ephesians 1.)

In Acts 10:10 we have: 'And he (Peter) became very hungry and WOULD have eaten...'

Matthew 15:28 says: 'Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou WILT.'

Matthew 19:21: 'Jesus said unto him, If thou WILT be perfect, go and sell that thou hast... '

Can we say that when Peter was hungry that he willed to eat, or that the Syro-Phoenician woman had her daughter healed through the exercise of her will-power? Can anyone of us, in whatever age or dispensation WILL ourselves to be perfect? If it were only so easy! Now, some reader might be thinking that each example given so far is speaking of people. Of course they can't will such things. They are not God. True, but look at my last example:

Matthew 23:37: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often WOULD I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye WOULD not.'

In this well-known verse, spoken by the Lord not long before His crucifixion, is He really saying that He WILLED to gather Jerusalem's children together and protect them, but He couldn't because they WILLED it otherwise. It is the same word in both cases. The Lord said He WILLED it, but they WILLED it not. If it was the other Greek word used, then we would have a real problem, but the truth of the matter is that *thelema*, and its verbal form, are better translated by the simple word WANT.

Peter was very hungry, and wanted something to eat. The woman who had the sick daughter got what she WANTED, because of her great faith. And the Lord said to the rich young man who came asking questions of life importance, 'If you WANT to be perfect, go and sell all you have.'

And the clincher for me is that last reference about Jerusalem. The Lord had often WANTED to help and protect and save His rebellious people, but they DID NOT WANT it. Just to round off that thought, we know full well from other Scriptures that the time is coming when He will stop wanting the obedience of His people, and He shall will it. For the sake of His glorious purposes and the fidelity of His Word and His Name, He will carry out their purging and redemption, and with the New Covenant engraved on the fleshy tablets of their hearts, as the nation born in a day, they will then want to do what He wants for them.

This subject of God's will is wide-ranging to say the least. Charles Welch has a discussion of the subject starting on page 105 of '*In Heavenly Places*', which goes for six pages, and I would recommend that anyone wanting to go more deeply into the subject should read what he has to say. I hope, however, that what I have said is sufficient for our purpose, and at the least, will alert readers to the fact that God does not always WILL things. Quite often, He simply WANTS things.

Verse 7 also tells us that these great riches that are ours are according to the riches of His grace. The words 'according to' could just as easily be translated as 'in harmony with', and that is exactly what Paul is saying. We had the words according to back in verse 5, and again if you think 'in harmony with' you will be right on track. What God has done in and through the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf is in harmony with the pleasure of His good will, and in harmony with the riches of His grace.

It seems that not everyone on earth or in heaven, thought that God's actions consequent upon the rejection of Israel at the end of the Book of Acts, were the right thing to do. Therefore, we find it stressed that His actions regarding the Church which is His Body are in complete harmony with His purpose and His Grace. This subject will arise again later, so I will leave it for the time being.

Paul's next point, at the beginning of verse 8 is that in all these things, God hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will. May I make a little personal comment here? I confess that there are times as I try to come to some understanding of what is written in these verses, that I wish Paul could write just one sentence without going into these very deep subjects.

When you look at the topics he ranges over in these few short verses we have already covered, is it any wonder it has taken us eleven studies to get this far. And, believe me dear reader, when I say we have done little more than scratch the surface. Anyway, I speak as a man. Paul, of course, was carried along by the Holy Spirit, and wrote as the Spirit dictated. I suspect that there were times when he too was rendered speechless by what was being revealed to Him. So let's press on.

Have you ever stopped to consider how God can abound in all prudence and wisdom towards us? Or can anyone do it for that matter? So often we read verses such as these, and the full import of what is said escapes us.

To abound means to 'hold nothing back', to be prodigal in giving, whether it is of money, time or effort or love or whatever. The word 'careless' comes to mind. The prodigal son is called that because he wasted his fortune. He carelessly, that is without care and forethought, spent up big, and eventually the money ran out. So abounding has those thoughts behind it.

But prudence is the opposite. It does not mean to be mean-spirited, but rather cautious and careful, as opposed to thoughtless and careless. And of course, wisdom would not allow any good resources to be wasted or squandered. So, I ask the question again. How can God abound in all prudence and wisdom towards us? As you may have suspected, I'll answer the question for you. I don't think He does abound in all prudence and wisdom towards us. But doesn't the verse say He does? Well, come with me back to the grammar lesson at school again. Or maybe that should be history.

We are very well served in our language and reading by rules of grammar, which, if we know them and understand them, makes our learning easier and surer. And in addition, the fact that our Bibles are divided up into chapters and verses with numbers on them makes it very easy for us to find what we want. BUT IT WAS NOT ALWAYS LIKE THAT. The chapters and verses were added centuries later by ordinary men – and while they did a mighty job, they didn't always get it right. But quite apart from that, my point is that the chapters and verses are not part of the inspired original. And neither is the punctuation.

When the Old Testament was written, they did not use vowels at all. I'll type something for you without vowels, and see how you go. They also ran their words together, but I'll spare you that for the moment. Th Hbrw f th ld Tstmnt ws wrttn wtht ny vwls. You should have been able to work out fairly easily that I wrote; 'The Hebrew of the Old Testament was written without any vowels.' When we get to the Greek of the New Testament, they did use vowels, but, as with the Old Testament Hebrew, they ran all their words together without any breaks.

So, Ephesians 1:7 would look like this, if we did the same thing:

'InWhomwehaveredemptionthroughhisbloodtheforgivenessofsinsaccordingtotheriche sofHis
gracewhereinHehathaboundedtowardusinallwisdomandprudence.'

Did you notice that I had gone into verse 8? Isn't it hard to read? Imagine having to translate something like that from a foreign language, and what is more, a language that was no longer spoken. (Modern Greek has changed considerably from New Testament Greek.)

Now, where are you going to put the punctuation marks? It is not always easy to decide what punctuation is appropriate let alone where it should go. So how does this affect verse 8? Well, simply this. I think that whoever punctuated the verse got it a little wrong. They joined two opposites that really can't be joined.

We can't really say that someone abounds toward us in prudence and wisdom. It is like saying that someone is carelessly careful, or to put it around the other way, carefully careless. I think that there should be a full stop after toward us, so part of verses 7 and 8 would then read like this:

'In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded towards us. In all wisdom and prudence He hath made known unto us the mystery of His will.'

Do not these verses now speak truth without any difficulty? I think so. Surely we can say that God has been prodigal in His love and grace towards us. If you don't think that God has poured out His love upon you without any reserve or limits whatever, you surely haven't read Ephesians chapter two yet. The verse of the hymn I quoted in the last study spoke of His waste of love. Is there any one of the Lord's people who can say that we have not wasted (squandered might be a better word) some of His love and grace? No, indeed, not one of us.

Yet has our loving Father held back in any way. No, He has not. God so loved the world, the rotten, sinful, rebellious, God hating world, that He gave His only begotten Son. And just like Abraham and Isaac, they two, that is, the Father and the Son went together to the mount of sacrifice. Not just the Father. Not just the Son. They two, together, united in the good pleasure of His will. This, I declare to you, is abounding love and grace. So that is one subject.

Now Paul moves to the next point. As the years roll by, and the conflict between the mystery of Godliness and the mystery of iniquity takes its course, God arrives at the point where it is the right time according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, to reveal to His people the mystery of His will, and He does not do this carelessly, or prodigally, but rather, in wisdom and prudence.

I suspect there has been more than one occasion where Satan has been tripped up by God's wisdom and prudence. Satan might know a lot more than us, but I am sure he does not have the full knowledge that God has. It seems that Satan studies prophecy as we do (probably much more thoroughly) trying to anticipate God's next move, but God prudently has not revealed all His plans. A little here, and a bit more there, and sometimes with enough ambiguity to keep His opponents guessing. And when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, it was time for something of the mystery of God's will to be prudently revealed.

This brings us to the word mystery, a very important word, not only in this epistle, but in Paul's teaching generally. It is worth noting the occurrences of it in Ephesians, and if I use the outline given in the book *'In Heavenly Places'* (Charles Welch), it will show the correspondences between them. The points marked with the same letter are parallels. This type of outline is called an introversion:

The Word 'Mystery' In Ephesians:

- A1. 1:9 The Mystery of His Will – which He purposed
 - B1. 3:3 THE MYSTERY – pre-eminently so
 - C1. 3:4 The Mystery of Christ – not made known as it is now
- A2. 3:9 The Dispensation(RV) of the Mystery – which He purposed
 - B2. 5:32 THE GREAT MYSTERY
 - C2. 6:19 The Mystery of the Gospel – made known.

I suggest to you that this outline is worth studying.

We must give some attention now to the two words that stand out in this outline, namely, mystery and dispensation. It would not be amiss to say that these two words are the crux of our approach to the study and interpretation of the Bible. By our approach, I mean that of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia.

The word 'mystery' is a straight take over from the Greek language. In modern English, it has come to mean something hard to understand, even when explained. When Paul used the word, however, it's meaning was more that of a secret. Some translators have actually used the term 'sacred secret' for this word when translating their versions of Scripture. Some might ask what the difference is between a mystery and a secret. A mystery can still be mysterious even when it has become known, where a secret is quite plain and understandable once it has been revealed. But that is a modern distinction. There is one other factor to be considered, however.

In the ancient world, there were many societies and orders, and to become a member and to know the mysteries associated with a particular society, one had to be initiated into it. The Masonic lodges are something of a parallel in our day. One progressed through degrees, and came into a deeper knowledge and understanding of ever deepening mysteries. In Ephesians and Colossians, as well as some other epistles, Paul uses some of the terms commonly used by these societies. The word 'mystery' itself is one of them. I will give just one example. In Philippians 4:12 Paul says '...everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry...' and the literal translation of 'I am instructed' is 'I am initiated'.

I am not saying that Paul was setting up a secret society. Rather, I think he was using words and terms (metaphors if you like) that his readers would understand to teach truths of God that were different in many respects to what had been taught before, and as such were not only a secret, that is, unknown before they were revealed, but also something of a mystery, that is, somewhat hard to understand.

I also believe that unless the Holy Spirit of God initiates someone into the truth of the Mystery, we will preach, teach, explain, badger and cajole in vain. It took me some years to learn this truth, but once I did, it has saved me many a heartache and headache. It is my job to teach and present what I believe is the Truth, and to follow up any expressions of interest that may be shown, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and initiate a believer into the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body and the Church of the Dispensation of the Mystery.

So I think it is not the whole truth to say that the word mystery only means a secret, something that is not mysterious when it has been explained. If it were as simple as that, why is it that the majority of believers not only don't understand it, but are not interested, and some are violently opposed to it? Their responses are something I do not understand. The word 'mystery' therefore refers to something secret that has been hidden, in the case of Scripture, by God Himself, but even when revealed, can still be hard to fully comprehend.

We are not short of examples of this in Scripture. Who can explain the 'mystery of iniquity', in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 for example? And Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:16 that the mystery of Godliness is great. Then there is the mystery of Christ. Can we explain that? Yes, in part. I suggest you look up your concordances and find out just how many different mysteries are mentioned in the Bible, and I know from experience that none of us can fully explain them, to say the least.

But let's come to some sort of conclusion about it. For our purposes, I think we can say that a mystery in Scripture is something that is a secret until God chooses to reveal it, but that even then, there can be

difficulties with fully understanding it, and it will require time and effort on our part. More about mysteries in later chapters.

The other word that we think is so important to understanding the Bible is dispensation. This is a translation of the Greek word *oikonomia* which means the rule of a house. That simply means the administration of the affairs of an estate. And associated with *oikonomia* is the *oikonomos*, the steward, the one whose job it was to administer the house. By the way, *oikonomia* has come over into English as *economy*. Unfortunately, like most words, it has degenerated to mean the wise handling of money, but when someone studies *economics* at university they are not learning how to be miserly with the cash!

The steward was expected to wisely and correctly apportion the resources of the estate, and of course, he was accountable to the owner. We still use the word in the pharmaceutical area, where we go to the chemist with our little prescriptions and the chemist, following the instructions issued, dispenses the correct medicine in the correct dosage to us. We hope it is correct anyway.

There are a number of dispensations named in Scripture, such as the dispensation of the fullness of times, the dispensation of the mystery, and we refer to the dispensation of law without any hesitation or confusion. A dispensation, while of necessity being in time, is not just a period of time. More than one dispensation can run together, e.g. see Galatians 2:7,8.

We handle this in our own day without much trouble. At the time of writing this, we have the dispensation of Bob Carr in New South Wales, while in Victoria, there is the dispensation of Geoff Kennet. And over those great houses, there is the dispensation of John Howard. If you have trouble with the word 'dispensation' there, substitute administration, which I think is the perfect modern equivalent.

Chapter 12 – Fullness of Times

We concluded our last study by looking at the two words 'mystery' and 'dispensation'. This was to prepare us for verse 10 which tells us about a dispensation called the dispensation of the fullness of times. But a few things remain to be said about verse 9 before we go on. We learned that God has wisely and prudently made known to His saints the mystery of His will. This revelation is in accordance, or in harmony with His good pleasure that He purposes within Himself.

And what is the mystery of His will? Simply this. That in a dispensation called the fullness of times, He is going to gather in one all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth. I confess to you that I quail when I look at those statements and wonder how I can ever do justice to the depth of meaning in them. All I can do is press on and pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate these things to whatever extent is possible for each of us.

The first point to make is that there is a little more to it than comes out in the *Authorised Version (AV)*. The mystery of God's will was 'unto' a dispensation of the fullness of times, or as we might say today, it had in view that special dispensation. The revised translations pick this point up and translate it slightly differently to the *Amplified Version* has it like this: 'In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He previously purposed and set forth in Him, [He planned] for the maturity of the times and the climax of the ages to unify all things and head them up and consummate them in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth.' No matter how it is put, it is still quite overwhelming.

The word 'fullness' is important. The subject of the fullness is quite large in Scripture and beyond the scope of our study, but I am not overstating the case by saying that the subject of the Fullness is almost the same as the subject of Christ. For the present, please note that we have a dispensation called the fullness of times here, and down towards the end of this first chapter we read of Christ as filling all in all

(or in other words, the Fullness). Let me state the obvious just to be sure the point is not missed. Fullness and filling are much the same thing.

But verse 23 tells us something more than that Christ fills all in all, doesn't it? I am a little reluctant to type the words, for it seems too fantastic to be true. But the sacred Word says it, so the mind of faith bows and says 'Amen'. This great Redeemer and Lord is the Head of a company of believers called the Church which is His Body, and that company is called the fullness of Him, that is Christ, the one who fills all in all.

Let me put it another way to try to make sure that I have got my point across. Christ is the fullness par excellence – He fills all in all. But He in turn is filled full by the company of believers nominated by God as the Church Which is His Body. I do not intend to go into this any more at the moment. It can wait till we get to it in its proper place.

We need to be aware, however, that verse 10 is not the only place in this chapter where fullness is spoken of. The next point to note is that fullness of seasons is a more accurate translation than fullness of times. It is referring to a season in the plan of God, not to a particular time.

The same word is used in Matthew 13:30 referring to the time of harvest. This does not mean some hour on the clock, but the season when the harvest occurs, and in fact, if you read the context you will find the Lord has told the parable of the wheat and tares. And He talks about the future time (season) of the harvest when the wheat and tares will be gathered together. And when He explains the parable He says in verse 39 that the harvest is the end of the world (better translation: age).

I do not believe that the end of the age of which the Lord spoke in Matthew 13 is the same as the dispensation of the fullness of seasons of Ephesians 1:10. We turned to this passage only as an example of how the word for seasons is used.

Another well-known verse where the word fullness occurs is Galatians 4:4: But when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son...Here however, it is the word for 'time', and not 'season', and I think we can easily see why it is different. The coming of Christ into the world was not a casual affair that could have happened at any time in a particular period. On the contrary, I believe that Christ was born at the precise moment of time that God had planned, and similarly, He hung on the Cross and gave up His spirit at the precise moment of time planned for it. So the word 'time', and not 'season', is correct there, but when Paul speaks of a period when God is going to do certain things that bring about the climax of the ages, the right word is season, not time.

The next point is about the gathering together. Other places in Scripture speak of things being gathered together, but in each case it is a different Greek word. The words 'gathered together' translate one Greek word and it is such a magnificent word that I can't resist giving it to you. It is *anakephalaioomai*. The average English reader nearly has a fit when confronted with a word like that, but we know more about it than we realise. The '*keph*' part of the word means 'head', and we all have heard the word 'encephalitis', an illness of the brain. English has softened the 'k' to a 'c', but in spite of that, '*ceph*' is the same as '*keph*'.

The word Paul used means 'to head up'. What does that mean? Well, it helps me to understand it better by thinking of it as sum up. While summing up may not cover all the meaning in it, I think it is getting close. Just as we sum up a column of figures, or a speaker gives a summing up at the end of his talk, or we speak of any conclusion as a summing up, so God is going to bring together and sum everything up in Christ in a dispensation called the fullness of seasons.

Some reader may be thinking that the Millennial reign of Christ on earth could be the dispensation of the Fullness of Seasons, but I don't think so. The Millennium is not the end of the ages. There is more after that. For instance, read Revelation 21.

Please remember that verses 8 and 9 tell us that God's purpose and plan had in view this fullness of seasons, and to anticipate our study of the closing verses of the chapter a little, Christ's heading up of all things relating to the Church which is His Body is a type of the great fullness of the seasons. He heads up all things now to the Church which is His Body, but not all things in general. But in the Dispensation of the Fullness of the Seasons, He will then head up all things without exception.

We need to go to 1 Corinthians 15 to round out the picture. I would urge you to read the whole chapter, but for now, I will start at verse 22: 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. THEN COMETH THE END WHEN HE SHALL HAVE DELIVERED UP THE KINGDOM TO GOD, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet.

Now to verse 28: And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.'

Let me summarise. God the Father has decreed that everything shall be subject to the Son, who reigns until every enemy has been subdued. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, and when all is finally subjected to the Son, He hands up the kingdom to God, and is Himself subject to the Father, to the end that GOD (not the Father) may be all in all.

It seems to me that there are many connections here with our verses in Ephesians 1. I think Paul is speaking of the same period in both passages. But Ephesians brings out a different aspect of it. 1 Corinthians tells us of the consummation, the final heading up of all the plans and purposes of God. But in Ephesians 1, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that in the company called the Church which is His Body, Christ is NOW the Head of all things.

He is not yet head of all things universally, only in the Church which is His Body. This company of believers is His fullness, and He in turn fills all in all.

But the ultimate goal is not that the Son will be all in all or even that the Father will be all in all, but rather that GOD will be all in all. In other words, the Church which is His Body and the relationship of that Body to its Head is a type, a prophetic picture, of how Christ will, in the fullness of seasons, be all in all universally, and when that great moment arrives, He will hand it all up to the Father, that God may be all in all. I apologise for all the repetition, but the point is worth it.

So we move on to verse 11. Notice that this verse starts with the words 'In Whom', referring back to 'in Christ' and 'in Him' in the previous verse. Verse 13 also starts with 'In whom', referring back to verse 10 again.

We need to realise that there are two things spoken of here that have their origin in Christ back in verse 10. What is said in verse 13 and 14 refer back to verse 10. It does not flow out of verses 11 and 12.

Let me set it out in outline form which I hope will help:

Verse 10: All things will be headed up in Christ...even in Him...

IN WHOM

we have an inheritance

being predestinated
His purpose
the counsel of His will
IN WHOM
ye also trusted
after ye heard the Word
after ye believed
ye were sealed...

By setting it out like that, I am not trying to suggest that there is a balance between the various points. I only want to press home the point that both sections refer back to the one starting point – EVEN IN HIM.

And how interesting that both sections end up with a reference to the praise of His glory! It is rather a sobering thought that the choosing of us by God, and the work of election done in and for us, which work is in harmony with His will and purpose, and on the other hand, our response to the Word of Truth, and the sealing of us as children of God by the Holy Spirit, is all unto the praise of His glory.

I have to confess that, often, as I reflect back on what I have said and done during the day, I can not see very much there that will be to the praise of His glory. But in this area, that of our service for our Lord, we are as dependent on His mercy and grace as we are in the area of the gift of eternal life. That does not mean we need not strive for maturity, or that we can let the old nature take over. Not at all. We have to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and keep the old nature under, and thus allow the fullest sway possible to the new nature by which we can render a reasonable service to our Lord and Head.

Chapter 13 – Inheritance and First Trusted

The Dispensation of the Fullness of the Seasons is, as we saw in our last study, a future period in the plan of God, when all things relating to the purposes of God will be summed up, or headed up, in Christ. This is the prelude, glorious in itself, that precedes the even more glorious handing up of the Kingdom by the Son to the Father, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.

The Church which is His Body now typifies that heading up of all things into Christ, but it is a limited heading up, confined to the company which Ephesians 1 tells us is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. That Church, given the title the Church which is His Body, is a special company of believers called into being when God's earthly people Israel were set aside (divorced) by God, after they rejected the second offer of Jesus as their Messiah during the period covered by the Book of Acts.

The apparent 'gap' in the plan of God, caused by the defection of Israel, was filled by God with the Church which is His Body, and as we have seen in our previous studies, this company of believers has a calling which goes back before the 'overthrow of the world', is based on a promise of eternal life made before the world began, and therefore is not based on nor connected with any of the covenants made with Abraham or Moses or the people of Israel. All of God's dealings with Abraham and Israel are said in Scripture to be since or from the 'overthrow of the world'.

So, to get back to the point, ever since the end of Acts judicially, and factually from AD 70 when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, God has been showing the Headship of Christ in all things relating to the Church which is His Body. This is a prophetic picture of how Christ will head up ALL THINGS (not just all things relating to the Body) in that future dispensation called the Dispensation of the Fullness of the Seasons.

As I have said before, I wish that I could understand all that these words mean, and even more, be able to explain clearly what I do understand. The concepts revealed in Ephesians and Colossians by the Holy Spirit through Paul are wide and deep, and tax my mind at least, to its small limits.

But the one thing that is not difficult to grasp, even for a child, is that all these things are in, through, by and for Christ, and all that is required of us is the simple 'Amen' of faith. If we hold fast by faith to our Saviour, Lord and Head Jesus Christ, then every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places far above all kingdoms, cities, callings and spheres of blessing are ours beyond any doubt whatsoever.

Now to verse 11 and 12 of Ephesians 1. These say: 'In whom (that is, Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (verse 12) that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.'

Did you notice that once more, whatever we have in these verses, it is in Christ?

The quote above is from the AV, of course. If you consult other translations, you will find that there are variations. The *Revised Version* has it: 'In whom also we were made a heritage.' Moffatt says: 'We have had our heritage allotted to us.' *The New English Bible* has: 'In Christ indeed we have been given our share in the heritage.' And the *New International Version* says: 'In him we were also chosen.' Their footnote says 'Or, were made heirs.'

The differences in those quotes shows the difficulty. Some translators say that we have been made an inheritance for God, while others have it that we have received an inheritance from God. Why or how it is that such opposite translations can be arrived at from the one passage I can't say. We are stuck with it, however, and have to do the best we can.

The Greek word used means, basically, to cast lots, and then by inference, it came to refer to whatever was obtained by the casting of the lot. We must bear in mind that the word 'lot' is linked to 'allot' and 'allotment'. We should also know that this one Greek word is translated as 'allotment', 'heritage' and 'inheritance'. It was common practice in Old Testament times, at least, for common land around a village to be portioned out, or allotted, by the casting of lots.

We find a reference to this division of land by lot in Psalm 16:5,6: 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places' refers to the fact that after the lots were cast and it was decided who got what portion of land, the various pieces of land were measured out using a measuring rope or line.

Another helpful reference is Isaiah 34:17: 'And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line; they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein. The first mention of casting lots in the Bible is in Leviticus 16:8,9,10, where it is used to choose which of the two goats chosen on the Day of Atonement shall be sacrificed unto the Lord, and which one turned loose into the wilderness as what the *Authorized Version* calls the scapegoat. And in the Books of Numbers and Joshua we read many times of lots being cast to divide the land up amongst the twelve tribes.

Well, I think it is not hard for us to understand that part of it. The real problem in verse 11 lies in who gets the allotment, God or ourselves. To help us come to an understanding of this, we need to go back to the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the '*Septuagint*' (LXX). The reason we do this is to see what Greek word was used to translate the Hebrew words in question, and discovering this, we then have a bridge of understanding to those words in the Greek New Testament. The point is that when the

LXX was translated, Hebrew and the Greek that the New Testament was written in, were living languages. We therefore give those ancient translators credit for knowing what the words in common use at the time meant, certainly far more than did the scholars of the middle ages and later, when the Bible began to be translated into English.

We find the Hebrew word for allotment or inheritance that is the equal to the word Paul uses in Ephesians 1:11 in Joshua 7:6,17,18 and also in 1 Samuel 10:20,21. We need to remember that while the casting of lots is not specifically mentioned in these verses, that is what was being done.

First the verses from Joshua 7: 'So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah WAS TAKEN. And he brought the family of Judah; and he TOOK the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi WAS TAKEN.'

Now 1 Samuel 10:20,21: 'And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin WAS TAKEN. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri WAS TAKEN, and Saul the son of Kish WAS TAKEN...'

In the above quotations, where I have capitalised the words took or was taken, it is the Hebrew word that became the Greek word used by Paul. You will find another example in 1 Samuel 14:41,42 which I will leave you to look up.

It seems reasonable to me to assume that Paul used the word in THE SAME WAY as when the Hebrew word so translated is used in the Old Testament. And the truth is that this word is ALWAYS used in the Old Testament to mean something taken or chosen as an allotment, not given to someone else as their allotment or inheritance. This means that Paul is telling us that the Father, in Christ, has obtained us as His allotment or inheritance, rather than that we have obtained an inheritance.

While it is true that we have indeed been given an inheritance in Christ, that is not what this verse is saying. Other passages tell us about what we have been given in Christ, so we are not losing anything by allowing the truth of this verse to come out, even though it says the opposite. Verse 5 of this very chapter told us that we have been predestinated unto the placing as Sons, which means that we have an inheritance. Even in our society, we still sometimes talk about 'the son and heir'. That is one side. As sons we inherit, and simultaneously God takes us as His inheritance.

Let me remind you of some other points we noted in earlier studies. In verse 5, we have the inheritance involved in the predestination as sons, and this is said to be according to the good pleasure of His will and to the praise of the glory of His grace. Here in verse 11 we have another inheritance, a predestination according to the purpose of Him that worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, in order that we should be to the praise of His glory.

Deuteronomy 32:9 shows that this thought of God having an inheritance is not foreign to Scripture. 'For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.'

All this raises a serious question for our consideration, surely. If we are an inheritance, a portion, an allotment for God, of what value are we. Is it strange to think, that with all God has spent (I use the word thoughtfully) on obtaining this inheritance for Himself, that He would expect something in return from us?

I am not inferring for one moment that we are or have anything of worth to offer God for our life in Christ. We are not and have nothing that could pay that price. But having been given life and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, and, in the process, having been freed from the power of sin and

death, we can now serve Him to whatever capacity we have, and thus bring Him glory and honour. How are we doing?

While we stand surely and safely on the foundation of Christ's sacrifice for us, we should continually pay heed to our work and our witness, or in the words of 1 Corinthians 3, we should take care as to the sort of building we erect on the one foundation. God enables, God calls, but He expects us to follow in a worthy manner.

I want to think now about the last part of verse 12: 'who first trusted in Christ'. This really follows the early part of the verse. The *NIV* puts verse 12 like this: 'In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.'

You will have noticed that the *NIV* quoted above changes the word trusted to hoped, which is correct. In the Scriptural sense there is no difference really between trusting and hoping, but I think it is important to realise that the word is hoped because we might then make the link with the word hope in verse 18, as I believe we should.

But what does Paul mean when he speaks about 'we' having first trusted or hoped, and 'you' also etc.? Most expositors and translators seem to take this sentence and the next one to mean that Paul was saying that we, that is, I and my colleagues, who first put our hope in Christ, are predestinated to the hope of His glory. And you, that is, you more recent Gentile believers, you too, when you believed the Gospel we preached, you were sealed etc.

'So what is wrong with that?' someone might ask. 'When Paul talks about 'we', I can see that means 'he and his fellow Jews and the 'you' refers to us Gentiles.' Yes, perhaps, but it is, I think, a little deeper than that. If this view is right, then in verse 7 where he says we have redemption through His blood, he is saying that only the Jewish believers have that and not Gentiles. Or in verse 11 where he says that we have obtained an inheritance, does he mean the Jewish believers have it but 'ye' Gentiles do not? The no in answer to those questions is self evident, surely.

Another slightly different interpretation is put forward by others, including Dr Bullinger in the marginal notes of the *Companion Bible*. This view says that the 'we' refers to the believers in the previous dispensation, that is, the Acts period, and the 'ye' refers to those who believed since that dispensation finished at the end of Acts. I don't think this can be right either, because the Ephesian church was in existence during the Acts period, as we read of Paul and others visiting it and working there.

In our search for understanding, we must take our usual look at the actual words used. Paul used a compound word made up of the verb 'hoped' with the prefix 'pro' stuck on the front of it. 'Pro' means 'before', and we use it in English in exactly the same way. But 'before' can have a number of different meanings.

By the way, 'pro' occurs 48 times in the New Testament, but here in Ephesians 1:12 is the ONLY time it is translated as 'first'! Other translations are 'before', 'afore', 'aforetime', 'better', 'prefer'. Bullinger defines 'pro' as follows: 'Pro governs only one case (the Genitive), and denotes the position as being in sight, or before one, in place, time or superiority.' (*Companion Bible*, Appendix 10/xiv). I have left out Bible references Bullinger gives, but we will look at one or two of them.

Let me restate the important parts of the definition in a straightforward way. 'Pro' means 'before', and that can be before in place (he is in front of me), time (he is earlier than I), or superiority (he is above me in status). John 1: 15, 27 and 30 give us examples of the use of 'before' in the sense of superiority.

Verse 15: 'This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me.' It can't mean before me in time; John was born first. It can't mean He is standing before me; Christ was not present. The obvious meaning is that Christ has a superior position or role to John.

Verse 27: 'He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' No comment necessary.

Verse 30: 'This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

These are examples of the use of 'pro' to show that it can mean before in a position of superiority. We can now bring this knowledge to our compound before-hoped. In the Scripture, the word 'hope' has a much stronger meaning than it does today. We often use the word 'hope' when there is a lot of doubt in our minds. For instance, we might look out the window at the dark clouds and say, 'I hope it won't rain'. But our hope in Scripture is sure and certain. Maybe the word 'trust' is better, but we don't use it much in this way.

Another word that may help us to express the meaning here is expectation, especially if we remember that our expectation is based on the promises of God's Word and on the unfailing work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So before-expectation? No, it is rather clumsy.

Let us substitute the word 'prior' for 'before'. That gives us prior-expectation. That, I think, is close to what Paul is meaning. Charles Welch uses the expression fore-hope which also expresses it well.

So what is the prior-expectation or fore-hope that Paul and his fellow believers had? It is that part of the Gospel newly revealed through Paul that, now that Israel with all its promises, covenants and law has been set aside, there is a new company of believers, made up of Jew and Gentile without distinction.

This company is called the Church which is Body and its place of blessing (the hope in other words) is not the promised land on the earth, or the New Jerusalem which is yet to come down out of heaven onto the earth, but rather to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all at the right hand of God. Ephesians 1:20,21 and 2:6.

Charles Welch, in putting forward this view, gives the following structure in support. You will find it in his book *'In Heavenly Places'*, on page 124.

Ephesians 1:5,6

- A1. Predestination to adoption,
 - B1. According to the good pleasure of His will,
 - C1. To the praise of the glory of His grace,
 - D1. HIGHLY FAVOURED IN THE BELOVED.

Ephesians 1:11,12

- A2. Predestined to inheritance,
 - B2. According to the purpose ... will,
 - C2. To the praise of His glory,
 - D2. WHO FORE-HOPED IN CHRIST.

For the sake of any reader who may not be familiar with structures like this, it is a way of outlining Scripture that brings into prominence special and important features. As you study the outline, compare point A1 with point A2, B1 with B2 and so on. Consider particularly the two points D1 and D2.

This brings us to the end of the second section of this chapter, the section dealing with the Work of The Son. The first section dealt with the Will of the Father and contained choice. The Work of the Son results in deliverance, and the next section deals with the Witness of The Spirit and presents us with sealing.

Chapter 14 – Witness of The Spirit

We come now to the section dealing with the Witness of The Spirit contained in verses 13 and 14. It might be best if we get something of an overview before we start looking at detail. Two short verses but what a wealth of material. In verse 13 the two major themes are the Word of truth connected with their salvation and the holy spirit of promise connected with their sealing. Then verse 14 speaks of the earnest of our inheritance and the redemption of the purchased possession. And the section ends with the phrase we have seen earlier, unto the praise of His glory. Just about every word there is chock full of meaning and calls for our prayerful attention.

So, after having said in verse 12 that those who had the prior hope should be to the praise of Christ's glory, Paul goes on to say, 'and you, having believed also, you were sealed with that holy spirit of promise.'

I confess that when I first read years ago about being sealed, I thought of the seal in a pump that stops the water leaking out. Also there was the thought of a seal on the lid of a jar that kept the contents free from contamination. Well, maybe we could make some sort of spiritual application out of that, but that is not what Paul is talking about. It is the seal of wax applied to a letter or some other document to keep it intact and, in some cases, to stamp the document with the official seal to show it was valid and correct.

A couple of references from Scripture will serve as examples: 'So he wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal.' 1 Kings 21:8. 'The King sealed it (the den) with his own signet.' Daniel 6:17.

There is a similar statement to our Ephesians text in 1 Corinthians 1:22, which says: 'Who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' We must take a little care here and not jump to the conclusion that it is exactly the same thing as in Ephesians. The Corinthians quote, of course, comes while Israel were still a people before God. They had not yet been put aside. But Ephesians is written after the end of Acts when God had set aside the people who had been His special treasure. Verse 21 of 1 Corinthians 1 speaks of God anointing Paul and his co-workers and establishing them with their hearers.

The word establish is the exactly the same Greek word as is translated as confirmed in Hebrews 2:3,4. This fits perfectly with the Acts period where the spiritual gifts such as healing and speaking in tongues were given to confirm the work and witness of the apostles and disciples to the unbelieving nation of Israel. See also 1 Corinthians 14, particularly verses 21 and 22.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer since the end of the book of Acts is different. We are not 'filled' or 'sealed' in order to confirm the witness to unbelieving Israel. Rather our sealing is part of God's work attesting to the truth of our salvation and looking forward to our fully appropriating everything that is ours in Christ Jesus in the glorious day of resurrection.

So while the purposes behind the sealing and earnest of or by the holy spirit are different in the two cases referred to, nevertheless, in both cases we have a sealing and something called an earnest. Before we consider what that might be, however, we need to think about the holy spirit of promise.

It is quite natural to assume that here Paul is speaking of the Holy Spirit coming in His power, as was PROMISED by the Lord before His death and resurrection. You will find that this is what most expositors take the words to mean. But I don't think that is what is meant.

Many of our readers will know that the words 'the Holy Spirit' or just 'holy spirit' do not always refer to the Person of the Holy Spirit. We have an example in Acts 1. There in verse 8 we read: 'but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...'

Now if you turn back to Luke 24, you will find a summary at the end of the chapter of what is given in more detail in Acts 1. Look particularly at verse 49: 'And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH.'

Those words are the Lord's own description of what happened in Acts 2. What the apostles and disciples received on the day of Pentecost was not the person of the Holy Spirit, but the power, or in other words 'holy spirit' (small 'h' and small 's'). Elisha in the Old Testament received a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Was he filled with two Elijahs? No, of course not. But he did have twice the power from on high that Elijah had. Count up their miracles and see for yourself.

So, what I am suggesting to you is that the believer is not sealed with the person of the Holy Spirit, but sealed with holy spirit, that is, the power of the Holy Spirit. But in contrast to how things were in the Acts period, our sealing is not unto any confirming miraculous ministry, but a quiet work of the Holy Spirit confirming that what God has started in us, He will bring to its proper conclusion.

The word 'promise' needs some consideration as well. Unfortunately, none of the other translations I have consulted bring out what I believe to be the truth here. They all speak of the Holy Spirit promised before. But Paul himself gives a clue when he says that the holy spirit that seals us is the earnest, that is guarantee. And to bring this out, we only have to change the English to read, not the Holy Spirit of promise, but rather the promissory holy spirit.

Just as in business, a promissory note is given, promising to pay a certain amount to a specified person on a set date, God has sealed us with holy spirit – He has put His seal, His stamp, upon us – and that is the earnest, His pledge, that 'we shall enter upon our heritage', as the New English Bible puts it, in His good time. Going on in the same vein, Paul says that this promissory holy spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

This use of the word earnest is no longer fashionable, but look up any dictionary worthy of the name, and you will find that one of its meanings is this: something given or done in advance as a pledge of the remainder. If you walked into a shop tomorrow and told the assistant that you wanted to give him an earnest on the large screen TV they had on special, he probably would not understand you. But if you told him you wanted to give him a deposit on the TV, he would grin from ear to ear and reach for the receipt book.

And that is exactly what Paul has said that God has done for/with us. We learned in an earlier verse that we have been redeemed through the blood of the Son of God, our sins have been forgiven, and now in verse 14, our Christ-appointed apostle tells us that God has also sealed us, stamped us with His own sign. This sealing is an earnest He has given, pledging that He will fulfil the rest of the agreement and

bring us in to our inheritance when He has redeemed the purchased possession. All we need to do now is find out what the last phrase means and we have this section wrapped up.

Paul used a term that would have been well understood by his readers, even though we may have trouble with it. The world of Paul's day was a Roman world, and the Romans had brought their own language and their own legal system to the countries they had conquered. That world was also a world of slavery, with all its attendant misery. If a slave was very fortunate, however, his master could set him free at any time.

It became something of a custom for wealthy Romans to free slaves on their death, and the freed slaves would parade behind the coffin of their late owner as a testimony to his kindness and greatness. The practice became so widespread that the Senate legislated as to the number of slaves that could be freed in this way. We couldn't have too many slaves going free now, could we! And to skip to the last part of verse¹⁴, this procession of freed slaves was said to be 'to the praise of the dead master's glory'.

But there was a further step that many slave owners took. It sometimes happened that a slave was so loved by the master, that he was made the heir as well as being set free on the master's death. Their way of making a person their heir was to adopt them. It was an entirely different process to adoption as we know it. It was all to do with inheritance, and we have discussed it earlier in these studies.

To adopt a person as the first-born son, meaning the heir, a man had to go before a magistrate and in front of witnesses go through a little ceremony in which he announced that he was taking this particular person as his son. A document was prepared, signed not only by the father, but also by the witnesses. But although the slave had been adopted, he was still a slave (unless he had been made a freeman at the same time) and he could not take possession of his inheritance until the father died.

Even then it was not automatic. He had to go back to the court again, call the witnesses who would testify that he had indeed been adopted by the dead man, and then he could claim his inheritance. THIS WAS CALLED 'THE REDEEMING' OR 'THE RANSOMING' OF THE INHERITANCE, and this is what Paul was referring to when he used the phrase 'until the redemption of the purchased possession'.

It is very instructive to know also that there was very little difference between taking a man as a slave and taking him as the (first-born) son. In the one case the man said, I claim this man as my slave, and in the other, he said, I take this man as my son. That is why the witnesses had to be called to testify as to which words had been used. So it can be seen that in both cases the form of the words hardly differed. It was the spirit that was very different in the two cases. Now, this throws light on another passage of Scripture.

Romans 8:15–17 says this: 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.'

At least two points come out of this. Firstly, as redeemed sinners, saved through His blood, we have received the spirit of adoption (sonship) by which we have been designated heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We have not received the spirit of bondage (slavery), and so we can call God Abba, Father, something a slave could never do.

Secondly, please note that we have now the SPIRIT of adoption. We will have the reality in resurrection, when, to use the form of the Roman custom, we claim our inheritance and take possession of it. And is not verse¹⁴ of Ephesians 1 saying a very similar thing? We have been sealed with the power of the Holy

Spirit, and that is an earnest – a pledge – given by God with a view to the redemption of the purchased possession, that is, when we enter into all that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Now to the phrase ‘the redemption of the purchased possession.’ Back in verse 7 we have redemption through His blood. That is the initial work of Christ on our behalf. That is where we started on our Christian walk.

The Old Testament picture of this work of grace is the Passover and exodus out of Egypt, the land of bondage and death. But when the people of Israel stood on the other side of the Red Sea and rejoiced at the destruction of the army of Pharaoh, they had not arrived at their destination. They had a promised land to reach, and if you read the account carefully, you will see that, if it had not been for their unbelief, they could have possessed their inheritance in a few short months, not the forty years that it did take.

And what is more, their land was inhabited by the Canaanites, who were of the evil seed. The Canaanites had to be dispossessed before God’s chosen people could enter into their inheritance given them by God. Could we say here, in the words of Ephesians 1:14, their purchased possession had to be redeemed? I think we can.

So when we received the redemption through the blood of Christ, and all that goes with it, it was not the arrival at our destination either. We were predestinated for something much more. So our journey began, and while we have been sealed with holy spirit, while we have received God’s pledge that He will bring us in to our promised inheritance, in this life we have to walk by faith. And during that walk of faith, God gives us the chance of winning a crown by a worthy walk and witness, to go with the gift of life.

So we are not yet actually seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of God. From God’s point of view we are, because He can see the end from the beginning. But we have to spend the years of our lives on the pilgrimage set out before us. But we need not fear, nor doubt, because God has pledged Himself that He has not only purchased a place of blessing for us, but that at the right time, He will redeem that possession for us, and place us there. And why? Simply for the praise of His glory.

I said earlier that the Passover and exodus is the Old Testament type of redemption through the blood of Christ. We also find a type of the redemption of the purchased possession. It is in the book of Ruth. I don’t have the space, nor do I think it necessary to expound that book here in detail. But I do urge you to read it for yourself with the thoughts of this study in mind.

Sufficient to say, however, that Naomi’s inheritance in Israel looked like being lost to her completely. On her return from Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth, however, Boaz, the near kinsman comes into the picture and through him, not only is the endangered inheritance restored, but Naomi is provided with sons to carry on the inheritance. And Ruth the Moabitess becomes a forbear not only of David, but also of the Word become flesh, Jesus the Christ.

What a wonderful God we love and serve! Tremendous things have been done in us and for us, much of which we don’t even know about, let alone understand. But understanding or not, we can trust His Word and stake our lives on it, for He has pledged Himself, and the mighty God who brought Israel out of Egypt and set them in their place of promise, and even more, who brought Jesus from the grave and seated Him at His own right hand, can and will bring us to the end, the goal, that is promised us in Christ Jesus.

Our verses keep telling us that we are to the praise of His glory. I often wonder how I can possibly be that. But one thing I know for sure is that there should be songs of praise in our hearts and on our lips to God for what He is, and what He has done for us. May He help our praise of word and deed be acceptable to Him.

Chapter 15 – The Apostle Prays

At verse 15 of Ephesians 1, Paul starts to talk about his prayers for his beloved Ephesian converts. And we are fortunate, I think, because Paul not only tells us that he prayed, but he also tells us what he prayed.

It is fairly common at this point for expositors to talk about the three prayers of Paul in this epistle. I confess I have done it myself. But as I look at the various passages again, it seems to me that rather than three prayers we find Paul telling us in the first instance what he prayed, yet he is not actually praying at the time. Then in the last instance, he is not praying, but asking his readers to pray for him.

I think it is only in the second instance that he is actually praying. Splitting hairs? Perhaps, but surely it is sound practice to be accurate not only in what we teach but also in what we read. The three passages in question are chapter 1: 15 or 16 to the end of the chapter; chapter 3:14–21, and chapter 6:18–20.

There are some interesting and instructive parallels and contrasts in these passages, and I would suggest that it is a worthwhile exercise to compare them. I hope that you will do some study of them for yourself.

For example:

In the first passage, his prayer is that the Ephesians might know a number of things.

In the last prayer he asks them to pray that he might make something known.

Now, let us look at the verses in chapter 1 in some detail.

The God of our Lord – The phrase ‘the God of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (verse 17). or something very similar, occurs in a few other places besides Ephesians 1. You might like to look them up. John 20:17; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 1:9. It is a problem for some that God is said to be the God of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christ is God, as we believe, how can the Father be called the God of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I think there are two reasons for this. Firstly, what is in view is not the deity of Christ. In Hosea 1:9 we read: ‘...and I will not be your God.’ Does that mean that at that point, God stopped being God? Of course not. God is God whether any man acknowledges that or not.

In the Old Testament, God was referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or the God of our Fathers. These titles imply a relationship between God and the person or persons named. But we can’t use those titles with any meaning to ourselves. God is not the God of MY Fathers in the way that is meant by the term in the Old Testament. Now, because I cannot use those terms, I am not the loser. It simply means that I have a different relationship with God. So while I cannot say the God of Abraham, I certainly can say the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the Man Jesus Christ is the One through whom I have my relationship with God.

The second aspect of this, and probably more important, is that Christ became man in order to be our Kinsman-redeemer and to be the Mediator between God and man. Now, as man, He could do one of two things. He could refuse to acknowledge God, or He could acknowledge God. The latter, of course, is what He did, so God is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another reason for Christ to become flesh was to make visible the invisible God, or to use other words of Scripture, to be the expression of the inexpressible God. This thought, I believe, is also in the expression the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1:17, Paul says that He has asked God to give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. This is not a main point, but I think it should be said. If you go to the relevant parts of Acts, you will find that Paul spent a long time in Ephesus, at least two years. He had lived with these people, worked with them, taught them and no doubt answered their many questions. There should have been no need, after all that, for him to pray that God would give them wisdom and understanding, for surely they would have understood what he had taught them very well while he was with them.

But the truth is, that what he has been teaching since his imprisonment in Rome and what is contained in this epistle, is not what was taught while he was with them during the Acts period. He told them when he was farewelling them on the beach at Miletus, Acts 20, that he had kept nothing back from them that was profitable to them, verse 20, and also that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, verse 27. And a little later, when speaking before Agrippa, he declared that what he had preached up to that point was only that which was contained in the prophets and the law of Moses, Acts 26:22. These two statements must be put together. The whole counsel of God for the Ephesians (and by implication for all believers at that time) before the end of Acts was nothing else but what was in the prophets and the writings of Moses.

But after Acts, he is commissioned by the risen Christ to reveal and teach a secret part of God's plan that had never been revealed before, Ephesians 3:1–6; Colossians 1:26. Hence, he prays that God may give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation. The message was now new and different, and as history has shown, the transition from the old to the new was difficult. Verse 17 then goes on to say, 'in the knowledge of him'. The Greek word for knowledge is '*gnosis*', but the word used here is '*epignosis*'. The *Amplified Version* translates this as 'the deep and intimate knowledge of Him', which shows that '*epignosis*' means something more than just knowledge. But we must dig a little deeper.

There are a number of places in the New Testament where, although the word is translated 'know', it has the sense of 'recognise'. For example, Luke 7:16; Acts 3:10; 12:14; 27:39. The word '*epignosis*' and the related verb '*epiginosko*' is also translated as 'acknowledge' and 'acknowledgement' in a number of places. I will give you several examples:

1 Corinthians 14:37: 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him ACKNOWLEDGE that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'

1 Corinthians 16:18: 'For they have refreshed my spirit and yours; therefore ACKNOWLEDGE ye them that are such'.

Colossians 2:2: '...to the ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of the mystery of God.'

2 Timothy 2:25: 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the ACKNOWLEDGING of the truth.'

The other occurrences that I haven't quoted are: 2 Corinthians 1:13,14; Titus 1:1, and Philemon 1:6.

Colossians 1:6 uses this word '*epiginosko*', and the context can help us. It reads: '(the word of truth) which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and KNEW the grace of God in truth.'

So what is it in this verse that can help us? Just this. The AV does not, for some unknown reason, translate a word which comes after 'and bringeth forth fruit'. The Revised Version puts it like this.. 'bearing fruit AND GROWING.' The *Amplified version* says: 'is bearing fruit AND IS STILL GROWING.'

So what am I trying to say? Just this. It is one thing to know something, but another thing altogether to do something with that knowledge. And as we have seen in our studies of this first chapter of Ephesians, there is knowledge enough to last a lifetime.

God gives the Word of Truth. He also gives to those who seek it, the spirit of revelation, wisdom and understanding. He then looks to see what we will do with the knowledge, or in other words, He waits to see if we will ACKNOWLEDGE what we know in our daily lives. And if there is no acknowledgement and no fruit bearing in our lives, there will be no further growth.

I believe, as a result of all this that Ephesians 1:17 should read. 'that Go may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the ACKNOWLEDGING of him.'

Now a few more words about the spirit of wisdom and revelation that Paul prayed his readers and we should receive. I doubt that any of us would argue that we do not need wisdom. I know that I do, and I am grateful to the Lord for what He has given me. But I found myself baulking at the word 'revelation' a little. What did Paul mean when he said he prayed that God would give us a spirit of revelation? It suddenly took on a different complexion when I realised that the word meant 'unveiling'.

Not only do we naturally lack wisdom when it comes to the things of God, but we also seem to have a veil over our eyes, or a mental block of some sort. Learning natural things can be difficult at times depending on the make-up of our minds (I struggled with maths all through school), but if we apply ourselves, these sorts of subjects can be learned. But the mere application of brain power and will power is not sufficient when it comes to the things of God, especially the mysteries of God, one of which we have here in Ephesians.

God must give the spirit of wisdom and understanding. He must take away the veil, else all the striving and learning will be to no effect. The revelation and understanding of God's truth does not begin with us or in us. Yes, we must have a desire for it, but He must open our minds to it. If He does not give, then we cannot know.

And to go back to the previous point about acknowledgement, it is this spiritual wisdom and understanding from God that will lead on to the corresponding acknowledgement in our living. And it seems to me that it is as we appropriate and understand what God teaches us through His Word, and then show that we have taken it in and it has become part of us by the things we do, that God will then give us some more of His great Truth.

Is this why, sometimes in my Christian life and experience, I have seemed to stagnate? Is this why some believers never seem to grow very much? God tests us, I believe, with a little of His precious Truth, and waits to see what we do with it. If we take it in, and then live it out, then He gives some more. But if we only know what He gives, without the corresponding acknowledgement, then it seems to me that He will refrain from giving any more of His treasure to someone who will not use it.

The next phrase, in verse 18, is a parenthesis. Paul is not praying that the eyes of their understanding would be opened, but rather stating that it is so. Read it like this: 'That God...may give unto you...wisdom and revelation in the acknowledgement of him, (the eyes of your understanding having been enlightened) etc.' The verse then goes on with 'that ye may know...

1. what is the hope of his calling, and
2. what (are) the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints
3. and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe...'

As I look at that little list, I am aware of how large each subject is, so maybe this is a good place to finish, and we will start on the hope of His calling and the others in our next study. I pray that in the lives of each of us, there will be the acknowledgement of God's truth in every aspect of our lives. May no one who knows us be able to say 'I can't hear what you say, because of what you do.'

Chapter 16 – Hope, Riches and Power

As we continue and look at what Paul prayed for on behalf of his beloved Ephesians, let me remind you about the request he made in verse 17. He wanted that they might not only know what God was revealing, but rather that they might recognise and acknowledge the revelation in their lives, for in this acknowledgement is fruit bearing and growth.

Then, having reminded them that the eyes of their understanding were already enlightened, his prayer for them was that they come to know three things. The English of the Authorised Version here is a little quaint so let me put it as some later translations have it.

The *Amplified Version* seems to bring out many of the shades of meaning.

'...so that you can know and understand

1. the hope to which He has called you, and
2. how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints – His set-apart ones, and
3. so that you can know and understand what is the immeasurable and unlimited and

surpassing

greatness of His power in and for us who believe...' verses 18 and 19 in part.

[The numbers in brackets in the quote are, of course, inserted by me to help readers see the three points.]

The Hope of His Calling

As we now consider the phrase 'the hope of His calling', I would remind you of what I said in the last study. Paul is praying for wisdom and enlightenment and understanding for His Ephesian converts, because he is teaching them about a new revelation he has been given by God. So when he talks about the hope of His (Christ's) calling, it is not the hope they held fast while he was in their midst. If that was the case, he would have said something like: 'Let me remind you of what I taught you when I was with you.'

I know I, and other contributors to this web site, emphasise this point about the new dispensation at the end of Acts over and over, and in many different ways. We make no apology for this, because firstly, it is the ministry that the Lord has laid upon us, and secondly, the failure to recognise and understand the change of dispensation at the end of Acts and the completely different message that Paul was given subsequently, has been the major cause of confusion, division and hostility in Christendom for two thousand years.

Here in 1:18, it is the hope of HIS calling, while in 4:4 it is YOUR calling. Note that the word 'vocation' in 4:1 is exactly the same as 'calling'. Even in English, 'vocation' is just a fancy Latin word for 'calling'. And this is the order it must be in. if we are not called by HIM in the first place, there will be no point in talking about your or our calling afterwards.

The word 'hope' is used very differently in Scripture to the way we use it today. We use the word 'hope' when there is much doubt about the outcome. 'I hope it is going to rain today.' Or 'I hope I am going to get that job I applied for.' There is a great deal of uncertainty, in those statements. but not so in the Scriptural usage.

The word 'hope' is used in a general sense in several places but by far the majority of occurrences of the word 'hope' in the Bible connect it with a calling or a statement of God and the hope entertained by the believer in those cases is not something full of doubt but rather something as solid as God's promises.

But our hope must be based on God's calling and God's promises. As such, hope is closely linked with faith. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Faith is of little use unless it is faith in the right thing. So if a believer does not rightly divide Scripture, and as a consequence, looks to parts of the Bible that do not belong to today, then that believer's faith will be misplaced, and the hope built on that faith will not be sound, for it will be connected to a wrong calling. And all the effort, drummed-up enthusiasm or whipped-up emotions will not make it right.

So it is not just hope that Paul prays about, but the hope of His calling. Now if our hope is connected to faith, and our faith must be based on God's Word. What is this hope of His Calling based on? I wish all questions were as easy to answer as this one. The Hope of His calling that belongs to the church which is His Body is based on the teaching Paul has already given us in the verses of this chapter leading up to our present position.

This calling goes back before the overthrow of the world, before Adam, Noah and Abraham, and therefore before any covenants made with those important people. Its sphere or place of blessing is in the heavenly places far above all powers and dominions etc. and it is further described as being at the right hand of God. The blessings connected with this calling are not blessings of basket and store, as Israel were promised, or miraculous powers associated with healings, tongue-speaking and the like. No, they are spiritual blessings, every one of which is secured for us in the person of the Son of His love.

Now, if your hope is not based on those specifics from the part of God's Word written by the only one He appointed as the Apostle to the Gentiles, then your hope is not soundly based. Are you looking for the coming of the Saviour in the clouds to the Mount of Olives? I hope not, for that is the hope of the earthly Israel, and it is in abeyance at the present time. Maybe you are looking with steadfast expectation for the great time of the Lord meeting His saints in the air?

That was the hope of the believers during the Acts period. And that, too, was put aside at the end of the book of Acts with all the other things that were part and parcel of Israel's earthly and heavenly ceilings. As I said earlier, a believer can earnestly wish for those things, and indulge in all sorts of ways and means to try to bring them about, but they just don't operate today.

No, if you want the best that God has for this part of His operations during the time in which we live, then you must look to what Paul teaches in the epistles written after the end of Acts, particularly Ephesians and Colossians. Here is the new company, the Church which is His Body, and here the new sphere of blessing, the Heavenly Places, and the new hope for the believer, to be seated with Christ in those Heavenly places in Christ at the right hand of God. So for us it is not the Mount of Olives, nor being caught up to meet Him in the air, but rather to be manifested with Him in the Heavenly Places when He is manifested in glory to the heavenly hosts. Dear Reader, are you sure of the Hope of His calling?

The Riches of the Glory of His Inheritance

The second thing that Paul wants his readers to come to know is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The 'His' in this statement refers, of course, to the Lord Jesus. It is His inheritance that is being spoken of here, not ours.

You will remember that in an earlier study, we saw that verse 11 should really read that we have become an inheritance for God, not that we have obtained an inheritance in Him. And Paul prays that the

member of the Church which is His Body will come to realise something of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints.

What these riches are is not spelled out, but it seems to me that again we are onto the subject of acknowledging the truth that is imparted to us. As we learn aspects of God's revelation, and put this truth into practice in our lives, we will grow not only in grace but also in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians and Colossians have a fair bit to say about riches, and not just riches but exceeding riches, unsearchable riches and all riches. Have you ever paused to consider some of these riches and how they apply to ourselves? When I read these verses, I get the feeling that Paul was running out of superlatives to describe what was ours in our Head, Christ Jesus. I will give you the references to 'riches' in these two epistles (there is one from Philippians, too) and I hope you will look at them all carefully.

Ephesians: 1:7; 1:18; 2:4; 2:7; 3:8; 3:16. Philippians 4:19. Colossians: 1:27; 2:2; 3:16. I will have more to say about the references in Ephesians as we come to them.

Exceeding Greatness of His Power

The third item that Paul wants his readers to know and acknowledge is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. If you looked up the references to riches given earlier, you will have noticed the word exceeding, or some similar word in other translations. And here we have it in connection with the power of God that has brought about the great work of God in and for us.

'Exceeding' translates the Greek word '*huperballo*' which means to throw beyond. The word is used three times in Ephesians as follows:

- 1:19: The exceeding greatness of His power.
- 2:7: The exceeding riches of His grace.
- 3:19: The love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

I'm sure you don't need me to tell you which is our word '*huperballo*' in that last reference. I hope you are getting something of the sense of this word 'exceeding'. Paul is talking about a power that is beyond anything that was known. We may be tempted to say that we know about power that is exceedingly great, such as atomic power, but I suspect that Paul's words still stand even today. Without getting into the next verses, which comprise a new section, I think we can say without fear of contradiction that the power necessary to bring Christ alive out of the grave was far beyond the power of anything modern man has devised, as awesome as those inventions are.

The Greek word for power is '*dunamis*' and it has been used as the base for a number of words in English – dynamite and dynamo spring immediately to mind. This great power is to usward who believe, and I think it is important to get the order right. The power didn't bring about the believing. Rather it is the other way. We believed, and this exceedingly great power of God, the same power that raised Christ from the dead, started to operate in and for us.

The question might arise in the minds of some then, as to why, if this great power of God operates in us, so many Christians seem powerless? Are we back again to the question of acknowledgement again? Is it that we don't get past knowing the truth and go on to the deeper point of recognising and allowing the truth to change us?

Sometimes we hold back because we know that there is a price to pay. The Lord spoke about it as carrying our cross and that is not an easy thing to do. But if we will step out believing, this great power to usward who believe operates and takes us into a more intimate relationship with the Lord.

In the next few verses to the end of the chapter, Paul uses several different words for 'power', 'strength' and 'might', which we will come to in due course. For now, I want to confine our thoughts to this word power (*dunamis*). It occurs five times in Ephesians, but it is not always translated 'power'. Don't let that throw you. Here are the occurrences. Charles Welch has set them out in structure form which we will reproduce to make the connections clear:

A. 1:19. The exceeding greatness of his POWER

Note: it is 'exceeding'; it 'worketh in us'; it is 'to usward'. It leads on to 'the fullness of Him that filleth all in all'.

B. 1:21. Far above all principality and power and MIGHT.

A. 3:7. The effectual working of His POWER.

Note: 'less than the least'; it 'worked' in Paul. It leads on to 'all the fullness of God'.

B. 3:16. Strengthened with MIGHT by His Spirit.

A. 3:20. The POWER that worketh in us.

Note: 'exceeding' abundance of the answer. It 'worketh in us' and flows from the references to 'fullness'.

Surely, as we conclude this study and ponder this great power that God has unleashed in us, we can do no better than look to our God and Father to answer Paul's prayer in us.

Chapter 17 – The Church Which is His Body

We were discussing the great power of God in our last study, which was wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead. I hope I was able to convey a sense of the awesomeness of that power. It was something far beyond anything that man has devised and used or seen, including even the various forms of atomic power that we have witnessed in the last fifty years.

I think that we sometimes pass over the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and what was required to bring it about, a bit too glibly. As wonderful as the death of Christ on our behalf was, the resurrection is a greater, a mightier act of God, and is as necessary for our salvation as is the first part of this great work, the crucifixion.

And then Paul tells us, in Ephesians 1:19, that this stupendous power is also to usward who believe.

Seated

But, picking up the train of Paul's thought in verse 20, we see that God did not stop when He raised His Son from the dead. There was more to be done, and that was to set, or seat, the Lord Jesus at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

May I remind you that back in verse 3, we saw that this term 'heavenly places' means the above heavens, or the superheavens. It is not easy to find a term in English that conveys the right idea. But it is not just heaven! Surely, what follows should give us some sense of the height and majesty of the position that Christ was given.

First, however, let us pause and consider the word 'set'. I added the word 'seat' just a few lines back because that is what the word is. We may not use the word like this today, but back in the early 1600s when the Authorised Version was translated, 'set' was the past tense of the verb 'to seat'. The Greek word is '*kathisas*', which comes from '*kathedra*', a chair. This is where our word 'cathedral' comes from, because the bishop's seat or chair is in the cathedral.

But the thought is not just that Christ sat down to have a rest. It means that He was appointed to a special position, like a monarch being enthroned. So as we read that Christ was set at the right hand of God, we should have these thoughts in our minds.

Principalities and Powers

Now let's move on. This special seat, or position, that the Risen Christ occupies, is said to be far above all sorts of things. Things is not the best word here, but we'll let it stand for the moment. Let me list them for you. All principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. There is more of course, but let's pause there.

I wonder if you can tell me just what is a principality, or a power, or a might, or a dominion? Apart from Scripture, the only principality I know is a small state or country which has a prince as its ruler, such as the Principality of Monaco.

It might help us if I quote from the *Amplified Version*: 'Far above all RULE and AUTHORITY and POWER and DOMINION, and every NAME that is named – above every TITLE that can be conferred.

These strange words are used in Scripture in other places. Here is Romans 8:38: 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature (the Amplified says 'nor anything else in all creation') shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Notice that Paul lists principalities and powers in the context of, but separate from, angels. I think that gives us a clue.

Ephesians 3:10 is very interesting: 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in (the super) heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' We will talk about this verse when we get to it later.

Ephesians 6:12 is also interesting: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (same as heavenly places earlier).'

I will list the other references for you, but one last quote will help us, I think. Colossians 1:16: 'For by Him all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him.'

Other references. are Colossians 2:10 and 15. The word 'power' alone is used in 1 Corinthians 15:24, Ephesians 2:2, and Colossians 1:13.

I think that these terms, while strange to us in some ways, refer to spiritual beings who have rather high positions in the heavenly realms – the aristocracy of Heaven we might say – and that no matter how high and important they may be, the position in which the Lord Jesus Christ has been seated is far above all of them.

At the Right Hand of God

I think that the position of this great seat 'at the right hand of God' is significant as well. Consider these verses.

Zechariah 3:1: 'And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.' The word 'Satan' here is the Hebrew word 'accuser', and we could translate the last part of the verse like this: 'the accuser standing at his right hand ready

to accuse him.' I have no intention of trying to expound this verse. My purpose is to show that in the ancient court (and in God's court?) the place of the accuser was on the right hand.

Now go to Romans 8:31–34. Please open your Bible and look at these verses, I haven't the space to quote it all. We are in God's court. Remember, the chapter starts with NO CONDEMNATION.

The question is asked in verse 33: 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?'

Implied answer, 'No one.'

'Why not? 'Because it is God who justifies.'

Next question: 'Who is he that condemneth?'

Implied answer: 'No one.'

Why not? Because 'it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

Did you see it? When the believer stands before the Judgement Seat of Christ and looks to the right hand where the accuser should be, he/she will see the One called the Lamb of God who will not accuse, but rather plead His all-sufficient Sacrifice. And then Paul goes on to talk about nothing being able to separate us from the love of God, because His blood has dealt with all our sins.

It is significant that in Romans 6, Paul tells us that the believer died with Christ, was buried with Him, was quickened and then raised with Him, but He does not go any further. It was necessary for the Acts period to close, and for the Dispensation to change, before Paul could say that then, the believer, now a member of the Church which is His Body, was also ascended with Christ and seated with Him in the same Heavenly places where He, Christ, sits on the right hand of God, Ephesians 2:4–6.

This is a staggering piece of revelation, and I know from personal experience that many of God's people seem unable to grasp it, but it is written there for our acceptance by faith. Well, more of that when we get into chapter 2.

It is Christ being seated at God's right hand that occupies our attention at the moment and there is one other passage of Scripture that I want you to consider.

Hebrews 8: 1: 'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, WHO IS SET ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF THE MAJESTY IN THE HEAVENS...'

Again, we cannot turn aside to expound these marvellous things. But I must say that the principle of rightly dividing the Word of Truth must be applied.

In Ephesians, the company (church) in view is the Church which is His Body, and the one who sits at the right hand of God far above all, is called the Head of the Body.

In Hebrews, we are in a very Jewish setting, and the company in view is that composed of the true children of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile, and the Lord Jesus seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, is presented as the true High Priest.

These are dispensational differences, and do not affect the underlying truths of justification by faith and redemption through the blood of God's Lamb.

Under His Feet

Back in Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23 say: 'And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'

Readers who have a *Companion Bible* will notice that the words 'hath put all things under His feet' are in bold type, meaning that they are a quote from the Old Testament. Some other Bibles mark Old Testament quotes in various ways. But these few words are missed by some.

They come from Psalm 8:6: 'Thou hast put all things under his feet.' If you read on in Psalm 8, you will find that the things that have been put under the feet are all earthly things – cattle, sheep, fowl, fish.

But Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit picks out these words from the Psalm and says that really, they apply to the Risen, Exalted and Enthroned Lord, the Head of the Body, and the things that are under His feet are these strange beings in the heavenly realms.

If you read Psalm 8 right through, the whole 9 verses, you will see that it appears to be speaking of Adam. And it is too, but in a deeper way it is speaking of Him who is called the last Adam.

We will have cause to come back to these few words later.

The Head

The next part of the sentence says, 'and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church which is His Body...' We need to take a little care with this. If we read only part of it, we could believe it to teach that Christ is the Head now over all things. But that is obviously not true. Look around you. In my community, the Lord Jesus Christ is not Head over all things. In most places, He is not acknowledged at all, let alone given the Headship. Think of our nation. Christ is certainly not the Head of it. It has been quite a few years since Australia officially declared itself not a Christian nation. No, the truth is that at this time, God has set the Man Christ Jesus in the highest position in Heaven, at the very right hand of God and given Him to be the Head over all things to the church which is His Body.

My friend, do you claim to be a member of the Body of Christ? Does He then have the Headship in all things in your life, your family, your home, your business, your recreation and whatever other areas there may be in your life? I don't have to answer for you, and you don't have to answer for me, but we do have to answer for ourselves.

I believe that the present Headship of Christ to the Church which is His Body is a foretaste of the time to come, when Christ will indeed have the Headship over all things, not just in the Church Paul has alluded to that time in verse 10, where he wrote, 'That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth: even in Him.'

The word 'fullness' there in verse 10 comes again in verse 23, but I am running out of space for this study, so we will leave the fullness till next time.

Body of Christ

But a few comments on the phrase, 'the Church which is His Body'. It is my contention that this called-out company, this '*ecclesia*' called the Church which is His Body, is a new thing. It is not the church in the wilderness, Acts 7:38, it is not the church which the Lord said He was going to build in Matthew 16:18, it is not the Church of God of Acts 20:28. Those callings are all to do with Israel, either the earthly aspect or the heavenly aspect.

No, I believe that what the Scripture is telling us in Ephesians and Colossians is that after the setting aside of Israel with all her hopes, covenants, blessings, prophecies and punishments, God revealed through the Apostle Paul the Secret which He had kept hidden from before the foundation of the world,

namely, that He would call into being a new church having no connection with Abraham, Moses or Israel, and in which Jews would have no advantage and Gentiles no disadvantage as in the Acts period. but rather both the Jewishness and the Gentileness would be done away with, and members would be simply joint or fellow members.

Some of the foregoing statements have yet to be dealt with as we work our way through the epistle.

But what about 1 Corinthians 12 someone might ask. The Body of Christ is mentioned there, and that is before the end of Acts, isn't it? It certainly is, a fact which should make us exercise a little caution.

The subject of 1 Corinthians 12 is spiritual gifts. At least, that is what Paul says in verse 1. So we must keep that in mind. He makes the point that while there are many different gifts, they are all given by the one Holy Spirit. And then at verse 12 Paul says, 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.'

Let me quote it again, this time from the NIV: 'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ'. Verses 13 to 26 continue the illustration talking about the functions and relative importance of different parts of the human body. Then in verse 27 we read, 'Now you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'

Unfortunately, there is a slight mistranslation in this verse. Paul did not write, 'Now you are the Body of Christ'. He wrote, 'Now you are A body of Christ.' No definite article! Surely what he is doing in this chapter is using the human body AS AN ILLUSTRATION of the diversity of gifts and functions among the members of the church of the time to show that all are necessary to its proper functioning.

Here in 1 Corinthians 12 he says for instance, that some members are like the eyes. But in Ephesians it is Christ who is the Head, we are the Body. None of us could be called eyes in the Ephesians calling.

So, to repeat myself, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the diversity of the human body to illustrate the diversity of gifts within that church where miraculous gifts were the norm, and the phrase 'Body of Christ' is not the title of that company.

But in Ephesians 1:22, 23, it is the title of the new church, 'The Church which is His Body.'

Chapter 18 – The Fullness of Him That Filleth All In All

I have to confess to you that I come to this chapter with a great deal of anxiety. As I have progressed in my understanding of God's purposes outlined in Scripture, I have come to realise that the subject of the Fullness is very close to the centre of that great purpose. I am also conscious that my understanding of the Fullness is limited, and on top of that, I don't have much confidence in my ability to explain clearly what I do understand.

Then again, how can I compress so vast a subject into the little space the editor can allow me. So perhaps you can see why I am a little anxious. The best I can do is to pray that the Lord will not only help me, but also that my introduction to the subject will cause some of our readers at least, to start looking into it for themselves. I will give you some directions as to where you can look for more help at the end of this article.

Pleroma

First of all, I should tell you that the Greek word for 'fullness' is '*pleroma*'. It occurs in the New Testament in its various forms of noun, verb etc. quite frequently. And out of habit, I will probably refer to the subject as the *pleroma*, not the fullness. It is an established rule of Bible study that the first

occurrence of a word gives a guide to the meaning of the word. So following this rule, let's go to the first occurrence of *pleroma*, and if you don't already know what it is, I think it might come as a surprise.

If you turn to Matthew 9:16, you will read this: 'No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment and the rent is made worse.'

Then in Mark 2:21 we have: 'No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment., else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.'

The word '*pleroma*' does not occur in Luke 5:36 but it is such an obvious parallel that we must quote it: 'And He spake also a parable unto them: 'No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.'

I also want to throw in the rendering of Matthew 9:16 from the *Amplified Version*: 'And no one puts a piece of cloth that has not been shrunk on an old garment, for such a patch tears away from the garment and a worse rent is made.'

'That which is put in to fill it up' in the *Amplified Version* becomes the 'patch' in the *Amplified*. And it is our word '*pleroma*' that is translated as the 'patch'. So also in Mark 2:21. And the word that is translated 'tear' in the *Amplified Version* and 'rent' in the *Amplified* is the Greek word '*schism*', a word which has come straight over into English unchanged.

So where does this lead us? I am not expounding the verses that I have quoted above, but I believe that the way the word '*pleroma*' is used in these references, teaches us that when there has been a rent – a schism – in the fabric of God's purposes, He has provided a '*pleroma*', a '*fullness*', 'a patch', to FILL UP the schism and repair the damage.

We need to take a little care here. I do not wish to give the impression that God's plan looks something like the tubes in my bike tyres when I was a poverty-stricken teenager. There were more patches than tube. While there have been a number of schisms throughout the ages in the outworking of God's plans, He has never been taken by surprise.

Satan makes a countermove to God's move and it might seem that God's purpose has been thwarted, but God is always prepared with another way to accomplish His purpose, often using the very thing that Satan has done. These new ways, that God reveals only at the appropriate time, are '*pleromas*' – 'fulnesses'.

To give some examples of some 'rents' in God's work, think of Adam and his children. I think that Satan would have been exultant when Adam chose to eat the fruit offered to him by Eve. It seemed as if God's plans had come crashing to the ground. This was a rent of major proportions. But God steps in, and the first hint is given about the coming One who would repair the damage, and to anticipate our climax, who would be the Fullness.

But then Adam and Eve have their first son, and it is remarkable that Eve says, 'I have gotten a man, even Jehovah.' That is the literal rendering of the Hebrew. She apparently believed that Cain was the promised Redeemer. And so did Satan, or at least, he could not take any chances, so in a way not revealed, Cain became Satan's man. See 1 John 3:12.

But then it is discovered that God's purposes were to flow through the second son, Abel, not Cain. Satan steps in and causes another rent. Cain kills Abel. Ah, mission accomplished, Satan thought. But no, God

has a '*pleroma*' to patch this rent with. A third son is born who is SET (SETH) in Abel's place, and the line of descent to the Messiah runs through him.

If you follow the line suggested above, you will find out just how much the subject of 'the *Pleroma*' has to do with the outworking of God's plans.

Fulled/Unfulled

Another point. Do you remember how the *Amplified Version* rendered Matthew 9:16? '...no one puts a piece of cloth that has not been shrunk...' The words 'that has not been shrunk' are not a literal translation. The result has been put for the process. What the Greek says is 'a piece of unfulled cloth', that is, cloth that had not been fulled.

No, I haven't made a mistake, the word is 'unfulled' not 'unfilled'. Our older readers will know immediately what unfulled cloth is, but younger folk may not. By the way, there is no connection between the words 'fulled' and 'filled'.

Let me quote Mark 9:3 to you: 'And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them.' Cloth made from natural fibres can be harsh and stiff in their natural state, so they were put through a rather rigorous treatment to soften them and at the same time to bleach them. They were washed and beaten repeatedly until they became pliable and ready for use. And the fuller used strong soap called – fuller's soap.

Malachi 3:2 has something to say here: 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.' Fuller's soap obviously is strong stuff!

So what these verses are telling us, I think, is that God has used fillings or patches, to compensate for the rents caused by Satan's activities throughout the centuries. We should also learn that God fully understands the principle of the patch being fulled, so that it is agreeable with the situation in which it is used. I think we also need to recognise that often the fullness is not a patch repairing a rent, but rather a filling full, a fulfilling, so that some part of God's work is filled up or brought to completion.

Fills All in All

Ephesians 1:23 finishes by telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His capacity as Head of the Body, is the FULLNESS PAR EXCELLENCE, in that He fills ALL IN ALL.

I hope you remember that we have already come across the word 'fullness' earlier in the chapter, in verse 10, where we read of the dispensation of the fullness of seasons, when God will head up (sum up) all things in Christ. All this but emphasises the supreme importance of the Lord in the outworking of the counsels of God. We must, I believe, look at another side to His office of the Fullness. The Fullness had to be fulled, and I think Scripture shows very clearly that He was indeed.

Please read Hebrews 2, and as you read note the connection with the latter verses of Ephesians 1. There is the quote from Psalm 8, 'Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet.' And a couple of more verses from Psalm 8 are quoted.

But the verses in particular that I want to draw to your notice are Hebrews 2: 9 and 10, which say in part: '...made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'

And I would link with this, Hebrews 5:8: 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.'

Now go back to Hebrews 2, where in verse 14 we read; 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.'

These verses hint at the awful cost to the Saviour of the work of Redemption. It was no easy thing that He did. I am reminded of a verse in Proverbs which says, 'He that goes surety for another will surely smart for it.' And to use the language of the verses we are considering, He underwent His fulling.

We glory in the fact that indeed, as Hebrews 2:14 says, He partook of flesh and blood to accomplish the purpose of God, but as we glory, let us not forget that it was a great condescension on His part to do so. But it was a necessary step if He was to be our Redeemer, for to do that, He had to be one of us.

It is also no accident that He is the One to whom the Father has given the position of Judge. We will not have to face one who has not been where we have been. He understands.

While it may not be difficult for us to accept that Christ is the ultimate Fullness, I think it is much harder to accept the other part of Ephesians 1:23, namely, that we are His fullness! Our minds tend to balk at this, even though it is written on the sacred page. What does it mean that believers who are members of the Church which is His Body constitute the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ? Does this imply that in some way Christ is deficient? Or that His work has lacked something? Absolutely not! So what?

I find I am helped here if I stick rigidly to what is the theme of these verses. The new company that God brought into being, or at least revealed after the final setting aside of Israel, is called the Church which is His Body. And the Lord's title as the leader of this company is the Head. This is parallel to His title as the King of Israel. The Old Testament also refers to Israel as the Lord's wife.

Then we read of His relationship to the company associated with the Acts period described as the Lamb, and that company is called the Bride of the Lamb. Figures of speech? Yes, I think so, but nonetheless, titles of different companies of God's family. And these titles are meant to help our understanding.

So, it is in the context of the Lord Jesus being Head of the Body where we are told that the believers making up the Body are the fullness of Christ. As Head, He is incomplete without the Body, JUST as the Body is incomplete without the Head. And both are really inoperative without the other. Again, by saying that, I am not implying in any way, any lack in the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Position.

One other point needs to be made, I think. The sphere of this Church is in the Heavenly Places, far above all principalities and powers etc. where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. We, in our turn, are His fullness in that relationship. We too, must of necessity, have been full for our position. That is, we must have been washed and beaten and scoured so that we will be pliable and agreeable to our new position. Could we use the covering word 'conformable'?

So, my brethren in Christ, when the times of trial come, and we are undergoing some period of stress, remember, it is nothing more than the Heavenly Fuller getting rid of some of the harshness and coarseness that is in the best of us, so that we may fill up our Head in every agreeable way.

But let us always remember that He occupies the highest place. He, as the Fullness of God, fills ALL IN ALL. ALL is by Him, through Him and for Him. But there is one higher goal. The great day will eventually come, when the last enemy having been put under His feet, He hands the Kingdom up to the Father, so that GOD may be ALL IN ALL. 1 Corinthians 15:24–28

For those readers who may care to follow up this great subject further, I refer you to Charles Welch's book *'In Heavenly Places'*, pp. 182–188. and also the article *'Pleroma'* in Volume 3, p. 88 of the *'Alphabetical Analysis'*, also by Welch, chapter 19 *'Ephesians 2 – An Overview'*.

Before we start into the second chapter of this great epistle, I would like to briefly recap the first chapter.

After the opening greetings, we had in verses 3–24:

- a. the Will of the Father
- b. the Work of the Son
- c. the Witness of the Spirit.

And in that section, which we could call the threefold charter of the church, we saw that this was a peculiar calling in that it went back before the foundation of the world, and also had its sphere of blessing in a special place called the super or above heavens. These two points alone immediately mark it off from every other calling named in Scripture.

Then in verses 15–19 Paul told the Ephesians (and us) that he prayed continuously for three things for them namely, that they might know the hope, the inheritance and the power associated with this calling.

The chapter concluded with Paul showing that the power that energises us is the same power that God used, not only to raise the Lord Jesus from the dead, but to seat Him at the Father's right hand far above all principality, power, might and dominion in heavenly realms. In this position Christ has all things under His feet, and is the HEAD of the church which is His body, this church constituting His fullness, as He in turn is the one who fills all.

As we contemplate the incredible position to which the love and grace of God has raised us in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not forget an even more important point. Verses 19–23 of chapter 1 also tell of the wonderful exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ to this pre-eminent position in the universe.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that by taking His place at the right hand of the Father, He simply resumed the position He had before He condescended to become flesh and dwell among us.

The glory He now has is the glory of the Redeemer and the Mediator. Philippians 2 tells us very clearly that this glory was given to Him as result of His complete obedience and utter faithfulness, to the Father's Will. And this glory He can and will share with some of the redeemed.

We find a hint of this in Isaiah 52:13: 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.' But that is only the half of it. We find the next part in 53:12: 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

That last verse is nothing more nor less than a summary of the great passage of Christ's humiliation and exaltation in Philippians 2. So He will share the glory He has now as the Man Christ Jesus, the One Mediator.

But the glory that was His before the Incarnation was His as God the Word, and that cannot be shared by any creature. When praying to His Father the night before He died, He said 'And now O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was' (John 17:5). No creature sharing there, only the Father and the Word become flesh.

I know how difficult it is for some to accept these statements about members of the Body being seated far above all with Christ at the right hand of the Father, but these grand truths, mind-blowing as they are, are written by our inspired apostle for our acceptance by faith. I echo Paul's prayer and pray that the Holy Spirit will indeed enlighten us to see and believe what is written.

Chapter 2 – an overview

I intend now to present something of an overview of this next chapter before we start to look at it in detail. If you consult the outline of the book which I gave you at the beginning of the series, you will see that the themes Paul is teaching often ride across the chapter breaks.

We have a case in point here between chapters one and two which I will come to in a moment. It does bring up the point, however, that we must keep in mind when reading and studying the Bible. Don't let the chapter breaks stop you reading on. If you stop just because you have reached the end of the chapter, you will often miss material that is connected with what you have just read. So always have a little look past the break, just in case. As it happens, the end of chapter two does coincide with the end of a section.

Just in case any reader may wonder how I can be so cavalier about God's Word as to say that we can ignore chapter breaks, let me say that the chapter and verse divisions in our Bibles that are so useful to us, were not part of the original Scriptures. They were added centuries later to aid us in finding our way through this very large collection of writings called the Bible.

At 1:19 Paul, as we have seen, speaks about the mighty power of God that was needed to raise Christ from the dead. We know from other references that the Lord had to be quickened before He was raised. To be quickened is old English for being made alive. The verse that speaks about the quick and the dead is referring to the living and the dead. It does not mean that if you are not quick when crossing the road, you're dead!

So the first verse in chapter 2 tells us that God also quickened us, or made us alive. It comes again in verse 5: Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath quickened us together with Christ. Following this, 2:6 tells us that we have also been raised with Christ. Then in 1:20, we are told that Christ was set or seated at God's right hand. And 2:6 finishes the threefold union by saying that we have also been seated with Him in those super-heavenly places spoken of earlier.

As an aid to memory and understanding, we could say of the section from 1:19 to 2:7 that we have A THREEFOLD UNION of the believer with Christ. It involves being:

1. Quickened with Him
2. Raised with Him
3. Seated with Him.

It seems that right throughout this epistle things come in threes, and in the next section, verses 8–10 we have THREE WORKS.

1. Not of works
2. We are His work
3. Unto good works.

The next section is verses 11–19, where we have a THREEFOLD PEACE.

1. Those far off made nigh – peace
2. The Two made one – peace
3. He came and preached – peace.

And, finally, in verses 19–22 we have another THREEFOLD UNION.

1. Citizens together
2. Framed together
3. Buildded together.

That is the framework we will use as we study this chapter. Let me emphasise that these outlines and headings etc. are the work of frail men, and are to be received as such. We (those who publish these articles) call on our readers to exercise the same spirit that the Berean Jews did of old (Acts 17), who listened to Paul's preaching with open ears and minds, and then went home and checked their own Bibles to see whether they had been told the truth or not. We could not have a better example to follow.

Chapter 20 – Dead to Trespasses and Sins

As we start to look in some detail at Ephesians, chapter 2, we need to keep in mind that, in spite of the chapter break, these verses down to verse 7 are part of a section that started back in 1:19. This section speaks of a threefold union of the believer with Christ: quickened with Him; raised with Him; seated with Him. Of course, there is much more in the section, but as an aid to memory, it may help to think of those three things.

After telling us at the end of chapter 1, that the Church which is His Body is the fullness of, or fills up, Christ in His office as Head, who in His turn, is the fullness of, or fills up, all in all, Paul then says, 'And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked...' Ephesians 2:1–2.

Actually, Paul didn't say that. When I came to this verse, my first thought was something like this. 'Oh Paul, why couldn't you have been more explicit about what you said?' But then, after a little thought, I realised that it was not Paul who had been careless or obscure, but rather the translators who had not objectively translated the Greek words that Paul had dictated to his amanuenses. I have no explanation for why this was done.

I make no apology for questioning translations where it may be necessary, for we are trying to exercise the Berean spirit, which takes nothing for granted, but rather searches to discover whether what we read and are told is really the truth.

The matter that I wish to question is whether this first verse actually says that we were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, let me say at the outset and without any ambiguity whatsoever that I, and those associated with this witness, believe that indeed all mankind were dead in trespasses and sins as far as God is concerned. The Bible teaches that clearly, and I accept it without reservation. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' But, is that what this verse in Ephesians 2 is teaching? I don't think so, and if it is not, then to try and make it teach something it is not, is mis-using God's Word.

'In'.

Firstly, I would point out that in the Greek, there is no word for 'IN' in the phrase 'who were dead in trespasses and sins'. Because of Greek grammar, it can be inserted at times, even though the actual word is not present, but Paul has not hesitated to use the word 'IN' throughout chapter 1 where he

needed it. The Greek word 'in' occurs 28 times, in fact, in chapter 1, and is translated variously as 'at', 'with', 'in' and 'wherein'. Coincidentally, it also occurs 28 times in chapter 2, where it is translated as 'in', 'among', 'through', 'at', 'by', 'wherein' and 'thereby'.

If you think that all those different ways of translating 'in' is confusing, just stop and think of how many different ways we can use the word 'in' in our own language!

Three verses speak clearly of being dead, or dying, in our sins and in each case the preposition 'in' is used.

John 8:21: 'Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come.'

John 8:24: 'I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.'

I Corinthians 15:17: 'And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sin.'

I mentioned Greek grammar above, and I was referring to the fact that sometimes a preposition needs to be added because of the dative case, not only 'in', but sometimes 'to' or 'at'. The dative case is the giving case (don't you wish you had paid more attention at school?), and in our modern idiom we often skip right over it. Example: when we say 'Give me the book', we really mean 'Give TO me the book'.

But what we do or do not say in English is not the most important thing. It is how the Holy Spirit uses the Greek language to teach the truth we need, so let us look at other examples in the New Testament where we have exactly the same grammatical construction as we have in Ephesians 2: 1.

Romans 6:2: '...How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' If the AV translation of Ephesians 2:1 is correct, then we should translate this verse, 'How shall we that are dead in sin, live any longer therein?' It is not only incorrect doctrinally, it also makes no sense.

Romans 6:10: 'For in that he died, he died unto sin once... ' We certainly could not, nor would not, translate that 'He died in sin.'

Romans 6:11: 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin...' The alternative – dead in sin – is untenable when taken with the rest of the verse. know that it is impossible to live unto righteousness if we are dead in sins. But by the grace of God, it is possible when we are dead to sins.

So, I suggest that the proper rendering of Ephesians 2:1 is this: 'And you hath He quickened, being dead TO trespasses and sins...'

If you glance down to verse 5, you will see that Paul repeats himself, the reason being that verses 2–4 are a parenthesis. You don't have to be very familiar with Paul's writings to know that he often inserts parentheses.

Sometimes, however, the parenthesis can side-track us, so let us leave it out for the moment in order to pick up Paul's flow of thought.

Quickened, Raised and Seated

'And (or Even) you hath he (God) quickened...hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Ephesians 2:1,5,6

In the last few verses of the previous chapter Paul tells us that God raised Christ from the dead, and seated Him (Christ) at His (God's) own right hand in the heavenly places. And then he goes on to tell us that we, being dead to trespasses and sins, have also been quickened, raised and seated together with Christ in those same heavenly places.

Way back in Sunday School days (and even after) I sang songs about dwelling in 'Beulah land' or walking the 'streets paved with gold', but what Paul talks about here in Ephesians is so far removed from, and higher than, the promised land and the New Jerusalem, that our minds struggle to take it in.

But it is written in God's Holy Word by an inspired Apostle, for our faith and edification. May God grant us not only the faith, but also the courage, to believe what He has said.

Chapter 21 – Walk, Darkness and Wrath

In the previous chapter about Chapter 2, I tried to explain some of the reasons why I believe that the first verse tells us that God quickened us when we were dead TO sins, not dead IN sins. Looking back on that study, I am aware that I was not all that clear, and I certainly did not bring out all that is in the original words that Paul wrote. I am not going back over it now, and for the sake of readers who like to go into these things more deeply, I refer you to Charles Welch's book *'In Heavenly Places'*, p. 188.

I, and other contributors to this magazine, are continually faced with the problem of how deep to go in the studies we present. We have a large readership now and our readers are at many different levels of experience and understanding. So our writing has to be aimed at reaching as many as possible, holding our reader's interest, and all the while praying that we will all respond to the Holy Spirit's leadings and urgings, and start digging for the deeper treasures. But, as we all know, digging can be hard work!

So for our present purpose, I am satisfied to say that I believe that Ephesians 2:1 should read, 'And you hath he quickened, being dead [TO] trespasses and sins.' Those of us who contribute these articles, firmly believe that every believer has the responsibility before God to exercise the Berean spirit and personally check what they hear and read to see 'Whether these things are so', Acts 17:11,12. What I am saying is that you, dear reader, must make up your own mind as to what you think this verse says.

Parenthesis

Let me remind you that following his statement in verse 1, Paul turns aside into one of his parentheses. We will come to that in a little while. But please notice that he takes up this theme again in verse 5: 'Even we, being dead to sins, hath he quickened together with Christ...' And in the following verses, he develops that theme. We will leave that for the time being, however, while we consider what our Apostle says in the parenthesis.

As I said earlier, Paul often has parentheses in his writings. He makes a statement, and then decides that before he can go on with it, he has to turn aside and explain some aspect a little more. This is what he has done here. In verses 2, 3, and 4 he amplifies how we were once under the thrall of trespasses and sins. He says that in times past, that is, before we died to sin, we walked according to the course of this world.

The word 'course' in verse 2 in the Greek is *aeon* (can be spelled *eon*), or 'an age'. This word means not only a period of time, but can also refer to the character or characteristics of a certain time or season. For instance, we can talk about some 'golden age' or the 'age of innocence', or the 'age of steam', and none of us has difficulty in understanding that it would be almost impossible to put exact time limits on any of those periods. So when Paul uses the phrase 'the age of this world', he is referring to the characteristics that are the norm in the behaviour, or walk, of those who are living according to the course, or age, of this world. Maybe 'worldly age' might help us to understand it better.

It seems to me that Paul touches on the same theme when he says in Colossians 3:2: 'Set your affection (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth.' Another quote that comes to mind (no pun intended) is Philippians 2:1–5, the climax of which is in verse 5: 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...'

When we were dead in our sins, we walked according to the course of this world. Our nature, and flowing from that our habits of life, was of the flesh, and we were under the sentence of death, even though we may have been unaware of it. But we were quickened, and the wonderful thing is that when we were quickened, or made alive unto God, we died to sin and all its ramifications.

The power of God has freed us from the bondage of sin and death, and now WE HAVE THE CHOICE. It is up to us whether we walk after the course of this world, or after the Spirit. As we well know, being dead to trespasses and sins does not mean that we will never sin. But now, if and when we sin, it is either from ignorance or choice. The believer is not powerless, and we must avail ourselves of the strength and guidance of the Holy Spirit. 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die...but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God', Romans 8:13,14. And again, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...' Colossians 3:5. It is salutary to read the list which follows.

And perhaps Romans 12:1 and 2 sums it up best: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be ye not conformed to this AGE (yes, Paul wrote *eon* not *kosmos*); but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.'

Paul's use of the word 'walked' in Ephesians 2:2 introduces the practical side of our faith. Practice must accompany and balance doctrine, as many people are quick to point out. What is equally true is that doctrine must precede and govern practice. If it doesn't, then how can the walk be balanced and worthy? While Paul does make a few comments about walk in these few verses, it is left to chapters 4, 5 and 6 to develop the detail about the walk of the member of the Church which is His Body.

It may be wise, I think, to remember that walking according to the course of this world (age), no matter how reasonably or decently it is done, is really enmity against God and is certainly not the will of God for His people of any time or age.

Verse 2 also tells us that our walk previous to our conversion was according to the prince of the power of the air. Paul here is reminding his readers, and ourselves, that while they once thought they were pleasing themselves and controlling their own lives, there is in fact, a power behind the scenes controlling them for his own ends. Paul calls him the prince of the power of the air.

Principalities

Ephesians 1:21 has already told us that Christ has been placed far above 'principalities'. The Greek word there is *arche*. The word 'prince' in 2:2 is *archon*, which is clearly closely related to *arche*. The English word 'prince' comes from the Latin '*princeps*', which means 'taking the first place', in other words, the chief one.

It is a secondary meaning of the word when we use it to mean the son of the reigning monarch. So, it seems that the principalities and powers (*arche* and *exousia*) who are opposed to the plan of God, have a chief, or prince, who is their leader. John's Gospel uses the phrase 'the prince of this world' three

times, and this may not be as far removed from 'the prince of the power (authority: so it is the *archon* of the *exousia*) of the air' as we might think.

Talk of the air makes us think of the atmosphere that surrounds the earth and enables us to survive. But this was not the way people of Paul's time would think about it. To them, the air was the lower part of the atmosphere, as the ether was the upper part, and they often thought of the air as associated with gloom and darkness.

Psalm 18:11 says, 'he made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies'. In the LXX translation, it has the word 'air' for 'skies'. I am not trying to expound that particular verse, only trying to point out what Paul's first readers would have thought of the word 'air'. Remember too, that the spiritual beings who serve this prince of the air are called 'the rulers of the darkness of this world', Ephesians 6:12.

And consider Revelation 16:17: 'And the seventh angel poured out his vial INTO THE AIR; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done.' Maybe we don't understand all the Bible means when it speaks about the air like this, but at the very least, we can see it associated in some way with Satan's sphere of rule and influence, and thus he is rightly called 'the prince of the power of the air'.

Children of Wrath

Verse 3 touches on points that we well understand. Before we became children of God, we did indeed live in a way fulfilling the lusts or desires of the flesh. This does not mean, necessarily, that our lives have been filled with rape and pillage, but can simply mean that we then did what pleased us without any thought of God. The word 'conversation' in the AV does not mean 'talking with someone', as we use the word now. Four hundred years ago, they used the word to mean 'manner of life' or 'the way someone behaves habitually'. For example, this verse is translated like this in the *New English Bible*: 'We too were once of their number, we all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition we, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgement of God.' That, I think, puts it very well.

Some expositors get hung up on the phrase 'by nature the children of wrath', but it seems to me that Paul is saying what the Scripture clearly teaches. As children of Adam, all mankind are automatically (and naturally) under the sentence of death because of Adam's sin. Even before we get to the stage of committing any sin of our own, we were, because of our Adamic natures, on the wrong side of God's law.

BUT Now...

That, of course, is a terribly depressing picture, and there would be no light in the darkness at all if it wasn't for the grace, mercy and love of God. And that enables Paul to start verse 5 with the wonderful word 'BUT'.

This is not the only place where we find this 'disjunctive conjunction' changing the whole character of a depressing scene. It comes again a little further down in this chapter. For instance (verses 11–13), where Paul tells us that we were Gentiles by nature, uncircumcised, without Christ, aliens from the nation of Israel (through whom the blessings of God had come), strangers from the covenants of promise (made with Abraham and Israel), hopeless and without God in the world'.

How's all that for depression! And then our little word comes again – 'BUT NOW in Christ Jesus, ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' We will go into these verses in detail when we come to them in due course, but I think we should often thank God for that three letter word,

but. Of course, the word 'but' in itself has no value. It is because Paul was able to write 'But God...' and then 'But now in Christ Jesus...' that there was any change in our deplorable condition.

Verse 4 uses such wonderful words as mercy and love. Not only are we told that God is merciful, however, but much more, He is rich in mercy, and not only loves us, but loves us with a great love. And notice that in verse 7 we read that He shews the exceeding riches of his grace in his KINDNESS toward us through Christ Jesus. Such homely, comforting words: mercy, love, kindness.

We should never forget that our God and Lord is the Creator of the universe, and will yet be acknowledged by every creature in that universe as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He deserves our worship, our praise and our obedience without question. He can, and will, slay His opponents with the breath of His Word which is described as a powerful, two-edge sword.

But this all-supreme Creator-God loves us with a great love, is rich in mercy towards us, and graciously shows us unbounded kindness. Surely, these things, more than anything else, will bring us to our knees in surrender and commitment, ready to follow where He leads and do as He would have us do.

And that brings us to verse 5, where Paul picks up the theme of verse 1 again, 'Even when we were dead [to] sins, [he] hath quickened us together with Christ...'

Chapter 22 – Quickened, Raised, Seated and Riches

Having followed Paul down the side-track of his parenthesis in chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, we can take up the main theme again at verses 4 and 5. As we saw previously, verse 4 starts with the words 'But God...' and we can leave out the intervening matter as we have already dealt with it and go straight on to verse 5 and read 'hath quickened as together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus'.

Please note that we have several phrases here that all have the word together in them. They are: quickened us together; raised us up together; made us sit together. What is not apparent to the English reader is that each of these three phrases is one word in the Greek.

The three Greek words are '*suzoopoieo*' (quickened together); '*sunegeiro*' (raised together) and '*sunkathizo*' (seated together).

We are more familiar with some of these words and their parts than we may realise. The '*su*' and '*sun*' at the beginning of the words come over into English as '*syn*' or '*sym*' in such words as '*synchronise*' or '*sympathise*' and '*symphony*', all words which have the idea of some sort of togetherness about them.

Then the '*zoo*' in the word '*quickened*' comes from '*zoe*' – life and we use it in such words as '*zoology*'. Then in the word '*seated*', we have '*kathizo*' which comes from the word for chair, '*kathedra*', and we use this in our word '*cathedral*', the place where the bishop's chair or throne is.

It is well to remember that Ephesians builds on the foundation truths already laid for us in the epistle to the Romans. We go to chapter 6. In verse 6 we are told that our old man was crucified with Christ on the cross. 'Crucified with' is another '*sun*' word, and interestingly, it is used of the thieves who were crucified together with Christ on crosses. Paul also uses the word in Galatians 2:20, where we read: 'I am crucified with Christ.' Romans 6: 3 and 4 tell us that the believer is baptised into Christ's death.

The passage then goes on to tell us that those who have been planted with Christ in His death will also live with Him (verse 8). But notice just how Paul proceeds from here. Verse 11: 'Likewise, (or in this

manner), reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Just as we were not actually with Christ on the Cross, but can reckon it because God says so, in the same way we are to reckon ourselves as alive unto God, even though we have not yet been actually raised. And we can do this because the power (dominion) of sin has been broken in our lives.

But while we still await our actual resurrections, which will bring about the glorious change to a resurrection body, what we do have here and now is the quickening. We have been quickened now, so that we can live according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit.

This thought of the present quickening is in the Galatians passage too. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.'

We go to Romans 8: 9–11 where Paul speaks of the indwelling of the Spirit of God and Christ and from verse 10 we read, 'And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

I hope you can see that on the basis of the identification of the believer with Christ Jesus in his crucifixion, death and burial, Paul goes on in Ephesians to further truth about our joint quickening with him, our joint resurrection (rousing) and our joint seating with Him in the Heavenly Places.

We need to look at the term used in verse 6 for 'raised us up together'. I mentioned earlier that the Greek word for raised together is '*sunegairo*'. Readers who are at all familiar with the important Greek words of Christian doctrine will know that the word for 'resurrection' is '*anastasia*', and 'to raise' is '*anestimi*'.

For example, when the Lord said in John 11:25 'I am the resurrection and the life', He used '*anastasia*'. I can tell you with absolute confidence that the term 'raised together' using '*sun*' with '*anastasis*' or '*anestimi*' does not occur in the New Testament.

So what is the difference between '*egeiro*' and '*anestimi*'. We do not have to go outside the book to find the answer. Matthew 8:25 has this: 'And His disciples came to Him and AWOKE HIM...' And Romans 13:11 uses the word like this: 'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to AWAKE out of sleep...' But the clearest example is in Ephesians itself, where in 5:14 we have, 'Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light.'

Let me set it out in a little diagram so we can see it clearly:

A – awake (*egeiro*)

B – thou that sleepest

A – arise (*anestimi*)

B – from the dead

Generally speaking, when we wake up to start a new day, we are roused first, either by someone else or something just brings us out of sleep to a (more-or-less) conscious state. Then, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly, we arise or stand up. And I think that Paul is teaching us something similar here in Romans 6 and Ephesians 2. It is all in Christ, we must ever remember that, and it is made available to us by grace through faith.

So, with that in mind, let's state it clearly:

We were crucified with Christ.

We were buried with Christ.

We were quickened (that is, made alive) with Christ.

Then we were ROUSED from sleep.

And because we have been brought to that stage in the process, we can live as alive unto God.

We are still, obviously, in this body of humiliation and death, a body of flesh and blood which cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. So the time will come when, in resurrection, we shall be given the new and glorious body that can live through the ages to come and can inherit our portion of the Kingdom of God.

We will also find that the emphasis in Romans on living and reckoning that we are dead to sin and alive to God, comes up again in these later epistles. Colossians 2:20 challenges us with, 'Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, AS THOUGH LIVING IN THE WORLD, are ye subject to ordinances?' We are not like others who do not know the liberating power of the resurrection in their lives. Our minds and affections should be fixed on things above, WHERE CHRIST SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, not on things on the earth, because we died with Christ. Colossians 3:1-3

Verse 6 of Ephesians 2 tells us that we have been seated together with Christ in the Heavenly Places. We had this phrase back in verse 3 of chapter 1 where our blessings were said to be in the Heavenly Places in Christ. This same sphere was further defined for us in verses 20 and 21 as being the place where Christ, following His resurrection, was seated at the right hand of the Father, far above all principality, power, might and dominion and every name (title?) that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

And then in the verses before us in chapter 2, we are told the staggering news that we too have been quickened with Him, raised with Him and seated together with Him in those same Heavenly Places. And it fits, doesn't it? If our blessings are spiritual blessings in the Heavenly Places, what would be the point of us not being in that same sphere where we could enjoy them? As I said, it is rather staggering, but it is written for our faith to accept, which I, for one, do. How about you?

Ephesians 2:7 gives us the reason why God has chosen to seat us in the Heavenly Places with Christ at His right hand. The word 'that' has a number of meanings, and in this instance, it means 'in order that'. The seating with Christ in the Heavenly Places, is in order that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

I must jump ahead a little and point you to 3:10 where we are told that the manifold wisdom of God is demonstrated NOW unto the principalities and powers in the Heavenly Places BY THE CHURCH (which is His Body). There are some differences between that and what is said in 2:7, but I will leave you to ponder that until we get to chapter 3.

As we look at these several verses however, we begin to see something of the purpose of God behind the strange and wonderful things he had kept hidden in Himself until it was the right season to reveal them through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

The comment has been made before, that in Ephesians we read not only of the riches of His grace, but the exceeding riches of His grace. The word is also used of God's power (1:19) and the love of Christ (3:19). We do not read statements like these in Paul's epistles, or the other epistles, written before the end of Acts. Is it any wonder that we keep saying that these later epistles of Paul, written after the end of Acts, are revealing a new message and calling?

The word 'shew' in verse. 7 needs a comment. It does not mean just to demonstrate, but rather to exhibit, to put on display, and it is the purpose of God, throughout the ages to come, to display through the Church which is His Body, His kindness.

Chapter 23 – Faith, Gift and Workmanship

Having soared to the heights of the Heavenly Places and found that the member of the Church which is His Body is seated there with Christ at the right hand of God, we come to verses 8 to 10 of Ephesians 2. This is the shortest section of the whole epistle, which, as we shall discover, does not mean there is very little in it. Far from it.

As I may have said before, I sometimes find myself wishing that Paul had written at a more simple level and without getting into the deep waters that we have sailed in so far. On reflection however, I can see that it would have been very difficult, to say the least, for him to have revealed these truths given to him about this calling that were not only new but that go quite a long way beyond anything that had been revealed in Scripture before this. So I am afraid that we must wrestle with the revealed Word of God as the Holy Spirit has seen fit to pass it on. And I know that we will exercise our minds and courage as well as our faith.

The three verses under consideration are short enough to quote in full and I use the AV: For by grace ye are saved through faith; and not that of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

I mentioned that this is the shortest section in the epistle, and if you will consult the outline that I gave you way back in the beginning of our studies you will see that, according to Charles Welch, this section is balanced by the passage found in 5:1 and 6:9. The relative length of passages or sections is not that important. The themes and thoughts put forward are what is important, of course.

Now in this section in chapter two, and I quote from the outline mentioned above, we have three works:

- 1 – Not of (our) works
- 2 – We are His works
- 3 – Unto good works

In the balancing section starting at chapter 5:1 we have a threefold walk:

- 1 – Walk in love
- 2 – Walk in light
- 3 – Walk circumspectly

I have not emphasised the outline as we have gone through the studies, hoping that you will have been using it for yourself but I hope you will spend some time looking at these two sections and try to see how they balance each other.

Now to our three verses. Before we get into the subject of what is the gift of God, notice that verse 8 starts with the word 'for'. That of course links it with what has gone before and we must not forget that God has quickened us with Christ and raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places because, first of all, we have been saved by grace through faith. That is the fundamental truth that underpins all the other things God has done for us in Christ. Unless the work of grace has been done in our hearts, minds and wills, the rest is so much empty talk. But we rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven and the unassailable promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

But the challenge of Scripture is to go on from there. As someone has well said, we cannot stay at the cross. The work of the Lamb of God on the cross is the foundation, to use the language of 1Corinthians 3 but we must leave that, not meaning that we abandon it but we have to move on and build a life of worthy walk on the foundation that could only be built by Jesus Christ.

And while it is everlastingly true that nothing will ever shift or break the foundation that has been once and for all laid, sometimes the structure that we build on the foundation is a bit shaky. And the other thing that we must not forget is that our works will be tried (tested) by the day of fire and if they are not good enough, then they will perish. But our life in Christ is untouchable.

I know I am jumping ahead a little but we find exactly these thoughts in our three verses, don't we? We are saved by grace through faith. It is not of ourselves, nor is it of works, but it is the gift of God. And then we see that we have been saved not by works, but UNTO good works, which have been prepared by God beforehand. These points, of course, we still have to talk about.

Now, if the thought crosses your mind that the great subject of salvation by faith is dealt with in three short verses and maybe it should have a greater place, I must remind you that the apostle has already written in depth and at length about the subject in Galatians and also, particularly, in Romans. It seems to me that Paul is assuming that his readers will have read and understood his great exposition of salvation by grace and not of works, so when he writes Ephesians there is no call for a lengthy treatment of the subject. But it is given its place and due recognition.

Now let's deal with the point that can cause some controversy. Some expositors teach that it is faith that is the gift of God. So, it is said, this means that no one can believe unless God gives the gift of faith. This viewpoint is arrived at because the word 'that' follows closely after the word 'faith' and according to English usage 'that' should refer to 'faith', the noun that immediately precedes it. And therefore when the passage goes on to say 'it is the gift of God', this too must refer to faith.

So it would seem on the surface but there is a little more to it than that. Unlike English, Greek uses gender for its nouns and the prepositions that go with them. The word 'that' in the passage is neuter. Now the grammatical rule is that the gender of a preposition must agree with the gender of the noun to which it refers. This still applies to English to the extent that we use gender, that is, when we speak about people. If, when I make a statement about a woman, I must use the word 'she', not 'he' or 'it'. The principle is the same in the Greek, except that they apply it to all objects, not just people.

So what is the point here? Simply this. The 'faith' in Greek is feminine (not the same as female), so if the word 'that' refers to faith, it too should be in the feminine gender. But as we saw above it is not. This simple rule of grammar means that it is not the faith that is the gift of God. So what is? Nothing less than the by-grace-through-faith salvation. THAT is the gift of God.

But first there are one or two other things to be said about this gift of salvation. What is the relationship between grace and faith? Grace is the instrument through which salvation comes. Faith is the means by which it is received. It was grace that provided the sacrificial lamb at the Passover Feast, for example. It was faith that responded by taking the lamb, killing it, splashing the blood on the door-posts, staying inside while the angel of death roamed the land, eating the lamb, dressed and readied to depart the place of bondage and death.

We see another place of it in the Day of Atonement sacrifices. Grace provided the two lambs, one which was slain by faith and whose blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. The second was not slain but it was faith that laid its hand on the head of the lamb, which was then let go to carry the sins of the people

away, never to be remembered again. Grace imparts, faith receives. God's plan of salvation excludes works but admits faith.

There is indeed a gift of faith in the Bible but it is never given to an unbeliever. It is given to some believers but not all. Many readers will know of the life and work of George Muller, who by faith, built a number of orphanages and looked after thousands of orphans. He never once made an appeal to anyone for help, money or goods. He simply would go into his room, close the door and tell his Heavenly Father about his needs and they were always provided, but the faith that George Muller believed unto his salvation was a very different thing to the gift of faith that enables him to do his wonderful work, and we must not only differentiate between the two things but must also not teach that everyone should have the same gift of faith. It is not given to us all.

We must also give a little attention to the word for 'gift' that Paul uses here. There are a number of different Greek words for different types of gifts but they all have the common root 'do'. English also uses this root in such words as DONate and DONor.

Paul uses at least three other words for gifts in Ephesians besides the word he uses in 2:8 so it is obvious he had a special purpose in mind by choosing the word he did. The other words are '*didomi*', to give, used 12 times; '*doma*', a gift, used in 4:8 and '*dorea*', a free gift, used in 3:7 and 4:7.

But the word in 2:8 is '*doran*' and a comparison with the Old Testament shows that this is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word '*corban*'. This word is used in Mark 7:11 by the Lord Jesus. Please look it up and read the context. The quote goes like this 'it is *corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free'.

As I said, please look up the context. the point to be emphasised here is that when a thing was said to be corban, that meant that it had been dedicated as a special gift, an offering to God. This is the word, or rather the Greek equivalent of this word, that Paul uses when he says It is the gift of God.

In the New Testament, *doran* is used of the gifts brought by the wise men, Matthew 2:11, of a gift offered to God, Matthew 5:23,24, and in Mark 7:11 as we have seen the word is used 19 times altogether in the New Testament and with the exception of the verse we are studying, it is always used of a gift made by man either to God or to another person.

But in Ephesians 2:8 it is God who brings the gift. Remember that *doran* has the sense of a gift that is a special offering. How remarkable that the Almighty God, in this dispensation of the Mystery, comes out from His glorious dwelling place with an offering in His hands and pours it out at the feet of the unworthy and the hopeless. No wonder this dispensation is called the Dispensation of the Grace of God!

The Little Word 'ek'

As I've noted before, the little words in our language are often the most important and the Greek uses the word '*ek*', meaning OUT or OUT OF, quite strongly throughout these verses, although it is hidden a little from English readers. Let me amplify it for you. 'And that not out of (*ek*) yourselves: it is the gift of God: not out of (*ek*) works, lest any man should boast'.

Paul is nothing if not consistent, for we have the same emphasis in Philippians 3:9: 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is out of (*ek*) the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is out of (*ek*) God by faith'.

I won't quote it but the word is used in the same way in Romans. I will mention Romans 3 though, where the word '*ek*' comes a couple of times and in this context we have, 'Where is boasting then? It is

excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith'. Surely it is not hard to see the same mind behind the pen that wrote these words in Romans and the pen that wrote what we have been looking at in Ephesians 2. And of course, behind that mind the Holy Spirit in both cases.

Verse 10 then goes on to say that we are the workmanship (or better, the handiwork) of God, 'Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'.

Let us state the case very clearly. Salvation is not OUT OF good works, but it is UNTO good works. We must take care that, in trying to avoid any semblance of works as a means of obtaining salvation, we don't throw works out the window altogether. Works, that is, good works, must play a significant part in the life – the walk – of the believer but these works are the outcome of salvation, not the cause of it.

In this first half of the epistle, which is doctrinal, Paul does not expand on the subject of the believer's walk and the good works that are a part of it. That comes in the last half, chapters 4,5 and 6, where we find a standard of walk laid out for us that would be impossible for us to attain to, were it not for the grace and power of God which operates in us by the Holy Spirit.

If you want a short exposition of the place of good works, read the epistle to Titus, same author and publisher.

What does it mean when we read that God hath before ordained these good works that we should walk in them? Let me quote from one or two other translations:

Amplified: 'that we may do those good works which God planned beforehand for us, (taking paths which He prepared ahead of time) that we should walk in them – living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live'.

NIV: 'For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'.

And the *New English Bible*: 'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us'.

If you compare and consider these various translations with the *AV* rendering, you will see that there are some different thoughts presenting themselves. The only comment I would make is that all of these thoughts are in the Greek words that Paul wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

My last point. The word for workmanship is '*poimea*' and if you think 'poem' as you look at that word, you are quite right. '*Poimea*' does mean workmanship or handiwork and in the evolution of language over the centuries the word has come into English as 'poem', a piece of verse that can have many different forms but which certainly is a piece of work on someone's part.

The best poems are beautiful things which encapsulate feelings, aspirations and experiences of the human condition. And this is the word which is used of ourselves. We are God's poem and it is a Scriptural truth that He uses us to express aspects of His greatness and grace and wisdom to various parts of his creation.

BRETHREN, THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Chapter 24 – Doctrinal and Dispensational

We have arrived at the 11th verse of Ephesians 2 in our study of this superlative epistle, and in doing so, we move from what we might call a doctrinal setting to a dispensational one. I think that I need to

explain these two words, or rather, my usage of them in this context, as some readers who are not all that familiar with the dispensational approach to Scripture may find it puzzling. I must admit that I am not all that happy with the two words, especially 'doctrinal' here, but I have not been able to find any more suitable. If any reader has a suggestion to make, I would be pleased to hear it. Please write to the editor.

Obviously, I am using these two words, 'doctrinal' and 'dispensational', in contrast to one another. When I speak of something as doctrinal in this way, I mean that it is a subject which Scripture applies to God's dealing with humanity overall, without distinctions or differences.

Such subjects include sin, the depravity of humanity, the universal need of a Saviour, the holiness of God, the love and grace of God. These things have never changed right from the beginning of God's redemptive purpose and apply to all, regardless of whether we are Jew or Gentile. (By the way, in case any reader is not sure, a Gentile is simply anyone who isn't a Jew.)

But opposed to these 'doctrinal' subjects, the Bible often deals with subjects that do change over time, or that deal with God's treatment of different races and sections of believers at different times. And because the Bible uses the term 'dispensation' to refer to the different administrations that God has used at different times, we call these subjects 'dispensational'.

The word 'dispensation' upsets some of God's people, and I have never been able to understand why, for it is a good, sound Scriptural word. It is also a good, sound word outside of Scripture, although just a touch old-fashioned these days.

My older readers will remember the chemist shops that were often called 'Dispensing Chemist', and the chemist's little cubby-hole down the back of the shop had a sign over it that said 'Dispensary'. And what did he or she do there? Dispensed the medicines according to the doctor's instructions. It was important, sometimes a matter of life and death, that Mrs. X did not get Mr. Y's prescription and vice versa. And in the same way, it is important that we do not mix up the different prescriptions that God has dispensed for different sections of His people over time.

This is exactly why the Berean Bible Fellowship is in existence, namely, to try to get God's people to rightly divide the Word of God or, to use the words of Philippians 1:10, to try or test the things that differ (margin) and approve the thing that is excellent (more appropriate).

We may have strayed a little from our main subject, but please bear with me, for it is vitally important to understand these things. I believe it is precisely a lack of understanding in these things that has brought about the confusion and animosity in Christendom. So let me refer you to a clear example in the Gospels of what I am trying to say. Please look up and read Matthew 15:21-28. This is the account of the Lord's meeting with the Syro-Phoenician woman.

A woman in desperate need came to the Saviour, but on the surface it appears that He would have nothing to do with her at first. Now, if there are no such things as dispensational differences, then we should be just a little shocked that the Lord who came to be the Lamb of God would turn away from such a heart-rending cry of need. On another occasion a woman simply touched the hem of his garment, and He turned to her immediately and said, amongst other things, 'Daughter, your faith has made you whole.' Why the difference? The answer lies in the fact that the Syro-Phoenician woman was NOT A JEW Look carefully at what was actually said in Matthew 15.

When she first came to Him, the woman addressed Him as 'Lord, thou Son of David'. Was that wrong? He certainly was the Son of David but that had no relevance to her as a Gentile.

Note this point carefully, dear reader. During His earthly ministry, the Lord was first and foremost ministering to the people of Israel, to Jews in other words. If that statement comes as a surprise to you, and you think I just might be wrong, the Lord says exactly that a line or two further on.

Also, please look at Romans 15:8, and I quote: 'Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.'

When I accepted and came to an understanding of what that verse said, many difficulties I had, particularly with the Gospels, melted away.

Back to our story. The Lord answered her not a word. The woman was not to be put off, and finally the disciples came and implored Him to send her away, as she was getting on their nerves. Compassion seems to be sadly lacking in this story so far. So the Lord said (to the disciples by the way, not to the woman. He still had said not one word to her!) 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'.

What does the woman do? She heard this remark, obviously, and apparently she was wiser than many believers are today. She did not need to be reminded twice that she was not of the house of Israel, so she dropped the title Son of David, worshipped Him simply as Lord, and asked Him to help her. Still He does not give her what she wants, but tells her that it is not fitting for the children's food to be given to the puppies. What did He mean? Simply that what belonged to Israel should not be given to any outside of Israel. His miracles were signs to Israel in fulfilment of prophecy and the message had to go to them first.

Again, see the wisdom of this woman. 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters tables.' Then, and only then, does He grant her request. When she acknowledged that what she was getting was a crumb from the table of Israel, He gave it to her. Was He unjust, or hard-hearted, or uncaring in His treatment of her? At first it may seem so, but not when the dispensational aspect is understood. He came to Israel first, and as she was not an Israelite, she had no claim on Him. But she could have a little crumb from the table. I hope that you will think deeply about this incident.

A New Section

Now back to Ephesians 2:11. It is obvious that Paul is beginning a new section here, although the word 'wherefore' shows us that what he is about to say, arises out of what has gone before. In the first eleven verses of the chapter, Paul was dealing with the doctrinal position that Gentiles were faced with in the past – we walked according to trespasses and sins, according to the course of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air.

Phrases like 'the lusts of the flesh', the 'desires of the flesh and the mind', and 'by nature children of wrath' do not paint a pretty picture. But that was a true picture of the believers of Paul's day before they died to trespasses and sins, and it is also a true picture of ourselves in this 21st century, before we came into Christ from death.

At verse 11, however, we move from a doctrinal position, which speaks of what is true of all without distinction, to the dispensational position, which speaks of the position and condition of the Gentile as opposed to the position the Jew had held.

Charles Welch has a very clear outline of the whole chapter on page 226 of his book '*In Heavenly Places*', and I will try to reproduce it here:

DOCTRINE.

- a. 1–3 TIME PAST. Walk. World and flesh.
- b. 4 BUT GOD. Mercy. Love.
- c. 5–10 Made alive together. Raised together. Made to sit together.

DISPENSATION

- a. 11,12 TIME PAST. Gentiles. Flesh. World.
- b. 13–18 BUT NOW Nigh. One.
- c. 19–22 Citizens together. Fitly framed together. Buildded together.

Look at the various words that are used. 'Called Uncircumcision by those who were called the Circumcision (Israel in other words)'; 'without Christ'; 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel'; 'strangers from the covenants of promise'; 'having no hope'; 'without God in the world'.

I know that if you point these things out to many believers, they react with some scepticism. They think, even if they do not say it, that they have had God in their lives for many years (depending on when they came to the Lord), and does not church history show that for nearly 2000 years, the nations of the world have had Christ and God. Look at what the Christian nations have done for the world, and so on.

Yes indeed, those things are true, but it was not always like that and the fact that many believers think that way only shows how complete the dispensational change was at the end of the Book of Acts. While Israel has not been the chosen nation before God for a long time, there was a time when they were, and while they were the first on God's list, the rest of the nations were in a very subordinate position. Fortunately, we will shortly come to verse 13, which says BUT NOW...Thank God for His butts. We mustn't jump ahead, however.

'Without...'

While most of the terms used in verses 11 and 12 should not need explanation, I do want to comment on the words 'without Christ' and 'without God' in verse 12. The English reader can be forgiven for thinking that the same word for 'without' is used in both cases but this is not true. Without going into the Greek, the phrase 'without God' means exactly what it appears to.

Before the dispensational change of Acts 28:28, the Gentiles were indeed without God. The only way they could have God was to come to Him through His chosen people. But when the new dispensation of the Mystery was revealed through Paul after that fateful day in Rome of which the latter part of Acts 28 tells us, God was no longer available only through Israel, but available to all who would seek Him.

Let me remind you of another historical fact. The first eleven chapters of Genesis records for us the early history of the human race. What a sorry tale it is! The climax of man's rebellion against God comes in the tower of Babel incident recorded in chapter 11. God 'confounds' their language so they cannot understand each other, with the result that the people scatter over the face of the earth.

Then, after the record of the families of Shem and Terah, chapter 12 opens with the call of Abraham, and it is through this man and certain of his descendants, the people of Israel, that God works. And that situation did not change until the end of the Book of Acts.

Now look at a few verses in Romans: 1. Start reading from verse 18 and go to end of the chapter, but it is verse 28 that I want to emphasise: 'And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.'

Let me put these pieces together. Genesis tells us that the people rebelled against God, so He confounds their language, scatters them throughout the world and then chooses one man to work through. Paul tells us in Romans that because the people in ancient times rejected God in spite of the witness of nature, and what they had been taught about Him, God in turn gave them to the corrupt workings of their own minds. He let them go.

And in Ephesians 2, Paul alludes to this when he says that the Gentiles were without God. And the fact that most of the world is still Godless, does not alter the truth that, since the end of Acts, God has been available to any Gentile, and any Jew for that matter, who would come seeking Him in repentance and faith. But the Jew comes without the advantages he once had, and the Gentile comes without the disadvantages that once debarred him from God.

The words 'without Christ', however, have to do with the fact that in the flesh Christ was of Israel. We must remember that the word 'Christ' is the English form of the Greek word 'Christos', which in turn translates the Hebrew word 'Messiah'. So what Paul is telling us here is that the Gentiles did not have a Messiah born of them. As Paul says in Romans 9:5, when speaking of Israel's advantages, that of (or from) them (Israel) concerning the flesh, Christ came.

Verse 12 also tells us that the Gentile is without hope, that is, if they are not in Christ. But the same apostle could also write in Colossians 1:26 and 27, 'Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory...'

Is this not grace and mercy beyond our wildest dreams? Once the Gentile was lost and without hope. But in Christ, we have Christ IN US, and this is the hope of glory. Verses 11 and 12 would be extremely depressing if it were not for what followed in verse 13: 'But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.'

A little care here, please. It is too easy to assume that what the Gentile has been made nigh unto is the commonwealth of Israel, from which they were once alienated. I believe, however, that it is God that the Gentile is made nigh unto. The Gentiles' hopeless position was that they were without God. But His blood has brought us nigh, and the wonder of the world's relationship with God since the end of the book of Acts, is that the whosoever can seek and find God without any recourse to Israel, who were once the only channel to God.

Chapter 25 – Peace and Reconciliation

Verse 13 commences with the disjunctive conjunction BUT. In His gracious love and mercy, God intervened in the hopeless plight of the Gentile and, on the failure of Israel to respond to the second chance they were given, He sets His once-favoured people aside, and through Paul, reveals a secret calling He had kept hidden up His sleeve, so to speak, from before the foundation of the world. This calling had no connection with Abraham, or Moses' law, or David's throne and Kingdom. It was not based on any covenant recorded in the Old Testament, but on a promise of eternal life made by God before the world began. Titus 1:2

So Paul starts off this section dealing with peace and reconciliation by telling how the blood of Christ brings the far-off Gentile near. Once strangers, aliens, hopeless, without God, but now not only near, with alienation and strangeness gone. There is peace.

Notice that Christ has not made peace. He IS our peace. What He has made (the word really should be 'created') is both one. Here we must press the pause button. Those of you with Greek Interlinear

Testaments should have a look and notice that what the Holy Spirit had Paul write was not just 'made both one', but 'made THE both one'.

Now that makes all the difference, doesn't it? It certainly makes a difference. Even when we read 'made both one', we should ask ourselves 'What both?', or perhaps it should be 'Which both?' But with the definite article there, it becomes specific. So our question should be, 'The both what?' And surely the answer is 'Both the Jewish and the Gentile believers.' We get the word 'both' three times in the next few verses and 'twain' once.

A careful reading of the Book of Acts, and also the epistles written during the years covered by Acts, will show that the two groups of believers, that is, Jewish and Gentile believers, while one in Christ, were not treated equally in practice.

Just one example will suffice. If a Jew and Gentile believer visited Jerusalem during the Acts period from, say, Antioch, when they came to the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jew would have to say to his Gentile friend, 'My Brother in Christ, I know we worship together, and pray together and eat together back home, but I want to go into this wonderful Temple and offer some sacrifices to God. You may come into the outer court, but I'm afraid I will have to leave you there, when I go into the Temple proper. There is a wall there through which you cannot pass.'

The Gentile might have said something like, 'But we are one in Christ. Paul has taught us there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Why can't I come in with You?'

And the reply could have been like this, 'Yes, I know we are one, but that is in Christ. But presently, in this dispensation, the Jewish people are still first before God, and you are like a wild branch grafted into our olive tree. While that is recognised in our assemblies, it is not recognised here in Israel, and particularly not in the Temple. If you try to come in with me, you will cause a riot, and possibly your own death.'

But after AD 70, which was just a few years after Paul's final quotation of Isa. 6:9,10 in Acts 28, God sent the Roman army to destroy the Temple and most of Jerusalem. Could there be a more emphatic sign that the Jewish ascendancy had finished? I don't think so.

Verse 14 speaks about that middle wall of partition that I mentioned a little while ago. Several stones from it have been found, with the inscription cut into them warning foreigners not to go in on pain of death. I mention these things to show that we are not dealing with some airy-fairy doctrinal point. They were once very real issues that could cost a person's life. But the middle wall that once divided Jew and Gentile believers has gone, and so have the law of commandments that caused enmity.

This, I believe, refers to the four decrees issued by the church in Jerusalem in Acts 15. We read about it also in Galatians. Men from the Jerusalem church visited the various assemblies that Paul had founded and were teaching the Gentile converts that they had to be circumcised to be believers.

Paul, of course, was very upset about this, and the matter was referred to the council in Jerusalem. The four decrees were issued to make sure that the Gentiles did not offend Jewish sensibilities, but as time went by, they created division amongst the assemblies, which resulted in envy and ultimately enmity. But in the new calling all those things had gone.

Verse 15 also has another very important point. What Christ has done is to create out of the two previously different groups a new company called the one new man, thus bringing about peace. And in

this one new man, or one body, the two groups would be reconciled unto God. Again it is the cross that is said to bring this reconciliation about.

Please note and consider, that Paul wrote this about 35 years after the crucifixion, and we never read about the cross bringing about this reconciliation in any of the earlier writings. There were aspects of Christ's death that were kept hidden until the appropriate time of the love of God, and then in chapter 4, for them to be revealed.

Verse 17 tells us that the Lord came and preached peace to those who were afar off, that is, the Gentiles, and to those who were near, that is, the Jews, and this peace gives the both access through the one Spirit to the Father, verse 18. As a result, verse 19, ye (Gentile believers) are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens.

The next phrase needs a little thought. The AV has 'of the saints', and so do all the other versions I have looked at. But the Greek simply reads: 'fellow-citizens of the holy'. The holy 'what' is not specified. It could be holy ones, that is, saints, but it could also be holy place, that is, the Temple. It does not mean, I believe, that the Gentile believer has become a fellow-citizen of Israel. I think it does mean that the Gentile believer has become a fellow-citizen of the holy place, a thought which Paul picks up a couple of verses further down. You will have to make your own mind up on that one.

Similarly, I think that the apostles and prophets referred to in verse 20, are not those associated with the Twelve and others during the Acts period. There are apostles and prophets mentioned in the Mystery epistles and these are the foundation of the church which is His Body, Jesus Christ a new Himself being the chief corner stone.

We need to note that in the last two verses of the chapter, the word for temple in verse 21 is not the general word for temple, but '*naos*', the word used for the Holy of Holies, the sanctuary that contained the symbols of God's very presence. What a goal, what a position, especially for those who were once the outcasts and 'dogs' as far as the Jews were concerned.

We are stones in the innermost sanctuary of the true Temple, made into a dwelling place for God in spirit. Following this, it should come as no surprise that Paul, in the next chapter prays that his converts would be given strength, comprehension and knowledge of the love of God, and then in chapter 4, pleads with them to walk worthy of this high calling which is theirs in Christ Jesus. Maybe he is trying to say something to us too.

Chapter 26 – Doctrinal Truth and Dispensational Truth

Before we get into this chapter, I want to make a general comment.

Firstly, several chapters back when I was discussing the difference between what I called 'doctrinal' truth and 'dispensational' truth, I asked if anyone could help me with a better word or term than 'doctrinal'. No one has come forward with any suggestions, but several words popped into my own mind not long after my request. They were the words basic or fundamental. Why I had not thought of these words before I have no idea, but either of them describe what I am trying to express very well. I think I will stick to basic, as it is easier to type.

So, to explain briefly for any who may not have read the previous discussion, the Bible is God's truth. But some of it is basic truth, that is, truth that applies to all ages and generations. Such truth includes basic teachings such as the universality of sin, the need of mankind for a saviour, the holiness of God, salvation by grace through faith and, most importantly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. There are many more basic truths, of course.

Dispensational truth, on the other hand, refers to truth that is true only for a particular part of God's dealing with mankind, or His dealings with a particular part of His family, such as Israel. Examples of dispensational truth are: the keeping of the Sabbath day; the slaying of the Passover lamb; preaching the Gospel to the Jew first; a Jewish believer having precedence over a Gentile believer; the signs and wonders of the Acts period, such as tongue-speaking, the gift of healing and the other gifts that were part and parcel of the Acts church. These things (and once again there are many other examples) were once true, but they ceased when the particular period or dispensation in which they belonged came to an end.

And it is the contention of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia that the disregarding of the differences between basic truth and dispensational truth – in other words – the failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth – is the cause of the dissensions and divisions in Christendom, and also the cause of confusion about the Bible in the minds of the majority of Christians.

Flowing on from Chapter 2

Ephesians chapter 3 commences with the words 'For this cause I...' jump down to verse 14 of this same chapter and you will read the words 'For this cause I...'. I confess that I had often read this chapter in my younger days and never noticed that in verse 14 Paul picks up again where verse 1 leaves off. I read it as if Paul was continuing on with one theme all the way through. The truth is, however, that Paul turns aside at verse 2 and introduces one large parenthesis with a smaller parenthesis inside it. Verses 2–13 are a rather lengthy explanation of an important point, which he obviously thinks it is necessary to explain before he can go on. What his turning aside was all about we will come back to shortly.

First of all, I want you to notice that although we have the chapter break, chapter 3 flows on from chapter 2. Chapter 2 revealed some marvellous things. We were quickened by God, being dead to trespasses and sins; we were given the gift of 'by-grace-salvation', we were raised together with Christ and seated together with Him in the same heavenly places that chapter 1 told us was the exalted position of Christ Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. We were saved by grace, not by works, so that we would have no grounds for boasting. We are His workmanship, and the goal placed before us is to do the good works that have been laid out for us to walk in.

Then we were reminded of our hopeless condition as Gentiles. Once without God and without Christ, nevertheless Christ became our peace, and in Him we have been brought nigh unto God, and made joint believers with those who once had pre eminence because of the middle wall of partition. But in the new man (the Greek word for man is the one used for a husband, so any thought of this company being a 'bride' is impossible) there is complete equality between all believers.

In fact, unlike the previous dispensation where the Jewish believer had a prior position, in the Dispensation of the Mystery the Jewish believer loses his Jewishness and the Gentile believer loses his Gentile-ness, and we are now, in God's sight, individually, members of the Church which is His Body, and corporately, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Please don't forget the last glorious point in chapter 2. The temple of which we are part, and making a spiritual habitation for God, is not just the outer part of the Temple, but the very Holy of Holies, the most sacred and innermost part, wherein God's presence was located. Paul here is speaking not of the earthly building, but the real, the original Temple in Heaven on which the earthly Tabernacle was modelled. Exodus 25:9,40

Such wonders stretch our comprehension and challenge our faith, but they are written for our instruction and acceptance. I believe that if we come to God's Word in sincerity and truth, and are prepared to do the hard work, the Holy Spirit will open it up to us.

For You Gentiles

Now to 3: 1. 'For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'. I have yet to see a translation of this chapter that puts a parenthesis at the beginning of verse 2, but I believe a careful reading of the chapter will convince anyone that it should be there. What was it that caused Paul to break off his main theme and give this long explanation? I believe it is the phrase 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'. This was a new thing, a claim that had not been made before, and as such it needed corroboration.

In Acts 28, when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he called the leaders of the Jewish community to him, and among other things, he said to them in verse 20, '...for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.' But when he writes the epistle to the Ephesian church some months later, it is not for the hope of Israel that he is bound, but rather he is the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. This change is not just because he is writing to a Gentile assembly, for there were Jewish believers there as well, but rather that the dispensation had changed.

At the end of his daylong conference with the Jewish leaders, he had dismissed them for their unbelief and quoted the fateful prophecy of Isaiah 6:9,10. This, I believe, brought Israel to the long foretold condition of 'LO-AMMI' (not my people), a condition which they have occupied ever since and right up to this year of 2000 AD.

Any Bible student knows that Paul had to defend his apostleship and ministry right from its commencement. In the Book of Acts and the epistles Paul wrote during the time covered by the Book of Acts, he defends his ministry among Gentiles by quoting from the Old Testament as to how God would bless Gentiles through Abraham.

It is also well known that his Acts epistles are full of Old Testament quotes. But in Ephesians when he has to make known the newly revealed truth of the Dispensation of the Mystery and the Church, which is His Body, he cannot quote the Old Testament because these truths are a secret God has kept hidden from before the foundation of the world. So how is he going to convince people to listen to him and accept as God's truth, these new and startling truths that have been trusted to him by the Risen Lord?

The only course open to him is to appeal to his previously demonstrated knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, and ask his readers and hearers on that basis to accept what he has to tell them about this newly-revealed part of God's plan called the Dispensation of the Mystery.

The last part of verse 3 says, 'as I wrote afore in few words (and going on into verse 4) whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ'.

Most Bibles put that quote in brackets, but I want to leave that for the moment. What concerns us now is Paul's claim that he has written a few words before about the mystery of Christ. It has been something of a puzzle to many as to what he referred to. The answer, I think, is not far away. In chapter 1:22,23 we read, 'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body...'

Very few Bibles give any cross-reference to the words 'And hath put all things under his feet', but they are quoted from Psalm 8:6, where David is describing the dominion that the first Adam had. It was to do with cattle and other animals, birds and fish. But Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

lifts those few words out and applies them to the last Adam, and shows that the dominion of this One includes heaven's nobility such as principalities and mights and powers.

It is a fact that no New Testament writer links Christ with Adam as Paul does. It is Paul who teaches us about the first and last Adams and about being in Adam or in Christ. He certainly has demonstrated a deeper knowledge of the mysteries or secrets of Christ than any other inspired writer. And I think this is what he is appealing to in 3:3 and 4, and asking his readers in his own day and also in our day to accept what he had to say but could not 'prove' from the Scriptures, because the new revelation was not the subject of covenant, prophecy or type in what we call the Old Testament.

I think I have already exceeded my limit for this study, so I must stop. But one last thought. After sending out the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians in which the new revelation is set out, Paul had to say that all they in Asia had turned away from him. 2 Timothy 1:15. His plea to be heard was refused by the majority of the believers of his day. That would seem to be the case today as well. But I pray that you, with me, will not be numbered amongst those who closed their ears to the message delivered by the Lord Jesus through his apostle to us Gentiles.

Chapter 27 – The Mystery and the Mystery of Christ

In our previous chapter, I pointed out that there are TWO parentheses in Ephesians 3:1–14, not one as is usually shown in our Bibles. Paul often puts a parenthesis in his writing, and I understand that there is a correct technical term for a parenthesis within a parenthesis. But that need not concern us.

The larger parenthesis starts at verse 2 and goes to the end of verse 13. The smaller, inner parenthesis is generally shown in our Bibles as starting towards the end of verse 3 with the words 'as I wrote afore...' and finishing at the end of verse 4. I believe that it should finish at the end of verse 5, however.

One of the characteristics of a parenthesis is that it can be left out of the main flow of thought without affecting the passage, so let's try it both ways and see what we get.

Assuming that the parenthesis finishes at verse 4, and leaving it out, we get this (from verse 3): 'How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.'

This time, starting from verse 3 again, we will leave out verse 5 as well as 4: 'How that by revelation He has made known unto me the mystery; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.'

Let's examine these verses a little more closely. I suppose that the question to be answered is this. Are there two mysteries being spoken of here, or one? I believe there are two, but if the parenthesis ends at verse 4, it makes it look as if there is one.

In verse 4 Paul refers to the mystery of Christ, and in verse 5 says that the mystery of Christ was not made known in other ages to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his apostles and prophets. It seems to me that Paul is making a comparison. He claims that NOW, that is, in Paul's time, there was a greater understanding of the mystery of Christ than there had been in previous times.

Next, if you consult your Greek interlinear Testament, you will see that the word 'ages' in verse 5 is '*geneais*', and is properly translated 'generations', not 'ages'. So, what Paul actually wrote was 'the mystery of Christ, which in other generations (or, to other generations) was not made known as it is now revealed...'

I have said a number of times in this series of studies that Colossians is a parallel epistle to Ephesians, and we often find truth expressed a little differently in Colossians, which helps us to understand what the Apostle is saying. And, fortunately, the Holy Spirit has given us the double witness that truth requires.

Look at Colossians 1:24–26. In verse 24, Paul claims to be a minister of the church, the Body of Christ, and to have a dispensation given to him for the Gentiles, which dispensation fulfils (fills up or completes) the Word of God (verse 25), and then verse 26 tells us that this mystery has been hid from ages and GENERATIONS, but NOW, that is, in Paul's time, is made manifest to his saints.

It does not take much hard thinking to see the logic here. Ephesians 3:5 says that the mystery of Christ was not made known to past generations to the extent that it was being made known in Paul's day. Then Colossians 1:24–26 tells us that Paul was given a special dispensation, which completes the word of God, and that with it there is a mystery (not the mystery of Christ), which has not been revealed to previous generations at all.

One of the exciting aspects of Bible study is to trace the gradually unfolding truth about the coming Messiah from Genesis 3:15 right through to the latest epistles of Paul. The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed, amongst other things, as the Lamb, the Scapegoat, Israel's King, the Bridegroom, and finally, in the epistles of the Mystery, as the Head of the Church which is His Body.

These things were known partially throughout the centuries of the Old Testament. But the Dispensation of the Mystery, in which all distinctions between Jewish and Gentile believer were done away was a secret never revealed to previous generations until it was revealed to and through Paul following his imprisonment in Rome.

Paul says a little more about this mystery further down in Ephesians 3. I should say here that the Greek word '*mysterion*', translated as mystery, really means a secret. It does not mean something dark and mysterious, which is what the word 'mystery' means to us today. A '*mysterion*' was simply any secret that may or may not be hard to understand once it is revealed. And to state it baldly for the moment, the secret that had NOT been revealed before was that the Gentiles were to be joint-heirs, of a joint body and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ.

This secret had never been revealed anywhere in Scripture, either in type, prophecy or any other way. It was an entirely new revelation given to Paul upon the rejection of Israel by God at the end of the book of Acts. Paul makes the claim in 3:9 that the mystery had been hid in God from the beginning of the world. Think about it, my dear reader. If God hides a secret in Himself, do you think anyone will ever find it until He makes it known? To ask the question is to answer it.

I hope by now you will be clear in your mind that the mystery of Christ is one thing, a secret gradually revealed through the ages, but shown in its full glory in New Testament times. The Mystery of Ephesians three is a different secret that God kept hidden in Himself until Israel were finally off the scene.

And the tragedy of it is that, though Paul could say in Acts 19:10 that all in Asia had heard the Gospel, he has to say in his last epistle, 2 Timothy 1:15, not long before his death, 'All they in Asia are turned away from me.'. Not only the truth of the Mystery was lost, but Paul's great Gospel fundamental of salvation by faith was also lost. And it wasn't until a few believers here and there turned back to Paul's epistles that the truth was rediscovered in the 15th and 16th centuries.

(An excellent small book titled 'The Early Centuries and The Truth' by Stuart Allen, deals with these subjects and is available from The BBFA Book Agency.)

To sum up, the inner parenthesis in Ephesians 3:1–14 starts towards the end of verse 3 as it is marked in most Bibles, but goes on to the end of verse 5, not verse 4 as most Bibles show it. In this parenthesis Paul appeals to his demonstrated knowledge in the mystery of Christ, to validate his claim to have been given a new Dispensation of the Mystery, in which a new company of God's people was being called into being, this company to be called the Church which is His Body, and in this company all distinctions that had previously existed between Jewish and Gentile believers were done away.

The hope of this new company is not to be seated with Abraham in the Promised Land, or to walk the streets paved with gold in the New Jerusalem, but to be seated with Christ in the above—heavens at the right hand of God.

It seems too good to be true, but it is all here in Ephesians and Colossians.

Chapter – 28 Paul the Prisoner

In looking back over the last two chapters, I see that I have jumped around a little, which I hope has not confused you too much. I need now to refer back to several points made in the study before last to set the scene for us.

In chapter 2, Paul had spoken about the lost and hopeless condition of the Gentile as far as God was concerned. But God in His grace and mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ had brought about peace and reconciliation, not only between Himself and Gentile believers, but also between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

I hope that you can see that these further revelations about what was accomplished by Christ's death shows Paul's deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ. There is nothing in the Gospels or the epistles written during the Acts period that touches on the doing away with the barriers between Jew and Gentile, and yet it was part of what the Lord's sacrifice brought about.

Rejection Of Israel

On the rejection of Israel – an event which I have been at pains to show took place at the end of the book of Acts, not the beginning – the Risen Lord revealed through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, that He had a secret plan, kept hidden from all previous generations. This plan was that a new company was constituted, made of all believers who responded to the message, in which the Jew's advantages were all gone, and the Gentile's disadvantages were all gone, and believers destined for this section of God's family were members of the Body of Christ.

Shortly after Paul heralded this truth of the Mystery in Ephesians and Colossians, the city of Jerusalem was devastated, the Temple was destroyed, and the Jewish people were not only driven away from their beloved City of David, but the nation entered the period that the prophets of old called LO-AMMI. That is a Hebrew term 'not my people'.

Many believers seem to have missed this Truth. With about 1900 years of this truth behind us, believers of our own time seemingly have no conception of what a staggering revelation Paul was making. From the call of Abraham in Genesis 12, until Paul's imprisonment in Rome as recorded in Acts 28, the ONLY WAY for a Gentile to come to God was through a Jew. As Paul tells us in the opening chapters of Romans, when mankind gave up God, God gave them up and turned to one man and his descendants.

But God had not forgotten the children of Adam. The whole point of choosing Abraham's descendants through Israel, and instructing them and committing His oracles to them, (the Scriptures in other words) was so He could work through His nation of kingly priests to reconcile the world to Himself

Paul, The Prisoner of Christ Jesus

So when Paul gets to the end of that part of his letter that we call chapter 2, he goes on to say, 'For this cause – or, because of this – I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles...' And he stops. This was difficult. This was different. No Israel now. How could he substantiate his credibility when he has to reveal truth that is not part of prophecy. He cannot now quote from Moses or the prophets.

This secret God had kept hid in Himself from the beginning of the world (literally, from the ages), so he appeals to his demonstrated deeper knowledge in the gradually unfolded secret of Christ throughout the ages as a reason for acceptance of the new revelation that had been given to Him by the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some beautiful and significant correspondences in 13:1–13, which I think, will help us to appreciate the passage more.

Firstly, 3:1 starts: 'For this cause I...' The echo comes in verse 14 'For this cause I...' It is at that point that he resumes his discourse from which he turned aside at the end of verse 1.

Paul, The Prisoner for us Gentiles

Then in verse 1, he calls himself the prisoner of Jesus Christ FOR YOU GENTILES. Look at verse 13. My tribulations (sufferings) for you. In this connection also, note that verse 2 says that he has been given this special dispensation or stewardship to you-ward. Don't miss the insistence on the Gentile and the connections of this ministry relating to the Mystery with Paul's sufferings. Also note the other references to the Gentiles, verses 6 and 8.

It is worth thinking about the way in which the Holy Spirit gradually reveals the full extent of what the Lord said to Paul at his conversion. In Acts 9, we are told only what the Lord said to Ananias about Paul. Verses 15,16: 'But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'

Paul has something to say about it for the first time, as far as the Scriptural record is concerned, in Acts 26 where he is making his defence before Agrippa. Verses 16 and 17: 'But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee.'

Don't miss the allusion to two separate ministries in those verses just quoted. 'a minister and a witness...those things which thou hast seen...and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.' Right from its beginning, Paul's ministry was associated with suffering, but it is the second ministry that is particularly associated with bonds and imprisonment.

A Dispensation given to Paul

Verse 2 speaks of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me to youward. Then in verse 8 he says 'unto me...is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the dispensation of the Mystery...

I hope you noticed that my quote of verse 9 is a little different from what the AV has. It says the 'fellowship' of the Mystery. However, the RV and later translations have changed it to 'dispensation'. The reason for the difference is that the Greek words for fellowship and dispensation are rather alike, and it is quite easy for a scribe to misread it and write the wrong word.

I think that if you read right through verse 9, you will see which word makes the most sense.

‘And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath
been hid in God.’

‘And to make all see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.’

I have no doubt that Paul wrote dispensation, but you will have to make up your own mind.

The Mystery of Christ and the Mystery

Then in the middle verses of our section, we have two mysteries. The first is the Mystery of Christ gradually revealed throughout the ages and generations by apostles and prophets, and secondly, the Mystery, revealed only to Paul, and kept hidden in God from the ages (literally).

Notice that Paul claims that the Mystery was made to him by revelation. This again emphasises the fact that it was not to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures, or that he got it from the other apostles.

In verse 8, speaking of the mystery of Christ, he uses the word ‘unsearchable’. The Greek word so translated means to leave no footsteps, so untraceable, past finding out. Moffatt, in his translation has ‘the fathomless wealth of Christ’.

Jew and Gentile Differences abolished.

While parts of the mystery of Christ had been unfolded throughout the ages, there were parts of that truth reserved for the time when, upon Israel’s rejection, the truth of the Mystery was to be made known. And that revelation needed further truth relating to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, truth that had not been revealed before.

So we learn that the blood of Christ not only saves from sin, and sanctifies the believer, but that it also does away with the enmity that existed between Jew and Gentile, and so made possible the institution of the new calling, the Body of Christ, in which every believer is on equal footing, previous advantages and disadvantages having been completely done away with in the Blood of Christ.

I hope that none of our readers thinks that this complete equality existed before Paul’s revelation of the Mystery, because it did not. The present day believer only thinks it did, because he/she has never known anything else, and the teaching of the churches has missed it almost entirely.

The Church which is His Body

I am aware of repeating what has been said in earlier studies, but it is necessary for the sake of thoroughness. Verse 3:6 tells us that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ. The Greek uses the prefix ‘syn’ in front of the words ‘heir’s, ‘body’ and ‘partakers’, and it is difficult, to say the least, to find a consistent translation that makes sense in the English idiom. The best suggestion seems to be the word JOINT, so we would have JOINT-HEIRS, JOINT-BODY and JOINT-PARTAKERS.

While we may not fully understand what a joint-body is, the main point is that of perfect equality, no member ahead, no member behind. And over it all, giving life to and feeding the Body, is Christ the Head. And let me remind you of something we learned back at the end of chapter one. The church which is His Body is the fullness of Christ, who in His turn fills all in all.

Chapter 29 – Paul’s Prayer For His Readers

We are still in chapter 3 of Ephesians and have spent quite some time on vverse1–13 so far, for which I make no apology. It is a crucial part of the epistle, and we need to be very clear about what the Apostle to the Gentiles is saying here.

And before we proceed to the next section of the chapter, I want to make one last point about this parenthetical portion. I am aware that even with this one last point, there is much that I am leaving unsaid, and I am also sure that there is much left unsaid of which I am totally unaware. Who amongst us has plumbed all the depths of God's Word?

The Church and God's Wisdom

Chapter 3:9,10 says this: 'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (and we should add verse 11) according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Paul wanted to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, verse 9, for the purpose that to the principalities and powers in the above heavens might be made known the manifold wisdom of God (the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects – *Amplified Version*).

Apart from 1 Peter 3:22, Paul is the only NT writer who speaks about the ruling classes of Heaven, whom he calls principalities, powers, mights and dominions. In 1 Peter 1:12, we are told that the angels were vitally interested in the unfolding of the prophetic plan of salvation in Christ Jesus. But these other heavenly beings of whom we know so little, are also, according to Ephesians, very interested in what God is doing through the unique company called the Church which is His Body

Why would they be interested in the members of the Body? Because the sphere of blessing for the members of the Body is the super heavenlies, where Christ sits at God's right hand. And the super heavenlies is the realm of these mighty ones.

If the things said of the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 speak of Satan and his downfall, as I believe they do, and coupling that with several other references throughout Scripture, we should understand that when Satan sinned he was thrown out of that lofty and sacred position he had. We are told that a third of the angels went with him.

I can well imagine that all that caused quite a stir amongst the dwellers of that heavenly realm. And before ever God started His work of redemption by preparing the world and then creating Adam, He had purposed in Himself that there would be a company of redeemed people who would dwell with Him in those highest realms.

Can you see why those who are already there would be just a little interested in any newcomers? And note too, that Colossians 2:10 says: 'And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.' Notice that in verse 10 of Ephesians 3 it is not the love of God which is shown, nor His grace, but His manifold or many sided wisdom.

How does God's choice of you and me as members of the Church, His Body, demonstrate His manifold wisdom? I really can't give an answer. For what it is worth, Mrs Daisy Collier, a stalwart of this witness for many years, said on this point: 'I think that when the principalities and powers see that God has chosen us, so weak, faltering and unworthy, they will shake their heads in wonderment and say, 'God must be infinitely wise.'

Paul Bows His Knees

‘For this cause...’ Authorised Version
‘By reason of this...’ Interlinear Greek
‘With this in mind...’ *New English Bible*
‘For this reason...’ *New International Version*
‘Because of this...’ Ferrar Fenton

These are the various translations of Paul’s start to what we call chapter 3 of Ephesians. And to drive home the point I wish to make, let me quote one other translation: ‘For this reason [because I preached that you are thus builded together] This quote is from the *Amplified version*, and they added the words in brackets because they obviously felt a need to remind readers that Paul was continuing and developing what he had just written in chapter 2.

Well, that’s obvious, you might say, but I know from my own experience as well as observing others, that the chapter breaks sometimes cause us to break the flow of thought. At the risk of being tedious, please keep in mind that chapter 3 flows straight on from chapter two. More on that a little further down.

As mentioned in earlier studies, after turning aside to explain his term ‘the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles’ and something of what that entailed, he says in verse 14 what he was going say at verse 1, and again I use the *Amplified Version*: ‘For this reason (seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ) I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom every family in heaven and earth is named...’ Again the translators have inserted a reminder that Paul is still expanding what he said in chapter 2.

‘I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ is a lovely way of saying that he is praying for his readers. This is the second of Paul’s prayers in Ephesians, and it sits in the centre of the epistle, Ephesians 3:14–21.

An overview first of all

‘In Order That.’ The Greek word ‘*hina*’ comes three times in this prayer, and it is translated by the word – ‘that’. If you stop and think about it for a moment, you will realise that our word ‘that’ has many meanings. We understand these different meanings quite unconsciously from the context in which we use the word. Greek, however, is a little more exact than that. There are a number of different Greek words that are translated as ‘that’, and it pays the Bible student to take a little time to understand the differences.

The word ‘*hina*’ is one of those words, of course, and it means ‘in order that’ You will see where ‘*hina*’ occurs in the outline below, and I have shown the translation ‘in order that’ consistently. Notice the correspondence between the Prayer to the Father, and Every family in heaven and earth at the beginning, and then, Glory to Him and All the generations of the age of the ages at the end.

Verse 14 Prayer to the Father
Verse 15 Every family in heaven and earth
Verses 16, 17 In order that (*hina*) He may grant
Verse 18 In order that (*hina*) you may comprehend
Verse 19 In order that (*hina*) you may be filled
Verse 21 Glory to Him
 ‘All the generations of the age of the ages.’

Let me remind you of the link between chapter 2 and this prayer. Again a little outline:

Verse 2:22 A dwelling place for God in Spirit

Verse 3:14 For this cause I pray
Verse 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

I have changed the AV's 'habitation' to 'dwelling place', which some translations use, to emphasise the connection between the believer corporately as God's dwelling place and the believer individually as Christ's dwelling place by faith. In the Greek, the words for dwelling place and dwell are related, the one being the noun and the other the verb.

What is being spoken of in chapter 2 is the theoretical side, or the situation as God sees it. Each member of the Body is already seen in place as part of the building where God dwells, that is, the Temple. Paul's prayer, however, deals with the practical or the experimental side of it, dealing with what we are as we struggle along our pilgrim roads. By faith we are the dwelling places of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concentrating on the major items in the prayer, note that Paul says: I pray to the Father: IN ORDER THAT you, his readers, ourselves included, would be given through the Holy Spirit strength in the inner man, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, you being rooted and grounded in love; IN ORDER THAT you may be strong enough to apprehend or grasp with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height (of that love), to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; IN ORDER THAT you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

After all that, it is no wonder that Paul breaks out into a doxology praising God. And just in case you are wondering just how any of the above points in his prayer can become realities in your life, note that he gives praise to the God who can do, not just abundantly, but EXCEEDING abundantly above all that we can possibly ask or think; to this One, he says, be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages: Amen.

Now some details. Where the AV speaks in verse 15 of the whole family in heaven and earth, the correct translation is 'every family'. And it is interesting to note that the word translated as 'family' is not the Latin '*famulus*' but the Greek '*patria*' (hence '*pater*' father). This shows up the connection between the Father and the Fatherhood involved in establishing a family.

The *Amplified Version* puts the verse like this: 'For Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named – [that Father] from Whom all Fatherhood takes its title and derives its name.'

Notice how love is prominent throughout the prayer. Verse 17: that ye may be rooted and grounded in love; verse 19, and to know the love of Christ which is beyond knowing. I find it quite thought-provoking that verse 16 calls for strength and power so that we can grasp and apprehend every possible dimension (length, breadth, depth, height) of this wondrous love of Christ for His people, (verse 18. It is not intelligence or wisdom that is needed, but strength.

Many are the explanations put forward as to what these four dimensions refer to, but none of them seem to really get to grips with it for me. I am reminded of Romans 8:38,39: 'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It may be a very simple approach, but it is a great inspiration to me to think that no power or being, whether high or low, and no circumstance today or in the future can separate me from this wonderful love of Christ, for His love is higher and longer and deeper and broader than them all.

Perhaps the only thing left to do now is to echo Paul's doxology and pray that our lives, as believers indwelt by Christ, will bring unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ glory and honour both this day and throughout all ages.

Chapter 30 – Filled With all the Fullness of God

A few comments will bring us to the end of chapter 3 of Ephesians, which is the halfway point of this wonderful part of God's Word. It seems to me that we have scaled great heights of God's Truth. In fact, more than one expositor calls the revelations contained in Ephesians and Colossians, the epitome, the peak of God's revelations to mankind, and I find myself in wholehearted agreement with that assessment.

God's Dwelling Place

I touched on it in the previous chapter, but I do want to emphasise the connection between what Paul said at the end of chapter 2 about God building a dwelling place for Himself using the members of the Church which is His Body as the living stones for this building, and the statement in 3:17, where part of Paul's prayer for all of us is that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.

These two statements – 1, that the Lord is building His holy place using believers as the stones and 2, the prayer that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith – show as the two aspects of our life in Christ. There are different names for these things, but I like the two words 'standing' and 'state'. These words refer to what God sees us as in Christ, our 'standing', and what we actually are at the present time, our 'state'.

We get a good example of this in chapter 2:7. There, among other things, Paul tells us that we have been raised with Christ and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places. Chapter 1:20 has already told us that this position is at the right hand of God the Father. I don't mind what translation you use to check this out, but if you look at the tenses of the verbs used, you will see that God sees it as an accomplished fact. The Father sees us in Christ as already, now, seated in the Heavenly Places with/in Christ Jesus.

I hope you don't think I am being silly, but as I type these words, I am seated in our house, very much earthbound on our little acreage near Clarence Town in New South Wales. And while it is a delightful spot in many ways, it is a far cry from being seated with Christ in the Heavenlies at the right hand of the Father.

Both are true. The one position, in the Heavenlies, is our standing in Christ. It may not have come about in fact as yet, but because God has purposed it, and because its accomplishment rests both on God's Word and on Christ's faithfulness, God can speak and act as if it is already a fact.

On the other hand, we are still in 'this vale of tears', walking the pilgrim path that has been put in front of us. But as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were strangers in the land that God had promised them, and lived as if they were only passing through (they lived in tents, not building solid houses), so we are strangers here on earth. We are travellers passing through on our way HOME, and we've got Heaven in our hearts.

I hope, my dear reader, you know with me, that in spite of the many lovely things about our earthly surroundings, you don't belong here. As Paul says in Philippians 3:20, our citizenship ('conversation' in the AV) is in heaven. I suppose we could be really modern and say we are aliens, and one day, at resurrection time, we will be truly extra-terrestrial!

Filled with all the Fullness of God

Paul reaches the climax in his prayer in verse 19, when he says, 'that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.' This should remind us that back at the end of chapter 1, we read of the Church which is His Body being the fullness of Him (Christ, of course) who fills all in all. The subject of the fullness (*pleroma*, in Greek) is a large one, and I have neither the space nor the capacity to go into it here.

There is one point here that I think we can all comprehend. The *Amplified Version* translates this passage this way: 'that you may be filled UNTO all the fullness of God', and that is a more accurate translation of what Paul wrote. It is not easy to understand what the Apostle meant by unto all the fullness, and maybe that is why the earlier translators put the word with. Be that as it may, we need to come to an understanding of it for our own edification.

Colossians 2:7–10 is the corresponding passage, and verse 9 says: 'For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' Verse 10 goes on: 'And ye are complete in Him...' The word 'complete' is a form of the word '*pleroma*' – 'fullness'. So this sentence could be translated: 'And you are those having been filled to the full in Him.' Again using the Amplified, we have: 'And you are in Him, and made full...'

In the Ephesians passage, Paul prayed that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God, and in Colossians he wrote that you are being filled to the fullness in Him.

I think that it is beyond possibility that we can be filled with all the fullness of God, but it is certainly possible, and indeed highly desirable that we are filled to our capacity with the fullness provided in Christ. It is not hard to think of other passages where we are taught that God expects the best that each one of us can give individually.

Whoever you are who is reading these words, God does not expect me to receive and give the best that you are capable of. That may be beyond my capacity. And of course, it goes the other way. He will not ask of you to receive and give in return what some other servant of His may be able to take in and give out. As with the parable of the talents, each to his own capacity and ability.

Now this does not let us off the hook. If anything, it hooks us the more firmly. We could be forgiven, perhaps, for thinking that it is impossible to be filled with all the fullness of God, and so not worry about it. We cannot, however, be excused for not being filled to the full extent of our capacity, in other words, to grow in Christ to our full potential. This is possible. It is also God's goal for us. Surely that should make it our goal as well.

What does it mean to be thus filled? Perhaps a quote from Welch's book, '*In Heavenly Places*' may help. 'It will be remembered that, at the close of chapter 2 of Ephesians, there is a reference made to the 'habitation' of God and as a consequence Paul prayed that what the believer is in grace, in Christ and in position, he may be in experience, in realization and in enjoyment in order that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.'

Please read that paragraph carefully.

The Love of Christ

At the beginning of verse 19 we have 'and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge...' The words 'which passeth' are EXCEEDING in the Greek. This word has occurred twice before in Ephesians and if we put the three references together it looks like this:

- 1:19: 'What is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward.'
- 2:7: 'That...He might show the exceeding riches of His grace.'
- 3:19: 'The love of Christ exceeding knowledge.'

These three things are said to be exceeding – His resurrection power, the riches of His grace and the love of Christ. And they are all to us. What fullness! Which one of the Lord's servants would not want to be filled to the brim with these? By the way, the word 'exceeding' in verse 20 is not the same word.

The Power of God

The doxology of verses 20 and 21 picks up the themes that have been prominent in the preceding chapters – power of God, power that energises us, and to the Father who has made this power available to us, glory in the church in Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.

If you are wondering what happened to the world without, I must say that Paul did not write it. What I have put in the paragraph above is what he actually wrote. Think about it. We know very well from Scripture that this world is going to end. When the time comes, God will roll up the heavens like a scroll. Then this poor, sin-stricken and weary world is to be destroyed by fire, and its place taken by a new heaven and new earth.

So whatever the phrase unto all the generations of the age of the ages may mean, rest assured that Paul did not write 'world without end.' Maybe all that needs to be said at the moment is that there a number of ages to come, before the great plan of God is complete.

Chapter 31 – Doctrine and Walk in Balance

As we start with Ephesians 4:1, we commence the second half of this glorious epistle. Not all books in the Bible are arranged so neatly, but Ephesians simply divides into two equal parts. To repeat what has been said in earlier studies, the first half deals with DOCTRINE (that is, teaching), while the second half outlines for us the PRACTICE (that is, the application in our daily lives of the teaching given in the first three chapters).

There is an important principle about doctrine and practice here which we must understand and embrace, and I can do no better than to quote the words of Charles Welch, for they express the point far better than I could: 'There is scarcely anything more important and in need of more emphasis and repetition than that doctrine must ever be accompanied by practice, that walk must correspond with calling, that visible fruit must manifest the hidden root. This correspondence of doctrine and practice is most happily displayed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It naturally divides into its two main sections – the first three chapters containing the great revelation, the second three chapters the resulting exhortation.

It is not enough that we should learn the doctrine of the New Creation and the New Man; it must have some result. The old man with his 'former conversation' (4:22) and with his deeds (Colossians 3:9) must be put off, otherwise the glorious doctrine remains without life.' (*In Heavenly Places*, pp. 326/7.).

We may well struggle with the profound and sometimes difficult truths that Paul teaches in the first half of this letter, but I think each reader will understand me when I say that I have more difficulty applying these truths to my life and daily walk than I do in understanding them. I sometimes think that there is a more difficult standard of behaviour outlined in this practical section of Ephesians than that given to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai.

Those of us associated with this witness who try to get others to see the riches of the Dispensation of the Mystery, have been accused once or twice of having 'head knowledge' but no 'heart knowledge'. Further discussion at those times revealed that what we were being accused of was not having a corresponding walk to match the doctrine. I am sure that each of us so accused would acknowledge at least some truth in the charge, but we would also say that we are trying to achieve a balance.

So, while it means that we are falling short of God's standard if our walk does not balance the doctrine we believe, on the other side it is equally true that if we ignore God's revealed truth for our day and age, and try to walk according to truth that belongs to a previous dispensation, our walk and work for Him can also be falling short. It seems to me that it is not a case of either doctrine or practice. One should not exclude the other, and either without the other leads to a distorted walk and witness for our Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us.

There must always be the balance between the doctrine and the application of that doctrine in our lives. And, as a famous playwright once said, 'Ah, there's the rub.'

Before we dive into the detail of chapter 4, I want to present an overview of the last three chapters. I would refer readers back to the outline of the epistle given in the first study in *Spiritual Blessings Vol. 9 No. 2*. I shall, however, take a slightly different approach here. Also, I will give the corresponding, or balancing, sections from the first three chapters. I cannot urge you too strongly to spend sufficient time to come to an appreciation of this outline (see below).

The Balance between Doctrine and Practice in Ephesians

Walk Worthy

The first verse in chapter 4 immediately introduces to us the change of outlook, that is, from doctrine to practice. We get this in the different title that Paul uses for the Lord Jesus. In 3:1, Paul states that he is the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. In 4:1 he calls himself the prisoner of the Lord.

Rather than this being simply the casual use of a parallel term, I suggest to you that the use of the title 'Lord' instead of 'Christ Jesus' denotes the change of emphasis that the Holy Spirit through Paul wishes to make. By the way, in 3:1, it is Christ Jesus in the Greek, and not Jesus Christ as in the AV.

The title 'Christ Jesus' denotes the ascended and risen Saviour in whom and through whom we find our acceptance, our ground of blessing and our hope of glory. Of course, it is in Him and by Him that every blessing we have has been won. The title 'Lord' on the other hand, speaks of our relationship with our Head in the practical sphere.

Some verses from John 13:13–16 throw light on this point: 'Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet...the servant is not greater than His Lord'.

There is only one use of the title Lord in the first half of Ephesians, (2:21). The remaining 15 occurrences are all in the practical section.

Let me remind you, seeing that we have touched on Paul the prisoner, that in contrast to being the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, 3:1, when he called the Jewish leaders in Rome to a conference, he told them he was bound in his chains for the hope of Israel. Acts 28:20

It could be said that he was suiting his terms to his different audiences. Maybe, but I think we have to take into account that between Acts 28:20 and Ephesians 3:1 there comes the climactic quotation of Isa. 6:9,10, and Paul's dismissal of the Jews.

To the best of our knowledge, Ephesians was the first epistle that Paul wrote after being imprisoned in Rome, and to my mind, the fact that he now becomes the prisoner ...for you Gentiles, is another indication of the change of dispensation that took place at Acts 28:28.

Chapter 32 – Walking Worthily In The Lord

In our last chapter, we started to look at the second half of Ephesians, which begins at chapter 4. It seems to me to be obvious that these last three chapters are mainly practical, outlining for us the good works of 2:10. And it cannot be stressed too much that our walk in and for the Lord must be in harmony with the truths of the Dispensation of the Mystery that were revealed for the first time through Paul in the first three chapters of this epistle.

The AV uses the word 'vocation' in 4:1: 'I...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' 'Vocation' means exactly the same as 'calling'. God calls us to walk and work for Him, so we have a calling to live up to. In Philippians 3:14 Paul says: 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

The word 'high' is 'above' in the Greek, which changes the meaning slightly. While our calling is indeed a high calling, the meaning is better expressed, perhaps, by the Revised translation which goes like this: 'I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.'

If you will cast your mind back to Paul's statements in chapters 1 and 2 about being blessed and seated with Christ in the Heavenly Places at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, then the thought of our calling being an upward calling, or even a high calling, will seem to be quite appropriate.

We can and should glory in the fact of such a wondrous calling, but we must ever be mindful of the serious responsibility this places on us 'to walk worthy of our calling'. I think it is an indication of the kindness and love of our Heavenly Father that, before He calls on us to walk worthy, He has His scribe (Paul) tell us that the same power that energised the Lord Jesus and brought Him from the grave, operates within us. He has placed at our disposal the resources to enable us to answer His call.

The word worthy also demands a little attention. The Greek word translated worthy is 'axios', and is related to such words as axis and axle. The basic thought is that of a pivot on which the balance arm of an old fashioned set of scales pivots. It was a favourite game of my brother and me as small boys to play on the large set of scales on the railway station platform. We stood on the platform, and then had to keep adding weights on the end of the long arm until the arm swung down and 'balanced' our weight on the platform.

Perhaps a more appropriate example is that of the set of scales we used in the high school chemistry class. Essentially this consisted of a long arm, pivoted in the middle, with a small dish on each end. Some substance was added to one dish until it equalled the weights in the other dish and the arm would then swing to the horizontal position.

The significance is that the one thing was being compared or tested against the other. When the right quantity was added to the one end and the balance was achieved, it could be said, using the language of Ephesians 4:1, that the substance in the one dish was 'worthy' of the weights in the other dish.

I know that sounds a little strange, but that is only because we don't really understand the word worthy. If I speak about something being worthy, and say nothing more, then the question should immediately be asked. 'Worthy of what?'

To speak of worth, or worthiness, implies comparison, or as I said above, testing to see whether one thing measures up to the worth of another. We might hear that a friend has paid a certain sum of money for, say, a car. After looking at the car, our reaction might be that the car is not worth the

amount paid for it. In cases like this, we automatically make a comparison in our minds to see if the worth of the object equals the worth of the money asked or paid for it.

Maybe your thoughts, like mine, have gone to Daniel 5:27, where it is said of Belshazzar, 'You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting.' He was tested and found unworthy. What a terrible indictment. May it not be the Lord's verdict on any of us, when, in that great and awful day, we stand in His presence to account for our stewardships. And that reminds us that it is required in stewards that they be faithful. 2 Corinthians 4:2

Perhaps two references from 2 Timothy are appropriate here: 'Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' 2 Timothy 1:8,9

'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth'. 2 Timothy 2:15

Walk With Attitude

I had decided that I would try to cover the material more quickly in this second half of Ephesians, but we cannot skip over the terms used in these opening verses of chapter 4 without giving them the attention they deserve.

The Apostle goes on in verse 2 to implore us to walk with all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. What an attitude is required of us here!

Two other verses will help us with the meaning of lowliness. Firstly, Acts 20:19 where Paul claims that he serves the Lord with all humility of mind. Humility of mind is the same word as lowliness.

Secondly, Philippians 2:2,3: 'Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind (same word) let each esteem other better than themselves.' Please also look up Colossians 3:12,13 which parallels Ephesians 4:2.

Humility is a basic requirement for the child of God, and we must ever remember how God hates pride. It was pride that led to Satan's rebellion. So humility rates high with God. There is a false humility, however, which we must guard against. Paul has something to say about that in Colossians 2, which I hope you will read.

Meekness is closely associated with humility. Meekness is not weakness, as many people seem to think. Meekness is being gentle and unselfish and mild, when there might be some justification to strike out at others. I sometimes think that it takes a strong person to be meek, just as it takes a frightened person to be brave. Two other references which are worth looking at are Galatians 6:1 and 2 Timothy 2:25.

Longsuffering means just what it looks like. 'Love suffers long, and is kind', says 1 Corinthians 13:4. It is interesting that the two qualities are mentioned together in both places. Colossians 1:10 and 11 state that one of the goals of our worthy walk is 'unto all patience and longsuffering'. It is very difficult to put up with some other believers. It may help if we stop and consider how much more difficult it probably is for them to put up with us!

It is important to remember 2 Timothy 4:2, 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine'.

The last item in Ephesians 4:2 is 'forbearing one another in love'. It is a little hard to distinguish between some of these terms, but the *Amplified Version* puts it this way: 'making allowances for one another because you love one another'. I pray that we each may, with the power of the risen Lord operating in us, walk in humility, meekness, patience and love.

Chapter 33 – Three Unities – Spirit, Faith and Body

In the first two verses of chapter 4 Paul stresses the necessity of a worthy walk in lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and love that forbears, considered the implications of those words in our last study, and it seems that these qualities of character are prerequisites to such things as keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Before we tackle the items listed under the heading of the unity of the spirit, I want to present the major points of the outline of the whole section that lies before us, namely, Ephesians 4:1–17. See below. I have omitted some of the details, but I urge you to take the time to comprehend and appreciate the main points of this passage. It seems to me that it will be time and effort well spent.

This outline is taken from the structure done by Charles Welch of this passage, and is found on p.335 of his book *In Heavenly Places*. He has more detail than I think necessary for us, but I am sure that readers who go through the outline point by point and make it their own, will have arrived at a comprehensive understanding of the passage.

The word structure is used, by the way, because the Scriptures are constructed in such a way as to make it possible for a section or passage, in some cases even a verse, to be set out in a form that shows how one point parallels or contrasts another, the whole thing exhibiting a wonderful balance. To the best of my knowledge, the Bible is the only book with which this is possible.

The use of the letters A and B is quite arbitrary and a matter of convenience. They could just have easily been X and Y or any other pair. Consider the outline.

I draw your attention to the fact that both before and after the central points called B1 to B3, we have two references to Paul's ministry and our walk. The first is a positive point, and the second a negative. In other words, we are told in verse 1 to walk like this, and in verse 17 not to walk like that.

Just in case anyone is in doubt, the walk refers to our whole manner of living as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice also the two references in verses 2 and 17 to 'the mind'. I hope you remember from our last study that the word lowliness in verse 2 is better translated 'humility of mind'. So at the beginning of the section we have a statement about humility of mind being part of a positive walk for the Lord, and at the end of the section we have a warning not to walk like the Gentiles do – in the vanity of their minds.

Then we have the three central points revolving around the thought of unity; the Spirit with its bond of peace, the Faith and finally the One Body. I know the word unity does not occur in verse 16, but I think it is surely implied, and the use of it helps the memory with the points nominated B1 to B3.

Then we are told to KEEP the unity of the spirit; the unity of the faith is a goal to be ARRIVED AT; and the unity of the Body comes about by being FITLY JOINED. This phrase will be examined later.

Next, each of the unities mentioned has a sevenfold description (I struggle for a word here). For the moment, I will say no more about this, but leave you to try and find what they are for yourself.

Then the word MEASURE occurs three times in connection with the three unities. Again I will not stop at this point to explain, except to say that the word measure is the Greek word *METRON* (compare English meter, metric etc.). In verse 7 it is the measure of the gift of Christ. Verse 13 gives us the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and in verse 16, we have the measure of every part.

But there is more. In verses 8–12 the gifts of ministry are for the perfecting of the Body. Perfecting is another word that will need some consideration. Then verse 15 tells us that the truth is to be spoken in love so that the believer may grow up into Christ. And verse 16 says that every part of the Body works to edify itself (that is, the Body) in love.

I hope you find that even such a bare look at the outline of these 17 verses is not only stimulating but as stirring as I do. Remember they are the words which the Holy Spirit uses to teach us.

Endeavour To Keep

Now let us go back to verse 3 and start to look at some of the details. In the AV verse 3 starts with the word 'endeavour'. This is a stronger word than may first appear. In Galatians 2:10 the leaders of the assembly in Jerusalem asked Paul to remember the poor, which Paul said he was forward to do. 'Forward' translates the same word as 'endeavour'. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, 'study to show thyself approved unto God' 'Study' is our word 'endeavour'.

In the same epistle Paul urges Timothy to come to him as soon as he can: 'Do thy diligence to come to me shortly'. 'Do thy diligence' is our word 'endeavour', and, in fact, the word 'diligent' is a very good translation in all the occurrences mentioned above. In Hebrews 4:11 we have the same word but translated differently: 'Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest'. 'Labour' is the word 'endeavour', and again 'Be diligent' would express Paul's meaning very well. So we could correctly translate the beginning of verse 3 as 'Be diligent to keep...'

There are five different words all meaning 'to keep' in particular ways that Paul could have used. The four he didn't use mean:

1. to keep as a shepherd keeps his flock
2. to keep, or guard, as a soldier
3. to hold as the servant did the pound entrusted to him
4. to keep, to observe, as the Passover for example.

Paul by-passes those four, however, and uses the word that means to 'keep safe as a treasure'. This word in a slightly different form is used of Mary in Luke 2:19, who treasured in her heart things concerning her firstborn Son. Paul also used the word of himself, when in 2 Timothy 4:7, he said, 'I have kept the faith.'

We could go as far as to say that this word means to keep as a sacred trust, and it requires our diligence. What is it we are to keep? If we answer 'The unity of the Spirit' we have only given half the answer. We are to guard like we would a treasure, the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. I'm sure I don't have to work hard to convince you that keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace is not easy!

Where two or three (or however many) are gathered together, there will be differences of opinion, different ideas, different goals etc. and if we are not on our guard, these things can soon lead to striving and friction. But 2 Timothy 2:24 tells us clearly that the servant of the Lord must not strive or fight, so it is an on-going struggle for us each to keep the unity of the peace.

It is often said, and rightly so, that we are called upon to keep the unity of the Spirit not to make it. The implication is that this unity has already been made. It is not only that we don't have to make it, it is something that we could not make. That was the work of the Lord Jesus.

Will you join with me in a commitment that we will put off to the best of our ability the old nature within and allow the new nature to grow and flourish, and in this way we will make some progress in Our goal of keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Chapter 34 – One Lord, Unity and Peace

We turn our attention now to Ephesians 4:3–7 which speaks of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This is the first of three UNITIES mentioned in these verses, namely, 1–17. I trust that readers will remember the outline given in the last study.

For the sake of any who may not have seen it, however, let me briefly repeat the main points. I should say firstly, that we take verses 1–17 as a section because it starts and finishes with references to Paul, the believer's walk and an attitude of mind. In verses 1 and 2 it is the prisoner of the Lord who pleads with us to walk worthy in all humility of mind. In verse 17 Paul exhorts us not to walk as other Gentiles do in the vanity of their minds.

In between those opening and closing points, we have three unities mentioned, accompanied in each case by seven points and a reference to a measure. Finally, each unity is said to have a goal in mind. It is my purpose now to discuss these items in some detail.

The Unity of The Spirit. (verse 3–12)

The point was made in the last study that we are instructed to KEEP the unity of the Spirit. It really is simple logic, isn't it, to deduce that if we are to keep something then that something already exists. We are not instructed to MAKE the unity of the Spirit, but to KEEP it. Not only is it beyond our capabilities to make it, it has already been made by the only one who could make it, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cast your mind back to chapter 2 where Paul reminds us of the position Gentiles had before the setting aside of Israel and the revelation of the Mystery and its associated company, the Church which is His Body. Without going into every detail, words such as aliens, strangers, without Christ, no covenants, no hope, without God and far off, show how desolate the position of Gentiles was.

Then verses 13 and 14 tell us: 'But now in Christ Jesus ye...are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace...' And in verse 16, '...having slain the enmity thereby.' It is true that peace is more than just the absence of enmity, but it is also true that while there is any enmity present, there can be no peace. We will come back to these verses shortly.

Returning now to chapter 4, I hope you can see the genesis of this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The term 'of the Spirit' can be taken two ways, and I think it is right to do so. Firstly, it was and is undoubtedly the work of the Holy Spirit to establish this unity and peace in our hearts and the Church which is His Body. And secondly, it is in the spiritual sphere where this unity exists.

I think each reader will understand me when I say that we do not have this unity with the world at large. It is when we come, in spirit, into the company of fellow-believers that we feel at one and at peace.

Am I naive enough to think that this unity and peace amongst believers cannot be disturbed or even broken? No, I am not. I know that it can be disrupted, and I have no doubt that Satan works hard to do

just that. But we are redeemed not only from the consequences of our sins, but also from the power of the sinful nature. We no longer must serve sin. We now have the choice and can say no. So it seems to me to make a lot of sense that Paul pleads with us to keep, to guard jealously, this unity in the bond of peace, for it is possible for us to do so.

Let me remind you that the word Paul used for 'keep' here, means 'to keep safe' as one would a treasure. How well, then, do we guard it? We are called into a company (church) where all types and shadows have fallen away in the reality that we have in Christ Jesus. The distinctions that once caused contentions amongst believers have been completely cancelled out.

Surely, then, if I allow any of the types and practices that were important in previous dispensations to intrude, I am allowing this precious unity to be disrupted. Well, this is a matter for the individual's conscience. We just need to make sure our consciences are instructed by the Word of God.

Verses 4–6 tell us of the seven items connected with this unity. They are: one Body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father. Notice that the central item of the seven is ONE LORD. He it is alone who makes each of these items real and possible and indeed holds them all together. It is but another reminder to us that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is central to all we have and are, and without Him we are nothing.

Seven Unities

We will not get through them in this study, but we come now to the first one.

One Body

We need to be a little careful here, because of the traditional tendency to read truth from previous dispensations into this one, and conversely, to read the truth concerning the Body of Christ which is unique to the Dispensation of the Mystery, back into the administration of the Acts years.

To be specific, the 'body' of 1 Corinthians 12 is not the same as the 'one body' of Ephesians 4. What Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 4 relates to Ephesians 2, not 1 Corinthians 12.

I want to quote Ephesians 2:14–17 from the *Amplified Version* because this translation includes many of the shades of meaning in the Greek, that do not make it over into most English translations. While I could argue over a few little points in the translation, I nevertheless give it in its entirety so you can see the full colour of the passage. The brackets indicate the insertions made by the translators to show the other meanings present.

Ephesians 2:14–17: 'For He is [Himself] our peace – our bond of unity and harmony. He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one (body), and has broken down the (destroyed, abolished) hostile dividing wall between us, by abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the enmity [caused by] the Law with its decrees and ordinances – which He annulled; that He from the two might create in Himself one new man – one new quality of humanity out of the two – so making peace. And [He designed] to reconcile to God both [Jew and Gentile, united] in a single body by means of His cross; thereby killing the mutual enmity and bringing the feud to an end. And He came and preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were far off and (peace) to those who were near. [cp. Isaiah 57:19.]'

I urge you to take the time to go over that passage a number of times, compare it with your own version, and seriously consider the points made.

So here is the ONE BODY of Ephesians 4. It is a Christ-made union of Jewish and Gentile BELIEVERS in which all distinctions are wiped out. Not only has the Gentile believer lost all disadvantages, but the

Jewish believers have lost all the advantages that were once theirs right up to the end of the Acts period. I emphasise the point that the unity has been made between Jewish and Gentile believers in particular, not between Gentiles and Jews in general.

To illustrate my meaning, some years ago we had a visit from an American couple who had seen the truth of the Mystery of Ephesians. The husband was a Jew who, in his younger days, had been trained as a Rabbi in a strict Jewish sect. He had become a Christian, and then later brought to an understanding of the Ephesians position. When they came amongst us, there was an immediate bond and the fellowship was deep and rich.

On the other hand, I have at times had contact with Jewish folk, including Rabbis, who do not accept that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah. While these contacts have been friendly, there nevertheless has been a barrier between us, and in the true sense of the word, there was no fellowship.

One Spirit

The second point of the seven associated with the unity of the spirit is the ONE SPIRIT. Again we find that chapter 2 has prepared the ground before us, for in verse 18 we read: 'For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'

This is another point that shows how great the change of the Gentile and Jewish relative positions has been since the ending of the Acts administration. As Paul shows very clearly in Romans 9–11 (written towards the end of the Acts period, of course) that the position of the Gentile believer AT THAT TIME was that of a wild branch grafted into Israel's olive tree.

In the matter of life in Christ, there was no difference between them, for all had sinned, but in many dispensational matters there were great differences. Just to name one, no Gentile believer could go into the Temple in Jerusalem to worship.

But Paul dismissed Israel in Acts 28 during the day long conference with the Jewish leaders of Rome, then the new dispensation relating to the Secret hidden in God before the foundation of the world was revealed, and in this new era, the Jew had no more advantages over the Gentile. As far as the Temple was concerned, it was destroyed a few short years later and has not existed to this very day.

So it is the one and self-same Holy Spirit, who once worked in a special way showing wonderful evidential signs during the time of Israel's second chance, who now works in a different way, particularly as far as our present point is concerned, providing access to the Father for the both groups, without any favour for either.

Chapter 35 – The Unity and the Measure

I want to emphasise that not only does the Apostle teach about the UNITY of the Spirit, but that each of the seven items that are part of that unity, are in themselves single entities. It is not hard to see that the word ONE is a key word in these verses. We have considered, briefly, items 1 and 2, namely, one body and one spirit, so now we start with item 3.

One hope of your calling

The word HOPE in Scripture is used differently to the way we use it today. Hope to us generally implies uncertainty or doubt. 'I hope it will be fine today, but I don't like the look of those clouds.' 'I hope I win the lottery. I would like to pay off the mortgage and have an overseas trip.' We need to have it fixed firmly in our minds that 'hope' as it is used in Scripture has none of those ideas attached.

In Scripture, hope is always connected with a promise or statement of God. Abraham is a classic example. Romans 4:16–17 says: 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who AGAINST HOPE BELIEVED IN HOPE, that he might become the father of many nations, ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN, SO SHALL THY SEED BE.'

Abraham had hope in the face of all evidence to the contrary, because he believed that God could and would perform the miracles necessary to make him the father of many nations, even though as far as fathering children was concerned, he was as good as dead. His faith, upon which his hope stood, was firmly founded on what God had said. It must ever be the same with the hope any of us hold. This leads logically to the next point, namely, that it is not just one hope – a statement which if left unqualified would be meaningless – but the hope of your calling.

As part of Paul's prayer for the believer, he asks in Ephesians 1:18 that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we might know the hope of His calling. 'His' calling in 1:18 becomes 'your' calling in 4:4, and it seems to me, must be linked with our being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4

The hope of our calling, therefore, is linked with the Mystery and the Church which is His Body. The hope for the nation of Israel is the Promised Land and with it 'blessings of basket and store'. The hope of the believer during the Acts period was the New Jerusalem, with its streets of gold etc. But the hope of the Church which is His Body is to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all...Ephesians 1:20,21 and 2:6. Colossians 3:4 adds a little more detail: 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' Titus 2:13 is also to the point: 'Looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendour of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear.' (NEB).

The one hope of the Church which is His Body is not linked with the Lord's feet touching the Mount of Olives, or the meeting of the Lord with the Remnant or Overcomers in the air, but with the Lord's manifestation in Glory, an event which precedes the two other phases of His Coming.

One Lord

This fourth item, 'One Lord', is the central point of the seven, and it is not hard to see that it is the key item that underlines and holds the other six together. Without Christ, the One Lord, there is no Body. There would be no Spirit, for among other things, it is the Holy Spirit's task to teach us the things of Christ. We would have no hope, for He is the centre and basis of every hope and calling in Scripture. Our faith finds its only focus in Him, without which it is not faith, but fantasy. The one baptism unites us with Him particularly in relation to His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. And finally, we would know practically nothing of the One God and Father without Christ, because it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the visible expression of the invisible God.

Much more could be said about this point, but I will mention only one other. Paul was inspired, in Philippians 2:10–11, to quote from Isaiah 45:23, ascribing to Jesus Christ what Jehovah said of Himself. I will start from verse 9 of Philippians 2 to get the context: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

I hope that you will compare Isaiah 45:23 with Paul's quote in Philippians 2:10 and 11 if you have not already done so.

Paul's use of the quote from Isaiah 45 is enough by itself to convince me that Jesus the One Lord of the New Testament is Jehovah the One Lord of the Old. And this One Lord, who is, amongst other things, the Head of the Church which is His Body, will one day, at the precise moment in God's plan, be acknowledged and worshipped as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In the meantime, we are given the wonderful, and at the same time rather terrifying, privilege of acknowledging Him as our Lord and Head now, through an adoring attitude of heart and mind and an obedient and submissive life. We must always remember that the title Lord places the servant under the obligation of obedience. Again, I am conscious of leaving much unsaid, but I must move on, hoping that what has been said will give readers food for thought and further study.

One Faith

A little care must be taken now. I believe the word faith here refers more to the body of Truth delivered by Paul under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rather than to the fact that the gift of salvation by grace comes to me by faith. The One Faith is the Truth peculiar to the revelation of the Mystery and its associated company, the Church Which is His Body.

In writing to Timothy, Paul urged him to keep that which had been committed to his trust, 1 Timothy 6:20, and then to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of Paul, and also to keep that good thing which he had heard of Paul, 2 Timothy 1:13,14.

Paul's insistence on the Truth which had come through him is not a case of egotism, but rather an understandable and necessary concern on his part that the special body of truth concerning the Dispensation of the Mystery revealed through him, should not be perverted, watered down or confused with the part of God's Truth that pertained to Israel and the Church of God during the Acts period.

One Baptism

The sixth item of the seven is one baptism. The subject of baptism has caused much contention and controversy amongst believers throughout the centuries, into which controversy I have no wish to enter. We can leave the baptisms and many washings of the Old Testament aside in this study, although the underlying idea of washing and cleansing should be kept in mind. It is the New Testament baptisms that must be differentiated between when deciding which is the one baptism meant in Ephesians 4.

The New Testament knows a number of baptisms as follows:

1. The baptism of John, which was unto repentance for the remission of sins, Mark 1:4. Remember also that John said he baptised so that the Messiah should be made manifest to Israel, John 1:31. I think it is true to say that John's baptism also identified the repentant ones with the remnant of Israel.
2. The Baptisms of Water and the Spirit. These two baptisms were in operation during the Acts period. John had forecast the baptism of The Spirit, Matthew 1:11–12, Acts 1:5), and it came with dramatic results in Acts 2. A necessary part or result of this baptism was the accompanying gifts – the signs and miracles that were such an important and integral part of the witness during the Acts witness to Israel.

In case anyone thinks I have made a mistake here, Paul tells us in no uncertain terms in Romans 9–11 that the only reason Gentiles were brought into the company of believers at that time was to provoke Israel to jealousy and emulation. All that was done from Acts 1 right through to Acts 28:29 was to reinforce and validate the second offer of Jesus of Nazareth to the nation of Israel as their Messiah.

I hope readers will notice that the last two verses of Acts 28 are not included in the above statement.

Associated with this water and Spirit baptism are the last few verses of Mark's Gospel. In verses 15–20 we are told that certain things would follow those who believed and were baptized. We have the casting out of devils; speaking in new tongues; taking up of serpents without harm; drinking poison without harm; healing the sick through the laying on of hands. And verse 20 tells us that the believers went forth and all those signs followed. Thus, that is, in that way, was the Word confirmed.

Now probably the biggest controversy amongst Christian denominations is this very matter of the gifts and signs. An increasing number of believers say that we should have these signs today, but in spite of dramatic claims, these signs do not follow believers now.

And the reason why they do not is very simple. The Acts period, when these signs flourished right up to the last chapter, was a special appeal by God to Israel in response to the Lord's prayer for their forgiveness as He was being nailed to the stake. Luke 23:34. But they rejected their Messiah the second time. The rejection of the Jews in the homeland reached its climax with the murder of Stephen, and the rejection of the Jews of the Dispersion reached its climax with the negative attitude of the Jewish leaders in Rome as recorded in the last chapter of Acts.

And it was at that point, when Paul quoted from Isaiah 6:9,10 for the last time that the nation was set aside. AND THAT IS WHERE THE SIGNS THAT CONFIRMED THE WITNESS TO UNBELIEVING ISRAEL CEASED.

What is more, less than ten years later (it is hard to be precise) the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, an event the significance of which cannot be over-estimated.

As we well know, there has not been a temple in Jerusalem for nigh on 2000 years. It is not a coincidence by the way, that the temple mount in Jerusalem and the Muslim mosques that occupy it, keep popping up on our TV screens quite regularly.

3. The other baptism that we read of in the New Testament, and which seems to be largely overlooked, is the baptism of the Lord's death and resurrection. In Luke 12:50, the Lord refers to His approaching suffering and death as a baptism. Paul teaches in Romans 6 that the believer is united with the Lord in His death, burial and resurrection.

Ephesians 2 takes the member of the Church His Body a step further. We have not only been united with our Lord in His death, burial and resurrection, but in addition, we have been taken up with Him and seated with Him in that place of power and privilege He occupies, far above all.

Paul, in Colossians 2:10–12, deals with the same subject, showing that as the believer is truly circumcised, but not with the outward sign which is nothing more than a shadow, so likewise, the believer in this new dispensation, which followed the setting aside of Israel together with all her hopes, covenants, privileges and promises, is baptised into the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, WITHOUT THE OUTWARD SIGN. This, I believe, is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5.

Chapter 36 – God All in All

We continue our consideration of Ephesians chapter 4, and have still to look at the last of the seven items that are part of the unity of the Spirit – One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all – verse 6.

The first thing I want to say about this verse is that it does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. It is one of the fallacies abroad in the world, and alas, held by many believers as well, that God is the father of all human beings. That it is not true can be shown by such references as John 8:30–44.

The passage is really longer than those verses, but they contain my point. The Jews who were contending with the Lord claimed Abraham as their father. The Lord replied that they would have heeded His words if they were indeed true children of Abraham. In verse 38, He tells them that they do what they have seen with their father, and in verse 44 He says quite bluntly ‘Ye are of your father the devil...’ This is a terrible thing to say if it is not true, but it must be true as it is the Lord who is speaking.

There are also the wonderful verses that open John’s Gospel. Sublime truth is presented here, but there is also the record of tragic failure. Verses 10 and 11 say: ‘He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.’ Tragedy indeed! Then, however, comes the wonderful word ‘but’ in verse 12: ‘But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the authority or the right) to become children (not ‘sons’ here) of God, even to them that believe on His name.’

Surely the logic is inescapable. If a person becomes a child of God by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that those who have not believed are not children of God. It may well be true that all humans are children of Adam, but that does not mean they are automatically all children of God.

I think we will begin to come to a right understanding of the phrase ‘one God and Father of all’ and the words which follow, when we remember what is written in 1 Corinthians 15:28: ‘and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him – THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.’

Is not this the goal of the ages? Is not this the objective of God’s plan and purpose? I think so and I also think that this is what underlies this last of the seven items connected with the Unity of the Spirit. Verse 6 can be translated like this: ‘One God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in all TO YOU.’ That, I think, brings out the Apostle’s intent.

God is over all, through all and in all to the Church, but He is not yet over all, through all and in all universally. The time is coming, however, when through the work of His beloved Son, He will be.

We have another example of a present situation anticipating a future one in the Headship of Christ. At present, the Lord Jesus is the Head over all things to the Church, His Body, but not Head over all things universally. But the day will come when He is acknowledged as Head universally. Note Ephesians 1:10: ‘That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him’. The words ‘gather together in Him’ are, in the Greek, head up.

The climax of the great work of God throughout the ages is not the universal headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as glorious as that will be, but that subsequently to the Lord being acknowledged and worshipped as King of Kings and Lord of Lords by every creature in the universe, He will hand the Kingdom up to the Father, that GOD may be all in all.

The Measure of the Gift of Christ

At verse 7 of chapter 4, Paul turns from the Unity of the Spirit in the Body to the diversity not only of the members, but also of the gifts that have been given to those members. These gifts, I hasten to add, are not to be confused with the gifts of the Spirit that were operating during the Acts administration. The two sets of gifts should be carefully compared, and then the contrasts will be evident.

Verses 8–10 are a parenthesis, and if we leave it out we will see more clearly the flow of thought from 7 to 11: 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ...and He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.' I found myself wanting to leave the commas out when typing verse 11, and indeed you will find the newer translations do just that. The gifts the ascended Christ gave were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. But it could also mean that He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets etc. in which case, the commas would be correct.

Again a note of warning. It is apostles that were given, not apostolic gifts. Prophets, not the gift of prophecy. As Charles Welch puts it, 'Gifts OF persons, rather than gifts TO persons seems to express the difference.' It is true to say, of course, that these gifts of persons with special ministries were given to the Church.

I think it is also true to say that since the events recorded in the last half of Acts 28 took place, the Christian community has not seen the operation of the miracles, signs and wonders as they operated during the Acts years. But look around you, brethren. We do see evangelists, pastors and teachers.

So what happened to the apostles and prophets? When God changed the administration at the end of the Book of Acts, the canon of Scripture was not complete. More accurately, all the books that were to make up the full complement of Scripture had not been written. And secondly, the new revelation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body contained truth not found anywhere else in Scripture. Both of these conditions necessitated apostles and prophets.

The second set of seven epistles of Paul, all written after the events recorded in Acts 28, bring the Word of God to its conclusion. As the steward of the Dispensation of the Mystery, Paul in particular, was the apostle who carried out this task. 'Whereof I (Paul) am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil (the Greek word translated 'fulfil' means to fill up or complete) the Word of God.' Collosians1:25.

Once the required Scriptures had been written, however, and the new revelation imparted to the various groups of believers, the need for apostles and prophets passed. Evangelists, pastors and teachers on the other hand, were still needed, meeting an ongoing need for the witness to an unbelieving world and the edifying of the Body.

We need to remember that verse 7 told us that the grace given to us is according to the MEASURE of the gift of Christ. I confess I find it a little difficult to understand and explain just what is meant by the words 'according to the measure of the gift of Christ'. But before coming to that, please notice that the literal translation of the phrase 'But unto every one of us is given grace...' is more accurately translated as 'But unto EACH ONE OF US is given grace...'

That is slightly different, emphasizing that the gift of grace is given to each one individually. And the gift given to each one was measured according (or proportional) to the gift of Christ. Whether the gift of Christ means a gift given by Christ, or that Christ is the gift given I must leave for the time being. But the grace being given to each of us touches, I think, on a principle that governs God's gifts to His people, no matter what the dispensation might be.

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, the departing king gave his servants different sums of money to work with according to their abilities. To use the language of Ephesians 4:7, the king's gifts to each servant were measured (out).

Then as far as the return on the gifts that were given, the King would have been as happy with the one talent servant if that servant had gained another talent, as he was with the servants who gained the five and two talents respectively. I believe there is something of this in the grace given to each of us by our ascended Lord. We are given grace proportionate to our abilities and the tasks the Lord requires of us individually. We are not all expected to serve in the same capacity, and our Master is well aware of our differing capabilities.

Surely this should relieve us of any anxiety we may have about our ability to do what He asks of us. His gifts to us for service, and the resulting return that He expects are according to our capabilities. I am certainly not Paul. I am not Tom, Dick or Harry either. I am Athol, who is fully known and understood, and Athol will not be required to do Tom, Dick or Harry's task. But when the Lord calls Athol to a task, not only is the task within Athol's capacity, but Athol will be fitted for his work. From there on, Athol is simply expected to do the best of which he is capable.

We must take note of verses 8–10 as we conclude this study. Paul's mention of the gift of Christ causes him to turn aside from his main thoughts, and he quotes from Psalm 68:18 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men...' This is one of the very few quotes from the Old Testament in the epistles written after the end of Acts, and Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, uses it to show the cause behind the special gifts given by the Lord to the Church which is His Body. Paul then gives his own little commentary on it.

Chapter 37 – The Measure of The Stature of Christ's Fullness

In our last chapter, we gave some consideration to the measure of the gift of Christ, with its associated unity and ministry, Ephesians 4:7. I would like to move on now to the other two measures that we meet further down in the chapter. We will find, I think, that these too, have ministries and unities connected to them.

1. The Measure and The Fullness

The gifts given to the Church which is His Body, which we discussed in the last study, are said to be for a definite purpose. Verse 12: 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (14) that (better, so that) we henceforth be no more children ...'

Firstly, note the contrast in these verses between the perfect man, a position that is part of our goal, and the children (the word is infants, by the way) who can be tossed about by the winds of changing doctrine. It would, I suspect, be a worthwhile exercise for us each to reflect on just which category we find ourselves in, the adult in Christ, or the child, unable to comprehend and appreciate the deeper things of our faith, or to stand firm against the wiles of the devil.

The second point I would have you notice is that the English translation of Greek prepositions is not always accurate. FOR the perfecting of the saints is fine, but the next two statements should be UNTO or WITH A VIEW TO the work of the ministry and UNTO the edifying of the body of Christ.

For readers who like to know what the actual words are, the first word FOR in verse 12 is the Greek word *PROS* and the second and third occurrences of FOR translate the Greek word *EIS*. Certainly,

our word FOR can be and is used in these different ways, but the correct meaning is not always apparent.

The next thing I want to tell you is that the word perfecting in verse 12 is not the same as the word perfect in verse 13, and I am not just referring to the difference between the verb perfecting and the adjective perfect. They are quite different words with no links between them.

The word 'perfecting' in verse 12 translates the Greek word *katartismos*. Several examples of the verbal form of this word are:

Matthew 4:21: 'And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren...MENDING their nets.'

1 Corinthians 1:10: 'I beseech you...that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER...'

Galatians 6:1: 'Ye which are spiritual RESTORE such an one.'

I quote C. H. Welch's comment; 'to mend as one would a broken net, to be perfectly joined together as contrasted with division, to restore as one would a dislocated limb (the medical use of the word), this seems to be the sense uppermost in Ephesians 4.' (*In Heavenly Places*. p. 351)

The word perfect in verse 13 (perfect man) translates the more usual word for perfect *teleioo*. This means complete as in mature, or fully ripe, or arriving at one's destination. Nestle's Interlinear Greek has it as 'a complete man'. In other words, a fully mature adult.

Now if the church that Paul speaks of throughout Ephesians and Colossians is but the mature state of the immature church we see throughout the years of the Book of Acts, he could have used *teleioo* in verse 12. But, as we have seen, he does not. He uses the different word which implies a rent, a rupture or break which needs to be repaired or restored or adjusted.

The change which came about with the setting aside of Israel as God's people in Acts 28 was something of a climax, to say the least. And Paul was the instrument through whom God chose to reveal the revelation that would adjust the believers to the new calling.

It was a rupture that caused considerable confusion and then animosity in those who turned away from Paul and his message. This turning away resulted in the mixing of the truth concerning the Body of Christ with the truths of both the Old Testament people of Israel, and the election of the Bride of the Lamb which was happening during the second offer of the Kingdom to Israel in the years described by the Book of Acts.

The new revelation relating to the Dispensation of the Mystery, having no association with the calling, blessings, promises and covenants that belonged to Israel, necessitated a new order of apostles and prophets who were not linked with the twelve whose witness was to the disobedient and gainsaying people of Israel. Romans 10:21

Back to Ephesians 4:13. Please note that the perfect or mature man is part of the goal set before the member of the Body of Christ, and linked with it is the MEASURE of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

I would like to quote verses 12 and 13 of Ephesians 4 from the *Amplified Version* because they give the additional thoughts contained in the Greek words that don't make it through to the English translations:

12. 'His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church)

13. that it might develop until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood – the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection – that measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him.'

Out of all the profound thoughts in that quote, I want to touch on only one point. The standard (or measure, *metron*) of the stature of the fullness of Christ is THE GOAL that is set before each of us. Looking ahead to verse 15, we read there that we are to grow up into Him, our Head, in every way. So the maturity that is put before us as our goal is twofold. Negatively, that we might not remain infants, the very opposite of adulthood, and then positively, that we might measure up to His standard of maturity, of adulthood as it was really meant by God for Adam and His descendants.

2. The Measure of Every Part

Our word 'metron' measure, comes again in verse 16. In the previous verses, Christ the Head is the focus, but in verse 16 the attention turns to the Body, the Church, which joined to the Head and receiving the nourishment through the joints and ligaments, grows as each part of the body measures up to its function. The whole body thus grows and builds itself up in love.

If you felt earlier that the focus was on the evangelists, pastors and teachers to the exclusion of the ordinary members of the Body, relax, for here we are all brought in. Each part of the Body has its function, and if that function is not carried out or is only partially fulfilled, then the Body as a whole will suffer. Remember, this Body is one united whole.

There is perfect equality between the members, a situation that was not in existence in the church of the Acts period. Here all distinctions and enmity, advantage and disadvantage have been done away with. There are no second class members in this Calling. And it is only as each one of us nourishes ourselves on His Word and the power that not only brought Christ from the dead, but over and above, set Him at the right hand of God in the Heavenly places far above all, that we will make our contribution to the growth of the whole Body.

In the last 10 verses or so that we have been considering, there are many wonderful and deep truths expressed for our learning. Don't think, however, that it is pie-in-the-sky stuff. Definitely not. From verse 17 on Paul lays the practical consequences of what he has been saying on the line for us. Let me summarise:

Verse 17. This I say therefore...walk not as other Gentiles walk...emptiness of their minds... understanding alienated...ignorance...blindness of heart...past feeling...given themselves over to work uncleanness

verse 20 But ye have not so learned Christ...

verse 21 as the truth is in Jesus...

verse 22 put off... the old man...

verse 23 be renewed in the spirit of your mind...

verse 24 put on the new man...true uprightness and holiness.

From verse 26 to the end of the chapter, very practical subjects are mentioned such as anger, giving place to the devil, stealing, charity, false witness, inappropriate language, bitterness wrath, malice and not grieving the Holy Spirit.

In the last verse, 32, he turns from the negatives and sums up the positives in beautiful and simple words that no one can have any difficulty understanding.

‘And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.’

May this not only be our prayer, but also be plainly evident in our conduct every day.

Chapter 38 – The Lie Versus The Truth – Three Measures

The measure of the gift of Christ; the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; working in the measure of every part. These three measures, or perhaps standards, are set before us in Ephesians 4, providing us with appropriate goals at which to aim. They will also provide us with a few headaches as we try to achieve them.

One other subject that I want to bring to your attention in chapter 4 is rather obscured by our English translations, and not only the AV, all the translations have missed this point, which seems to me to have some importance. In 4:25 we read in the *Authorised Version*, ‘Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.’

Of course, I have no argument with what that verse appears to say. Telling lies should have no place in our conduct as redeemed children of God

But the verse, I believe, is saying something more. It touches on a subject that pervades Scripture right from Genesis 3, but which does seem to become more prominent as we get closer to the last days.

Other versions have the beginning of verse 25 like this:

‘Therefore, putting away falsehood...’ (*RSV*)

‘Therefore, rejecting all falsity’ (*Amplified*)

‘Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood...’ (*NIV*)

If, however, you consult your Interlinear Greek Testaments, you will see that what Paul actually wrote was this: ‘Wherefore putting off the Lie...’ I hope you can see the difference between putting away (or off) lying, and putting off THE LIE.

There are three other places in the New Testament where the Lie is spoken of (making four in all). They are as follows:

John 8:44: ‘...When he speaketh ‘the’ (not ‘a’, as in the *Authorised Version*) lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.’

Romans 1:25: ‘Who changed the truth of God into the Lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.’

2 Thessalonians 2:11: ‘And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the Lie.’

Please read and consider the contexts of the above verses, as they provide important information. It would take us too far afield to consider each of those references in any detail, but notice that in the context of 2 Thessalonians 2:11, some will be condemned not only because they turned away from the truth, but also and perhaps more importantly, because they did not receive a love of the truth.

There is a point worth pondering surely, as we look at our own walk and witness for our Master.

What is The Lie?

Once we start to consider what these passages say about the Lie, our minds should turn to Genesis 3, for it is here that we find the first manifestation of the Lie in human history. It is usual for many of us to say that the Lie is Satan's statement to Eve, 'You shall not surely die.' That, I think, is certainly part of the Lie, but not the whole of it. Please look at Genesis 3 as I make a few points about it.

Notice firstly what Satan says in verse 1. 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' The inference in this seemingly innocent question is that God is a bit mean to stop them eating of the fruit of every tree. What is He trying to keep from them? Satan impugns God's character.

Satan then flatly contradicts what God had said. 'Ye shall not surely die.' Eve, of course, did not quote accurately what God had said.

And finally, Satan leads Eve to expect a false outcome. '...ye shall be as gods.' Don't forget that it was Satan's desire to be as God that led to his downfall. And following on from this, the sorry history of mankind shows that anything and everything has been put in God's place by fallen man, and worshipped as God.

How apt are Paul's words in Romans 1:21–23: 'Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in the imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' And we should add the opening words of the next verse: 'Wherefore God gave them up.'

Now let's turn to Ephesians 4:13–16 and 22–25. I can hear quite a few echoes in these verses of Romans 1. Be that as it may, our focal point in Ephesians 4 is verse 25: 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour...'

My *Interlinear Greek* version puts it like this: 'Wherefore putting off the lie...' This is the only translation that renders the verse like that. All the others I have follow the AV in speaking about lying or falsehood. I think they have missed an important point. Let me elaborate. We must go back to the verse 17: 'This I say, therefore,...that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk...' While the section really goes beyond the end of the chapter, our purpose will be served in this study if we conclude at verse 27: 'Neither give place to the devil.'

Note the following points:

Verse 14: '...no more children tossed to and fro...sleight of men...cunning craftiness...lie in wait to deceive.'

Verse 17: 'Walk not as other Gentiles in the vanity of their mind.'

Verse 18: '...understanding darkened...alienated from the life of God through ignorance...blindness of heart.'

Verse 19: '...lasciviousness (lustfulness)...uncleanness...greediness.'

Verse 20: 'But ye have not so learned Christ...'

Verse 21: '...as the truth is in Jesus.'

Verse 22: '...put off the former manner of life...corrupt...deceitful lusts.'

Verse 24: 'Put on the new man...righteousness...true holiness.'

Verse 25: 'Wherefore putting off the LIE...speak truth with your neighbour.'

Verse 27: 'Don't give place to the devil.'

The parallels with Genesis 3 and Romans 1 in the above verses are quite conclusive to me.

Paul is speaking about THE LIE, not just telling lies.

Don't forget that Paul started chapter 4 with an urgent request that we walk worthy of our calling. It seems to me then, that what follows is nothing less than his detailed explanation as to how we are to walk worthily.

Notice the contrast in verse 13 between the mature (perfect) man (maybe we should say 'adult' here, as it is not confined to males) on the one hand, and on the other, in verse 14 the children who are pushed and pulled with every new doctrinal fad that comes along, or by the cunning deceitfulness and conjuring tricks of men who are lying in wait to deceive.

In verse 17 Paul urges us to walk not as other Gentiles walk. There is no word for 'other' in the Greek in some texts. We are not to walk as the Gentiles do. And how is that? They walk in the vanity of their minds, with darkened understanding, alienated from the life of God through ignorance, because of the blindness of their hearts. That is how we are not to walk.

Don't miss the two references to the mind in this section. 4:1–2 has 'Walk worthy in all humility of mind.' And verse 17 gives us the contrast, 'Don't walk in the vanity of your mind.'

We speak about the heart as being the seat of our emotions knowing full well that our hearts are simply muscular pumps to circulate our blood. In Paul's day they referred to their bowels in a similar way. These are simply figures of speech that we use, but the truth is that it is our minds that control our emotions, while temptations arise from the lusts of the flesh, the battle of the temptation is won or lost in the mind. It is a worthwhile study to follow through what the Scriptures say of the mind.

However, I would remind you of just one reference now, that is, Romans 12:1,2: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice...and be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may (ap)prove what is...the will of God.'

The end result of the vanity, darkness and ignorance of the unbeliever's mind is in verse 19: lustfulness, uncleanness, greediness. Fortunately, it is gloriously possible for the believer to walk differently. The positive side is given to us in verse 20: 'But ye have not so learned Christ,' and verse 21. 'if (indeed) ye have heard Him.' There is no uncertainty here. Paul means something like 'as ye surely have heard Him.' And don't miss the last half of the verse: '...taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.'

Let me quote these verses from the NEB, as I think they help us to see the flow of thought a bit better: 'But that is not how you learned Christ. For were you not told of him, were you not taught the truth as it is in Jesus? – that, leaving your former way of life, you must lay aside that old human nature, which, deluded by its lusts, is sinking towards death. You must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth. So then, throw off falsehood (THE LIE). Speak the truth to each other for all of us are parts of the one body.'

This brings us to our climax. Because we have learned 'the truth as it is in Jesus', because we don't walk as the Gentiles do in the ignorance of darkened minds, because we have put off the old man and put on the new, the logical outcome is to put off the Lie and speak truth.

I passed over the reference to speaking the truth in verse 15 earlier, but we need to link up verse 15 and verse 25 now. There is a little more in these references to speaking the truth than we may realise. It is more being true, than just speaking what is true. It implies being genuine, sincere through and through,

and if we are that, if THE LIE and all that is implied by that has no part of us, then the Truth will flow out of us, not only by word, but in every aspect of our living.

The chapter comes to a fitting conclusion. Part of verse 31 and 32 is like this in the *NEB*: 'Have done with spite and passion, all angry shouting and bad feeling of every kind. (And now the positive) And be kind and generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.'

Brethren, let us put off in every possible way the old nature, and put on as thoroughly as we can the new nature created in us by the work of the Holy Spirit. God has made it possible for us. It is now up to us to do it in the strength He has given us.

Chapter 39 – Walking Worthy

We now start to consider chapter 5 of Ephesians, and from here to the end of the epistle we find some very challenging instructions about living a life that is worthy of our Lord and Head and the high calling to which we have been elected.

It is a foundation plank in the platform of our faith that we could not, cannot and never will be able to do anything to gain our salvation. That is the free gift of our gracious God, based on the sinless life and offering of His only begotten Son. As 2 Timothy 2:11–13 assures us, once we have been brought to life through and in Him, even if we fall and say that we no longer believe, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. The other side to this, however, is that out of that free gift, or perhaps I should say, out of that new life that is based on His faithfulness and His righteousness, there should issue the good works that God has pre-ordained we should walk in. Ephesians 2:10

Let me remind you of something that has been said many times before. Do not let the chapter break, break Paul's line of thought. He said back in 4:1, as he commenced what we call the practical half of the epistle, that we should walk worthily of our calling, and that is still his overall theme as we move into chapter 5.

Notice the 'therefore' in the first verse. It connects what he says now to what was said before, which, as we saw in the previous studies, was quite a lot. But it is summed up for our purposes now in the last verse, 4:32, which is worth quoting: 'And be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Then comes 5:1: 'Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children...' The Threefold Walk 5:1–6:9

Before we go any further, I want to remind you of the themes of this section, taken from the outline of the epistle I gave when we started these studies. The section as indicated above, goes through to 6:9, once again overriding the chapter break. In the structure of the epistle as a whole, this section balances that of 2:8–10, where we have three works.

Now we have a threefold walk, which we can summarize as:

- a. walk in love
- b. walk as light
- c' walk circumspectly.

This is the longest practical section in the epistle, applying the doctrine taught in the first three chapters to every department of our lives.

It seems to me that we should take note of a number of statements that Paul makes throughout these verses. They set the tone for what follows. There are the three statements about our walk that we have already noted, but there are a couple of others that are worthy of attention.

Firstly, we have in verse 1 'Be ye therefore followers of God AS DEAR CHILDREN, AND WALK IN LOVE.' It certainly is true that we have been freed from slavery to sin, which once was our condition. We should never forget that we now have been freed to be the slave of Christ. Our service as His bond slaves, however, is not odious or onerous, but a joyous thing, and indeed, our relationship to God as that of child to its father is a far cry from that of a slave to his master. Certainly, the child must obey and respect, but the desire to please and serve comes from the heart-felt love for the Father.

The Lord Jesus Himself is our example here. He loved us and gave Himself for us, a giving that involved complete and dreadful obedience to His Father's will. While God's will for us does not call for such sacrifices as only the Son could make, nevertheless our service and obedience should be as willingly and happily rendered.

The other statement which I want you to notice is in verse 21: 'Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.' Before Paul says one word about the role of husband, wife, child, parent, master or worker, he instructs us to submit to one another. That, I think, is the environment in which we should read and apply the instructions about family and work relationships. But more on that when we get to it.

In verse 1, the word translated 'followers' also gives us 'mimic' in English. The word 'mimic' can have some negative overtones, but if we put those aside, we are not far from the mark if we understand Paul to be telling us to 'mimic' Christ.

How do we do that? By walking in love, in the same way that Christ has loved us. How did He love us? He laid aside many of His attributes as God, and gave Himself for us, clothing Himself in the likeness of sinful flesh that one day, we, with all those who are the children of God, may be clothed in His righteousness. And Paul is on the same theme in Philippians 2, where he says, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.'

The reference in verse 2 to Christ's sacrifice being a sweet-smelling savour to God sends us back to the Old Testament, of course. Not all the sacrifices and offerings outlined by Moses to the People of Israel were blood offerings. There were offerings that accompanied some of the others, and some of them, at least, were voluntary.

In Philippians 2:17 Paul uses a similar analogy which the AV obscures a little. It reads: 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.' The Greek reads: 'But if indeed I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith...' It is a reference to an offering in the Old Testament that was something extra added on top of a mandatory offering. This, it seems to me, should be the spirit of our obedience and service. Yes, we MUST serve our Lord and Head, but how pleasing it must be to the One who gave Himself for us, when we serve Him with joy and gladness.

Verses 3-7 list many things that, while prevalent enough in our society, should not figure at all in the lives of the Lord's people. May we each heed the warning in verse 6. If we allow any of these things in our lives, there will be a reckoning. We cannot presume on the love and kindness of God. He is also the God of holiness and righteousness. Paul's unambiguous word on the matter is simple. 'Don't be partakers with those who do such things.' These are the practical results of putting off the old man, putting on the new and not giving place to the Devil in any way whatsoever.

Verse 8 brings in the contrast between darkness and light. We are light in the Lord, therefore walk as children of the light. The Scriptures often use the analogy of darkness and light for sin and death on the one hand, and salvation and life on the other.

We have it presented to us in the first three verses of the Bible. Darkness covered the world which had become ruined and desolate. And as God moves to prepare the world for Adam, the first thing He does is to say, 'Let there be light, and there was light'. We also have it again in John 1:4: '...and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (or the darkness did not overcome it)'.

This theme of light versus darkness is continued in the next couple of verses, until in verse 14, Paul says, 'Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' While this is not an exact quote from Isaiah 60:1,2, Paul is nevertheless paraphrasing those two verses and applying them to his argument. It is just as applicable to our walk for our Master today. We are children of light. We have been brought out of the darkness into the light of life in Christ, what place is there in our lives for any of the unfruitful works of darkness?

Verse 15 gives us the next step. 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.' Is there any of us that can say we have never walked foolishly in the shadows? The answer is painfully obvious. It is no use blaming God, or even Satan, for the responsibility to walk worthily is squarely placed on our shoulders. God has broken the power of sin in our lives, and we no longer have to serve sin. If we do, it is a matter of choice, not necessity. So let us each one decide to have done with the works of darkness, and walk as children of light, and also circumspectly.

The word 'circumspectly' carries the thoughts of 'be wary' and 'taking everything into account', and while that is certainly part of what Paul was saying, there is more to it than that. The *Amplified Version* has it like this: 'Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, but as wise – sensible, intelligent people:' (and we should continue on) 'making the most of the time – buying up each opportunity – because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is.'

The word '*akribos*' – translated 'circumspectly', carries a strong sense of accurately, straitly, exactly, which thoughts we do not get from our understanding of circumspectly. We must ever remember that the grace shown to us by God does not allow for laxity or carelessness in our service. The pathway of our walk for God sometimes leads through dark and slippery places. Defilement and uncleanness surrounds us in society, and this calls for a careful and exact walk to avoid the contamination of sin. 'Don't be fools', says Paul, 'Walk wisely and accurately.' The word 'walk' occurs seven times in Ephesians. The first in the practical section, 4:1, says 'walk worthily'. The last, 5:15, says 'walk accurately'. The first says 'with all lowliness', the last says 'with wisdom'.

A few comments on verse 18–20 will conclude our study for this issue. Paul makes a contrast between being drunk or filled with wine, and being filled with the Spirit. Many of the evils mentioned earlier in the chapter were probably associated with heavy drinking although it is not specified, but be that as it may, Paul warns against drunkenness. It is the Spirit we are to be filled with.

But what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? The meaning is a little unclear, although only in the English translation. Greek is more specific than English in these instances. By way of illustration, I could say, 'The bucket was filled with the pump.' I could also say, 'The bucket was filled with water.' There is no English speaker who would expect to see the bucket with the pump standing in it.

Without going into the grammar, the meaning of the sentence is that the Holy Spirit will fill us. That is, He is the One who does the filling. But what are we to be filled with? Colossians 3:16 supplies the answer: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom' teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'

Wait a moment, you might be thinking: is this in the same context as the Ephesians 5:18? Good question. Let's make sure. In the Ephesians passage we have psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, melody in your hearts, giving thanks always. In the Colossians passage we have psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, grace in your hearts, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Then both passages move on to 'Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands.'

Charles Welch has a very well-expressed paragraph which provides a fitting conclusion to this study. I quote: 'The parallel is so complete that we cannot avoid the inference that 'to be filled with the Spirit' will be to be filled BY the Spirit WITH the Word of Christ. The Spirit everywhere takes of the things of Christ and applies them to the heart of the believer.'

That constitutes the inspiration of his renewed conversation, 'speaking to yourselves', and will prevent any corrupt communication from proceeding out of his mouth, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and a heart filled by the Spirit with the word of Christ will speak accordingly. I pray it shall be so with each of us.

Chapter 40 – Reflecting Christ in Daily Life

Walk worthy, the Apostle says in Ephesians 4:1. Walk circumspectly, he says in 5:17. Walk with all lowliness and meekness, 4:2, and walk wisely, redeeming the time because the days are evil, 5:15, 16. There is so much emphasis on our walk in this practical part of the Epistle, and we don't need it explained to us that our walk is but another way of speaking about our manner of living.

We looked at these and other important points in previous chapters, but perhaps we should not move on without reminding ourselves of 5:1,2: 'Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.'

The thought comes to mind that if we keep those words before us as we get into the verses that speak about husbands, wives, parents, children and servants, it may not be so difficult to fulfil the various roles we play in the manner that the Lord asks of us. What He requires is so little in comparison with what He gave for us.

We concluded our last study in verses 18 to 20 of chapter 5, noting that rather than being filled with strong drink, we should be filled by the Holy Spirit with the Word of Christ. By comparing Colossians 3:16, which is parallel to these verses, we are kept on the right track.

Now we come to 5:21: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord.' I know I have said it before, but I think it is important enough to repeat more than once. Before ever Paul talks about wives submitting to their own husbands, and husbands loving their wives as themselves, and children obeying their parents, he says that we must submit one to another in the fear of the Lord.

I have heard quite a few discussions about what wives submitting etc. might mean, and I have to admit that I have taken part in some of those discussions, but I do not recall anyone in any of those discussions mentioning verse 21. It seems to get overlooked completely. Yet, surely, it must be the over-riding principle that governs all that follows.

I think it will help to keep the discussion on an even keel if we consider what is said to wives and husbands together. Wives are told to submit to their own husbands, verse 22. The word 'submit' occurs first in Luke 2:51, where we read of the young lad, Jesus, 'and He went down with them (His parents), and came to Nazareth, and was SUBJECT UNTO them...'

Paul's instruction to husbands is that they are to love their wives. Note that he does not say that husbands are to rule their wives. There is no licence in Paul's words for any man to be overbearing with his wife.

Notice that in the case of both wife and husband, Paul stresses that each position gives opportunity to display an aspect of the Lord's love and provision for the Church. The wife is to be subject to her husband as unto the Lord. Why? Because the husband portrays the Lord in His position as the Head of the Church, His Body. And the Church is subject to its Lord and Head. Conversely, the husband is to love his wife. How? By giving himself for her, in the same way that Christ gave Himself for the Church to sanctify and cleanse it. This is in order that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious church, holy, without blemish, no spots or wrinkles.

Notice the word 'so' in verse 28. This little word can be used in a number of different ways, but here it means 'thus' or 'in this way'. What Paul is saying, I believe, is this: The Lord Jesus loved the Church by the giving of Himself for it, doing all that was necessary not only to redeem the Church, but to make it pure and holy, a thing of beauty and glory. This, husbands, is the way you are to love your wives.

The wife's submission shows to the world the submission of the Church to its Lord. The husband's love shows to the world the self-sacrificing care and provision that the Lord gave, and continually gives, for His Body, the Church.

Still in verse 28, we read that men should love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself because no man ever yet hated his own flesh. We take care of our own bodies, so we should love and care for our wives in the same way. Why? Because in the sight of God, husband and wife are one flesh.

Notice, too, that in verse 29, Paul says that we naturally love and cherish our own bodies, just like the Lord does the Church. And the reason for that is that we are members of His body, His flesh, His bones.

Verse 31 takes us right back to Eden, when God instituted marriage. God initiated marriage, in which a man and a woman would leave their birth families and join together, becoming one flesh, and starting a family of their own. I find myself at a loss for words, but I hope you can see the connection between husbands and wives, one flesh, and the believer being part of the Lord's body, of His flesh, of His bones.

It is quite common in Christian circles for these verses about husbands and wives and the Church to be taken as meaning that the Church is the Bride of Christ. I believe that view can only be arrived at by not rightly dividing the Word of Truth. The Church of Ephesians is clearly said to be the Body of Christ and the New Man. By no stretch of imagination can a man ever be said to be a Bride. The bridal relationship belongs to another dispensation, not this one, and while Paul is reminded of the close union between the Church and its Head by the close union of the marriage bond, he is not here teaching that the Church is the Bride.

Again I quote a paragraph from Charles Welch's book *'In Heavenly Places'*. The quote is from page 398. 'That there is a mystery in marriage let anyone decide after reading Matthew 19:5,6: 'And they twain shall be one flesh'. Such is the quotation from Genesis two. 'Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh', is the comment of the Lord Himself.

But, says the Apostle, granting the sanctity and the mystery of marriage under the thought of 'one flesh', the mystery I have in mind is that union with the Lord which makes 'one spirit'. Nevertheless, turning back to the typical union of man and wife he continues: 'Nevertheless let each one of you individually so love his wife as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband'. Ephesians 5:33

(Any reader who wishes to go deeper into the reasons for differentiating between the Bride and the Body should contact our Book Agent for the booklet *'The Bride and The Body'* by Charles Welch.)

Children, Fathers, Servants, Masters

Moving into chapter 6, Paul deals with other relationships or roles that the believer may be involved in. Covering, as he does, such important areas as marital and parental responsibilities, and the duties of children, servants and masters, I think we can say that he has hardly left anything important out. We must be careful that we do not get so caught up in arguments about these issues that we forget the main point here. That is, that our behaviour in each of these roles is part of our worthy (or unworthy) walk, by which we will either bring honour or dishonour to our Lord and Head.

Paul's instruction to children in 6:1 is simply to obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Unlike his words to husbands and wives, he makes no appeal to any parallels to the Lord's position as Head or obedient subject. With children, it is just a plain 'do this for it is right'. He then makes one of the few references to the Law that we find in these epistles written after the close of his Acts ministry. He quotes from the fifth commandment, which is the only commandment with a promise.

Does this mean that a child who obeys its parents can expect a long life as the commandment promises? Not necessarily, for the commandment and its promise related to children of Israel and the land to which they were headed, and that is not my land. Rather, I think that Paul's use of the commandment shows that the obedience of any child in whatever dispensation is a pleasing thing to the Lord.

I think it can also be said, however, that if a child learns to obey in early life, obedience which also involves learning self-control or self-discipline, those attributes will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

Paul, then turns to fathers and warns them against provoking their children to wrath. Rather, he says, 'rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord', as the *Amplified Version* has it.

The parallel verse in Colossians 3:21 has it like this: 'Fathers provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged.' (*Greek Interlinear Text*.) I think all of us know how discouraging harsh and unfair discipline can be, but we knew when we were being treated fairly, and took it as best we could.

Where our version has 'servants' in Ephesians 6:5, we should understand that the word is actually 'slaves' in the original. Of course, we know nothing of slavery in our western cultures, although it still exists in some parts of the world. But this is no excuse for an employee who is a believer to say that the Apostle's direction does not apply now. It certainly does, and we should ever remember that slack work ethics reflect badly not only on ourselves, but also on the One whom we claim to love and serve. We are to give fair work for our wages, treating our work as service unto the Lord Himself.

Some have argued, from verse 8, that it is only the good we do that the Lord will reward, the bad things having been forgiven. Again, Colossians supplies the corrective to this wrong thought. Colossians 3:23–25 tells us in effect that our work should be done heartily as unto the Lord, for He will reward both the good AND THE BAD that we do, and with Him there is no 'partiality no matter what a person's position may be, whether he is the slave or the master.' (*Amplified Version*)

Masters, or bosses, do not escape Paul's attention either. Bosses, treat your workers fairly and without threatenings or violence, 'knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him'. (*Amplified Version*)

This brings us to the end of this particular section of the epistle. Surely, Paul has left us in no doubt that our daily conduct at home, in business or whatever our work might be, in fact in every relationship we find ourselves in, should be such that mirrors the love, grace and kindness, and also the obedience and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ in every possible way. What a standard for us to aim at! It would be impossible for us, were it not for the power given to us that brought Christ from the grave and seated Him far above all, at the right hand of God. Ephesians 1:19– 22

Are we allowing this power full sway in our lives?

Chapter 41 – The Whole Armour of God

We come now to the conclusion of this wonderful epistle of Ephesians. This last section starts at 6:10 and goes through to the final Amen. Paul starts this part with the word ‘Finally’. I would have loved to use that word as the heading for this study, but I could not, because it will take us one more study after this one to get through the material that is in these 15 verses.

This section contains the best known passage in all Ephesians, that is, as far as the majority of Christians are concerned, also a difficult verse to translate properly, and some very practical advice to the Christian pilgrim. There are also several very homely references that remind us once again that Paul and his fellow believers were ordinary people just like ourselves.

One other point I would remind you of is that this section has references and parallels to some of the great doctrinal statements Paul made in the opening chapters. I think it is important that we do not miss these connections, for if we do, we will miss some of the truth that the Lord would have us know.

So, what is the first thing our Apostle says to us when he gets to ‘finally’? Fortunately it is very clear and straightforward, which is not to say that it is shallow. Far from it. His word is: ‘Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might’.

I am sure we will have all heard of the power of positive thinking. Philosophers have told us to be strong. Psychologists tell us to tell ourselves to be strong. But the Holy Spirit tells us, through Paul, to be strong in the Lord.

In Philippians 4:13 Paul writes ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me’. Here is the secret of our success in service for our Master. Those of us who are impulsive in nature are very quick to rush off to what we think is the battle, engaging enemies on all sides willy-nilly, forgetting that the battle is the Lord’s, and we can only succeed if we go in His will and in His strength. Oh, what a hard lesson for some of us to learn, myself included!

I must point out here that the command to be strong is linked with resurrection. It is interesting to note that Paul is the only writer, apart from Luke, in the New Testament to use the word ‘Be strong’ (it is one word in the Greek). Luke uses it of Paul himself in Acts 9:22, so the exception is almost not an exception. Be that as it may, let’s look at its first occurrence.

Romans 4:19–21: ‘And being not weak in faith, he (Abraham) considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.’

Both Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead as far as having children were concerned, but the power of the Lord is greater than the power of death, and Abraham was strong in faith, not staggering at the

promise of God through unbelief. In case any have missed the point, resurrection power is the theme here. See also verses 24 and 25.

Next is our present text, Ephesians 6:10: 'BE STRONG in the Lord...' This looks back to chapter one where, starting in verse 19, we are told that the power Paul prays we shall know is the self-same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead, and seated Him at the right hand of God far above all principalities and powers etc. Again, resurrection.

The other occurrences of the word are Philippians 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1; 2 Timothy 4:17 and Hebrews 11:34.

Before moving on to Ephesians 6:11, I would have you notice how a number of words from chapter 1 are repeated here. I know some readers find our references to Greek words a little tiring, but I must give them here because the translators are not always consistent. In 6:10 we have *endunamoo* – be strong; *kratos* – power, and *ischus* – might. In 1:19 we have *dunamis* – power (*dunamis* is the same word as *endunamoo*, only a different part of speech) ; *ischus* – might, and *kratos* – power. These words convey to us something of the power of the Lord in which we are to be strong.

Next comes the passage, starting in 6:11, that tells us of the armour which will protect us. As I said earlier, this is the only theme from Ephesians that many believers know about. That was true of myself as a young believer well into my twenties. I was very earnest back then, but not very well instructed.

Before we turn our attention to the whole armour of God, let's consider several things about the power or strength of the Lord. Notice that being strong in the Lord is mentioned BEFORE there is any talk of armour. The strength must come first, because without it the armour may be more than can be borne. David provides an illustration of this in 1 Samuel 17. Saul put his own armour upon David when he was going out to fight Goliath, but David was not at ease in this unfamiliar and unproven attire. Nor could he use Saul's sword. He put all those things aside and went with what he knew and had proved, his sling and five smooth stones from the brook. And, of course, above that, he went in the power of the Lord God of Israel. And perhaps there is a lesson for us in the fact that later, when David was more experienced in war, then he undoubtedly used armour in battle. I think we have to admit the possibility that we can impulsively get ourselves in over our heads, but on the other hand, if we follow the lead of our Captain closely, He will not allow us into situations that are beyond our present capacities.

Underlying this subject of being strong in the Lord, is the foundational truth outlined in Romans 5–8. Those four chapters deal with two laws, the first the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and the second, the law of sin and death. Consider Romans 8:37–39: 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, now Principalities, nor powers...nor any other thing...can separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Here, I think, is the basis of Ephesians 6:10. The wonderful truths Paul teaches in Romans 8 are only possible because, not only did Christ die for us, but God raised Him from the dead. The Lord's death paid the price of sin, but it was His resurrection that vindicated the death, and proved that He was indeed sinless, which made it possible for His death to be on behalf of us, the sinful ones. We must never under-estimate the place of Christ's resurrection in the plan of redemption.

So, in Christ, through His death and resurrection, we are 'MORE THAN CONQUERORS'. Notice also the reference to PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS in Romans 8:38. These somewhat enigmatic personages figure in both Ephesians and Colossians, and indeed, they seem to have a particular connection with the Church which is His Body and its sphere of blessing in the Heavenly places at the right hand of God.

Ephesians 1:21, 22 tells us that the Lord was raised FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER, and taking it a wonderful step further, Colossians 2:15 says this: 'Having SPOILED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, he made a shew of them openly, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM in it (the Cross).'

The words of Charles Welch on this are worth quoting, I think, for they make the point very well.

'To attempt the conflict of Ephesians 6 in any other power than that of the risen Christ is to seek defeat. To attempt it in that power is to make EXPERIMENTAL PROOF of the fact that in Him we are 'more than conquerors'.

We must also consider what our role is in this warfare, and just what it is we may lose if we are defeated. Also, we must give some attention to the various items of the armour. I do not, however, have enough space left in this study for those things, so they will have to wait for the next issue.

So let me conclude with this thought. Ephesians 6:11 tells us that we must put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Here is the first point. Our fighting involves standing against the cunning craftiness of Satan. This is a little different to the idea of attacking the strongholds of Satan. And linked with this is verse 13 where Paul tells us that the armour will enable us to withstand, and when the attacks are all over, to be still standing.

Chapter 42 – Finally ... Be Strong and Stand

Our considerations of the last section of Ephesians, namely 6:10–24, has brought us to Paul's admonition to us to be strong in the power of the Lord's might, and to put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

We must take care that we do not run away with the idea of fighting the Lord's battles as a good soldier, wielding the sword of truth vigorously against those whom we perceive as foes. Paul uses the imagery of the good soldier fighting the good fight in other places as well as here, but we need to be as clear as possible as to who and what we are fighting against, so that we do not jump to any wrong conclusions. So, let us examine these words which the Holy Spirit uses to teach us a little more closely.

The word for 'whole armour' is one word in Greek, *panhoplian*, which comes over into English as panoply. I must confess that I had no idea what panoply meant. Notice that Paul does not just say 'the whole armour', but 'the whole armour OF GOD.' This conflict is a spiritual, for which we are not naturally equipped, and we can only stand against Satan's deceitful attacks (in other words, the wiles of the devil) if we have put on the complete armour OF GOD.

As we try to discover what our warfare is, we must know that the word '*hopla*', which is part of the word panoply, can mean, and is translated as, instruments and weapons as well as armour. With that little bit of information in our minds let's look at several verses:

Romans 13:12: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'

Notice the contrast between the works of darkness and armour of light. Also the casting off of the one and the putting on of the other. Paul then goes on in the next two verses to expand these thoughts.

Romans 13:13,14: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

Surely there is no doubt about the works of darkness here that must be put off. And it seems to me that the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ is another way of saying 'putting on the armour of light'. I hope you will have heard echoes of the Ephesian verses in these phrases too.

1 Thessalonians 5:7,8: 'For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night; but let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.'

2 Corinthians 10:4,5: 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

Romans 6:12,13: 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments (*hopla*) of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments (*hopla*) of righteousness unto God.'

Rather than urging us to rush out and fight all and sundry, Paul's use of the words 'armour' and 'weapon' is to do with our fight against the old nature within. Our opponents in these instances are not external foes, but the lusts of the flesh such as wantonness and drunkenness.

The strongholds that have to be cast down are the vain imaginations of minds under the influence of the old nature within, and the captives we are to take are our thoughts which must be subjected to obedience to God. I suspect that we all know that subduing these foes within is the much harder battle.

The members of our bodies can either be instruments (weapons, but maybe the word tools is more fitting) of unrighteousness, or tools of righteousness unto God. It depends on which set of clothes we are wearing. It seems to me, then, that these are the thoughts that should come to mind when we read in Ephesians 6: 'Put on the whole armour of God.'

What are we fighting for in this great conflict? Perhaps the better question is: 'What can we lose in this fight?' What we cannot possibly lose is our life in the Lord Jesus Christ. That has been won for us by His works, not ours, and is eternally secure. 'Our life is hid with Christ in God.' Colossians 3:3. Also our membership in the Church, His Body, is not at stake, for that is a matter of God's choosing, before the foundation of the world. But Satan can rob us of our crown, that is, our reward for walking worthy of our calling.

In 2 Timothy 2:5 Paul says: 'And if a man also strive for masteries (he's back in the athletic games here), yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.' In plain language, you don't get the prize unless you keep the rules of the contest. And it is not too much further down in this very epistle where Paul, after saying he has fought a good fight, then says, 'henceforth...for me a crown.'

Before Paul mentions the various items of the whole armour in Ephesians 6, however, he writes in verse 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' This is the verse I mentioned as being difficult to understand correctly.

The words 'high places' are exactly the same as 'heavenly places' which are mentioned earlier in the epistle. And we know from those earlier references that the Lord Jesus Christ is seated in these heavenly places 'at the right hand of God'. Does verse 6:12 mean therefore that there is spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places at the right hand of God? I don't believe so.

Dr Bullinger suggested many years ago how this verse should be correctly rendered, and I will try to explain his thoughts. We do not wrestle with flesh and blood. That is, other people are not our foes.

Neither do we wrestle in heavenly places. It is very much a battle on earth. But we do wrestle with spiritual wickednesses who are the rulers of the darkness of this world, not of that world at the right hand of God.

With these thoughts in mind, the suggestion is that the verse should read like this: 'For we wrestle not with flesh and blood in high (or heavenly) places, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness.' That rendering carries my judgement, but you must make your own decision about it.

I think it is important to realise the significance of the phrase 'wiles of the devil'. Earlier, I gave a free translation of this phrase as 'the deceitful attacks of the devil', and the child of God must ever be alert for Satan's attacks to come from the least expected quarter, and in the most unlikely guises.

The word 'wile' is not used much nowadays, but it means 'a ruse', 'a trick intended to deceive'. Wily, a word that is more familiar perhaps, means crafty. Satan's strategy has seldom been an outright frontal attack. Probably, we would not be taken in by that. No, as his first appearance back in Eden shows, he uses deceit, lies – perhaps half-lies is a better description – implanting doubts by whispers in the ear, and as Paul tells us, he sends his agents in the guise of ministers of righteousness.

While Satan has always been active, it is logical, I think, that as the ages roll on and we get closer to the great climax of the conflict between God and Satan, to expect that Satan's efforts will increase. Open warfare, however, is not yet the order of the day. Tricks, ruses, stratagems, craft, cunning, snares, wolves in sheep's clothing are words and terms used of the enemy's ways. In Ephesians 4:14 the term translated 'lie in wait to deceive' is '*methodeia*' and has been translated as 'systematic deception'.

Without the whole armour of God to protect us, and without being well practised in the use of the Sword of the Spirit, that is, the Word of God which is our only offensive weapon, we would not be able to stand against such a cunning and powerful foe.

Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:13 that evil men and seducers would increase, and surely the way our own society has moved in the last few decades is ample proof of the truth of those words. But we are not to faint with fear, or lose heart, for our Lord and Head has already won the battle. Our part is to stand firm in His strength and in the armour He has provided for us.

In Ephesians 6:13, the words 'having done all' are the translation of one word, *katergazomai*. Two other occurrences of the word will help us here. Philippians 2:12. 'WORK OUT your own salvation with fear and trembling'. 2 Corinthians 4:17. 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, WORKETH for us a more exceeding eternal weight of glory.'

The Philippian believers possessed eternal life, and Paul wrote to urge them to a practical realization of their position in Christ. He speaks to them of 'striving', of a 'prize', of 'suffering' and of 'resurrection'. These terms are not to do with receiving eternal life, but with the WORKING OUT of what has been already WORKED IN us by God.

In the second reference, we again have a context of affliction in the walk of the believer through the wilderness on the way to his promised land, where there awaits glory and honour for those who have been faithful in patient endurance.

These things speak to those who have ears to hear. We are saved not by our good works, but by the work of the Lamb of God who died in our place. But there are good works that God expects from us once we have been saved. God, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, works His work IN us. Then it is up to us

to make sure that we WORK OUT what has been done in us and for us. And it is possible for us to do this, because the Lord has broken the power of sin in our lives, and we are energised by the same mighty power that God exercised when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the Heavenly Places far above all.

Chapter 43 – Grace and Benediction

The whole armour of God, Ephesians 6:13, is provided by the Lord for our defence and protection against the wiles of the Devil. It was suggested in the previous chapter that, rather than equipping us to rush out and attack all and sundry in the Name of the Lord, the armour is to enable us to stand against whatever the Enemy of the Truth throws against us.

There was also the thought brought out that most, if not all, of the enemies we are to fight against and subjugate are those within rather than without. More often than not, it is the lusts of our own sinful natures that cause us to sin rather than Satan. 'The Devil made me do it' is not really a valid excuse for the child of God.

Certainly, Satan tempts us in the matter of faithfulness to the light we have received through the Word, but I think that most of our struggles in our Christian walk are to do with our sinful natures fighting for supremacy.

When I was a babe in Christ as a young teenager, all I knew about Ephesians was the passage about the Armour of God. I can remember taking part in little presentations at the Sunday School Anniversary, where I carried a sword or a shield for instance, onto the platform and stood in line with other children while the relevant passage was read out.

But I did not know, and I cannot remember it ever being mentioned, that we find much of the imagery concerning the armour in the Old Testament. It may well be true, as some expositors suggest, that Paul's circumstances in being chained to a Roman soldier as he wrote this epistle, influenced his choice of the illustration of armour etc.

I personally believe, however, that his prepared mind, being full of the Scriptures he had known all his life, supplied the images he needed. Of course, there is also the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

So let's have a look. The Armour in the Old Testament: Isaiah 11:5 has this: 'Faithfulness (shall be) the girdle of His reins.' The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures is known as the *Septuagint* (*LXX*), and this is the version commonly in use in the days of the Lord and Paul. It translates the word 'faithfulness' as 'truth' and the word 'reins' as 'sides'. We tend to forget that the word 'reins' has the underlying thought of checking or restraining. We still speak of having to rein someone in, for example. Anyway, Paul, familiar as he was with the *LXX*, finds his girdle of truth in this verse.

Isaiah 49:2 gives us: 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.' And Isaiah 52:7 says: 'How beautiful ...are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.'

Still in Isaiah, this time 59:17, we have: 'He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation.' I'm sure you can see how these three verses refer to the Ephesians passage we're considering.

The last reference is in Psalm 91:4: 'His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.'

These scattered references are brought together by Paul to show us how we are protected and enabled by the Lord's provision.

Just one other comment before we move on. Does the shield of faith refer to our faithfulness or the Lord's? We are undoubtedly called to faithfulness, but the certainty of us meeting the obligation is a little shaky, to say the least.

The verse already quoted from Psalm 91 tells us that His truth is our shield and buckler, and I would remind you of the comments above regarding the connection between faithfulness and truth. To be clear and straightforward, it is the Lord's faithfulness, not ours, that is around us to shield us from 'terror by night and the arrow that flieth by day'. Psalm 91:5

Stand...and withstand.

Going back for a moment to verses 11 to 14, I want to bring to your notice the word 'stand'. It is instructive that the word 'fight' does not occur in this passage at all, but 'stand' is very prominent.

Verse 11: '...STAND against the wiles of the Devil...'

Verse 13: '...that ye may be able to WITHSTAND in the evil day, and having done all, to STAND.

Verse 14: 'STAND therefore...'

It is perhaps more true now than in past times that Satan's strategies are starting to come out into the open. Witness the almost open contempt towards the Bible even in Christian circles, the breakdown of morals and the sexual perversities that are becoming acceptable to society at large, and even promoted as normal. However true or otherwise those statements may be, we are certainly headed for the EVIL DAY of verse 13. If we have not exercised our faith and courage by standing against evil when things are not so bad, it will be much harder to withstand when the full onslaught of evil comes.

Fortunately, the Lord does not leave His people to their own strength and devices. He has provided for us, and we must not only believe, but practice in our daily lives that 'we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'

I think there are lessons for us to learn from the experience of the Israelites when they stood on the shore of the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army bearing down on them. Were they instructed to turn and fight? No. Were they told to run and hide? No. The Word of the Lord to them through Moses was 'Fear ye not, STAND STILL and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today...The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.'

His Word to us is similar: 'Stand...withstand...and having done all, stand.' His grace will prove more than sufficient for us.

Prayer and Watchfulness

We must not overlook verse 18. Yes, we are to put on the whole armour of God. Yes, we are to stand against Satan, and subdue the enemies within through the resurrection power that operates in us, but over it all, through it all, under it all, there must be prayer and watchfulness. There are shades of meaning in this verse that don't make it through our usual translations. This is how it is rendered in the *Amplified Version*: 'Pray at all times – on every occasion, in every season – in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints.'

We should not fall into the trap of thinking that the only prayer that matters or works is when we are in church, or on our knees with eyes closed and hands clasped together. There is nothing wrong with that, of course, the right atmosphere being of help. But prayer is as much an attitude of heart and mind as saying words, whether set or spontaneous.

Is it not possible that whatever our hands may be occupied with at any given time, our thoughts can be tuned to our Saviour and Lord at the same time. Could we say that if we are occupied in any activity that prevents our thoughts dwelling on God at the same time, that activity might not be one in which we should engage?

Notice that Paul's instructs us to pray for all the saints, that is, all of God's people. I trust that none of our readers need to be told that all believers are saints, not just a special few who have done something extraordinary. And perhaps in that context, I should remind you that Paul's instruction was to pray for the saints, not to them!

We are members of the One Body, and we should ever remember the joints and bands (sinews) that bind us all together, as our own bodies are held together. We suffer together, we rejoice together, we work together, and together we wait in faith looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and our Saviour Christ Jesus. Titus 2:13

The break between verses 18 and 19 is a little unfortunate, as sometimes our eye stops and does not read straight on as it should. After commanding prayer for all the saints, Paul goes on to say 'and (pray) for me'. Pause for a moment, and let this sink in. This is Paul the Apostle writing. He is arguably one of the greatest instruments in the hand of God in both the forming of the Christian Faith and also its spread. He had wonderful experiences, receiving directly from the Lord Himself the Gospel and Truth he was to teach. And this is the man who says to his fellow believers 'Pray for me.'

None of us are above or beyond the need for prayer. How regular and consistent are we in praying not only for all the saints, but particularly for those who have the burden of ministry, or service in the Lord's work in some way? Does the minister at your church fall short in some way in your estimation? Then have you prayed for him, or just criticized him?

Do you think I have missed the point and gone astray in these studies? Then have you prayed for me? I hope so, for I greatly need it. We certainly have a debt to love each other, and I don't think we do any injustice to God's Word if we add that we also owe it to each other to pray for each other. As James says in another context: 'The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available – dynamic in its working'. James 5:16. *Amplified Version*

Going back to Paul's request for prayer, notice that he wanted utterance to be given to him that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. The fact that this powerful man of God feels the need for boldness in his witness, while being something of a surprise, nevertheless reveals how much he is one with us after all.

I find it all too easy, when reading of these great Bible characters to forget that they were ordinary people like ourselves. They tend to take on an almost superhuman standing in our minds, which in my case anyway, makes me think that I could never measure up to the standards they have achieved.

This is not so, of course, and Paul's request for prayer reminds us of this. Obviously he felt afraid at times, we know he suffered from the cold while in prison, he was wounded to the quick (as we would be) when some friend betrays him. He was even known to lash out with an ill-considered and rather harsh rejoinder when he perceived his rights being trampled upon.

In short, a person much as myself. But he realised how much help he needed, so asked for prayer and trusted only in the strength of His mighty Lord and Saviour.

Mystery of the Gospel

The phrase ‘the mystery of the Gospel’ in verse 19 needs a comment perhaps. We Dispensationalists give so much prominence to The Dispensation of The Mystery (as we should), that we can be misled whenever we read the word mystery. If you think back to Ephesians 3, you will recall that there are two mysteries spoken of there, namely the mystery of Christ and another one called simply The Mystery. The mystery of Christ, as we saw back there, was something that had been gradually unfolded throughout the ages ever since the first hint was given about it in Genesis 3:15.

The Mystery, on the other hand, was a secret hid in God until God made it known through Paul at the point where Israel were to be finally set aside at the end of their probation period recorded in Acts. So to which does Paul's term in 6:19 refer? I think Colossians can help us here. We find that the context of Collosians⁴ is the same as that of Ephesians 6 and we read in Colossians 4:3,4 these words: 'Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.'

We lose nothing by seeing that Paul refers in Ephesians 6:19, not to the Mystery but to the mystery of Christ, because no matter what 'good news' is being preached at any time over the millennia of God's dealing with Adam's race, in other words, no matter what the dispensation at the time may be, it is always founded upon, and centred in, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the message from God is the Gospel of the Kingdom, then the advent of the King must be proclaimed. When the time came for the preaching of the Gospel of grace, the central theme of that Gospel was Christ crucified, dead and resurrected. Similarly, to preach the 'good news' of the Mystery which places the believer 'far above all, seated at the right hand of God', it must first of all be shown that Christ is not only crucified, dead and raised, but that He has also been 'seated at the right hand of God, far above all...':

Concluding Remarks

In this wonderful epistle, we have been taken to heights of glory and depths of truth encountered in no other Scriptures written before it. And yet, as in his other epistles, Paul concludes on a very personal note. He knows that if the members of the assemblies to whom he wrote were to pray for him intelligently, then they had to know something of his circumstances. He does not put these details into the epistle, however, but sends Tychicus who would not only deliver the epistle to them, but also make known to them 'all my affairs'. In addition to this, however, Tychicus had the task of comforting their hearts.

The epistle concludes with Paul's trademark statement about grace being with them all. This was done in order to guard against forgeries, which had occurred. It is interesting that the last word in the Greek of this epistle is the word 'incorruptibility'. (The word 'amen' is not in the Greek.) The margin of your Bible should show you that 'incorruptibility' is the more accurate word than 'sincerity'. Is Paul saying here that our love for the Lord should be incorruptible? That certainly should be the ideal, but how possible is it?

One expositor named Beza thought that the word incorruptibility should be read with the word grace and not love. It is God's grace that is incorruptible, unchangeable and imperishable. Well, this side of the resurrection we may never know for sure which way it should be read, but acknowledging that God's grace never changes, our aim should be to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds and bodies, as sincerely and consistently as we possibly can. And it is this epistle that tells us we have the same power available to us to help, as God used to raise our Lord from the dead.

I think the words of Frances Ridley Havergal are not out of place as this study of Ephesians concludes.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour – At Thy feet its treasure-store;

Take myself, and I will be – Ever, only, all for Thee. Amen.