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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

BY

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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Introduction

The city of Ephesus was situated in Lydia on the River Cayster, about forty miles from Smyrna. It was a place of considerable commerce and also noted for its magnificent temple of Artemis, which was from very ancient times the center of the worship of that goddess. This temple was burnt down by Herostratus 355 B.C., but rebuilt at immense cost, and was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Pliny tells us that it was 425 feet long and 220 feet in breadth. All Asia contributed to its erection, and 127 magnificent columns were bestowed by so many kings. Little models of the temple in silver, with the image of the goddess enshrined in them, were made for sale, and sold in large quantities (Acts 19:24-29).

From Acts 18:19-21 we learn of Paul's first brief visit to that city. He was then hastening to Jerusalem to be there at Pentecost. After his visit to Jerusalem he returned to Ephesus (Acts 19:1) and remained there laboring for about three years, so that he could say later to the elders of Ephesus, "therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). During this time the Ephesian assembly was founded, composed of Jews and Gentiles, who heard and believed the gospel. On his last journey to Jerusalem he did not visit Ephesus, but called the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, where he said farewell and exhorted them (Acts 20:18-35).

The Epistle Written by Paul

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul when he was a prisoner (chapter 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). There can be no doubt that the

Colossian Epistle and the Epistle to Philemon were sent by Paul the same time as the Ephesian Epistle. The date was about 62 A.D. Tychicus and Onesimus, the runaway slave, but now through grace "a brother beloved" (Philemon 16) were sent to Colossae by Paul (Col. 4:7-9). Tychicus carried the letter addressed to the Colossians to correct the evils which had arisen in that church, and to warn them against the wicked doctrines which were being promulgated amongst them. Onesimus the slave carried that beautiful little Epistle addressed to his master Philemon. And at the same time when Tychicus and Onesimus left Rome, Paul handed to Tychicus the Epistle to the Ephesians. Never before and never after were such weighty and blessed documents entrusted to human messengers. The reception of the authorship of Paul has been almost universal; only in very recent times has the Pauline authorship been foolishly questioned by some rationalistic critics.

Some scholars claim that the words "at Ephesus" should be omitted and that the Epistle was not addressed to the Ephesians at all. The chief objection is, that if this Epistle is addressed to the church at Ephesus, it would be inexplicable that Paul should not have sent a single message of personal greeting to the Ephesians, amongst whom he had spent so long a time, and to whom he was bound by ties of such close affection. But there are also other Epistles written by Paul which do not contain such personal greetings; for instance, first and second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, first and second Thessalonians and first Timothy. Other objections have been raised. Dean Alford states rightly "there is nothing in its contents inconsistent with such an address" (to the Ephesians). We find in it clear indications that its readers were mixed Jews and Gentiles (2:14; compare with Acts 19:10). it would seem quite improbable that the apostle should not have sent an epistle to Ephesus, where the Lord had so largely owned his testimony and where the Lord had so miraculously delivered him when he fought with beasts (1 Cor. 15:32). But while this Epistle was undoubtedly first sent to Ephesus, it may have been used as a kind of circular letter, being sent to and read by other assemblies. The Epistle mentioned in Col. 4:16 was probably this Epistle.

Its Deep and Blessed Message

In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul makes the statement, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God" (Col. 1:25). To fulfill the Word of God does not mean, as often stated, that Paul fulfilled his ministry and was faithful in it. it means rather that to him was given the revelation which makes full, or completes, the Word of God. The highest and most glorious revelation, which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been pleased to give, He has given through the Apostle Paul. The two prison Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians embody this completion of the Word of God. The Ephesian Epistle holds the place of preeminence. The revelation which is given in this Epistle concerning believing sinners, whom God has redeemed by the blood of His Son, and exalted in Him into the highest possible position, is by far the greatest revelation. God is revealing His own loving heart and tells out by His Spirit how He loved us and thought of us before the foundation of the world. He shows forth the riches of His grace and now makes known the secret He held back in former ages. How rich it all is! Like God Himself, so this revelation, coming from His loving heart, is inexhaustible. We may speak of Ephesians as the rich Epistle of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, rich in mercy, tells us of the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us through Christ

Jesus. But even this definition does not tell out half of all the glory this wonderful document contains. It is God's highest and God's best. Even God cannot say more than what He has said in this filling full of His Word.

In the Psalms we read: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19: 1). We lift up our eyes and behold the wonders of God's creation, which He called into existence by His Son and for Him (Col. 1: 16). Here in this Epistle another heaven is opened. If the heavens of creation are so wonderful and their depths unfathomable, how much more wonderful are the heavenlies into which Christ has entered, where He now is seated, far above all principality and power and might, and into which God's grace has brought us in Christ! The first three chapters contain this great revelation. What God has accomplished in His Son, to the praise of the glory of His grace; how He makes believers one with His Son, sharers of His glory, is told out in these chapters. The church, the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; the one body in which believing Jews and Gentiles are united; the building growing into an holy temple, the habitation of God by the Spirit, and the ultimate destiny of that body, are further revelations in these great chapters.

The central verse of the first three chapters is found in chapter 2:10, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." The word "workmanship" is in the Greek "poiema," from which our word "poem" is derived. It is a beautiful thought in itself to think of those who are saved by grace, and united to Christ, as "the poem of God." But the word "poiema" may also be rendered "masterpiece" or "masterwork."

Only once more is the same word found in the original language of the New Testament Scriptures. In Rom. 1:20 it is used in connection with the physical creation. God has produced two great masterworks in which He manifests His power. He called the universe into existence out of nothing. What He, as the omnipotent One can do, is seen in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the sustenance of His creation. His eternal power and Godhead are revealed in creation (Rom. 1:19-20). But the creation of the universe out of nothing is not the greatest masterpiece of God. God has done something greater. He has produced a work, which reveals Him in a far higher degree. That greater masterpiece is the redemption of sinners. God took only six days to bring order out of the chaos of the disturbed original creation and to call into existence the present earth and heavens, but He spent forty days with Moses in directing him to build the tabernacle, because the work of redemption is more glorious than the work of creation.

God's creation and also the Bible, His revelation, may be studied by the telescope and the microscope. A telescopic sweep of this wonderful Epistle is hardly sufficient. The microscopic examination brings out its wonders. "The student of Ephesians must not expect to go over his ground too rapidly; must not be disappointed, if the week's end finds him still on the same paragraph, or even on the same verse, weighing and judging--penetrating gradually, by the power of the mind of the Spirit, through one outer surface after another, getting in his hand one and another ramifying thread, till at last he grasps the main cord whence they are diverged, and where they all unite--and stands rejoicing in his prize, deeper rooted in the faith, and with a firmer hold on the truth as it is in Christ. And as the wonderful effect of the spirit of inspiration on the

mind of man is nowhere in Scripture more evident than in this Epistle, so, to discern those things of the Spirit, is the spiritual mind here more than anywhere else required." (Dean Alford, Prolegomena.)

And the more we read and study this Epistle, the more we will be impressed with the greatness and the glory of the revelation it brings to our hearts. It is a theme for eternity. How needful the study of this Epistle is for us in these days! The truths revealed will keep us in the days of apostasy and lift us above the materialistic spirit of the times. Without earnest and continued meditation on the great truths made known in this Epistle, spiritual growth and enjoyment are impossible. May it please the Holy Spirit to lead the writer and the reader into a better and deeper heart knowledge of His wonderful grace.

The Division of Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians has two clearly defined sections. Chapter 4 begins with the following words: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." What the calling is wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has called those who believe in His Son, is revealed in the first three chapters. As stated in the introduction, God's great masterwork, the redemption of sinners, is blessedly told out in the opening chapters of this Epistle. The last three chapters contain exhortations and instructions to walk worthy of this high calling, to manifest in every way the great Work of God.

I. THE MASTERWORK OF GOD (1-3)

1. The Godhead at Work (1)
2. The Production of the Masterwork and its Destiny (2:1-10)
3. The Mystery now made Known (2:11-3:21)

II. THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER (4-6)

1. Walking worthy of the Calling (4:1-6)
2. The Ministry and its Purpose (4:7-16)
3. The Walk in Holiness and Righteousness (4:17-5:21)
4. Manifestation in the Family Relationship (5:22-6:4)
5. Exhortations to Servants and Masters (6:5-9)
6. The Warfare and the Panoply of God (6:10-20)
7. The Conclusions (6:21-24)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE MASTERWORK OF GOD (1-3)

1. The Godhead at Work

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-2)
2. The great doxology (1:3)
3. The work of the Father (1:4-6)
4. The work of the Son (1:7-12)
5. The work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)

6. The parenthetical prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of glory (1:15-23)

In the brief introductory words to this Epistle, Paul speaks of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. It is to be noticed that the will of God is repeatedly mentioned in this first chapter. All blessings mentioned in this Epistle flow from the will of God. What God hath done for us in Christ is "according to the good pleasure of His will" (verse 5). Then we read also of "having made known unto us the mystery of His will" (verse 9) and "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (verse 11). This will of God goes back to eternity, before the foundation of the world. This will made the erstwhile persecutor of the Church, the apostle of Jesus Christ, the instrument through whom that blessed will of God is now fully revealed. The Epistle is addressed "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." This does not mean two classes of believers. All believers are saints--separated ones. Yet a saint may not be faithful. Many who are saved by grace and are constituted saints in Christ are unfaithful in their walk and testimony. The words "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" correspond to the two divisions of the Epistle. In the first three chapters we learn that God has made us His saints in Christ; in the last three chapters we are exhorted to walk in obedience and be faithful.

The doxology (verse 3) marks the beginning of the epistle. When we reach the end of this first section we find another doxology (3:20-21). Between these two doxologies are found the unsearchable riches of God's grace in Christ. The third verse is in itself the key to the great and deep revelation which follows in this chapter. It is the bud which the Holy Spirit gradually unfolds. The Godhead in blessing believers is revealed in the doxology. First we find the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the author of all blessings. In the second place we learn that the blessings are in the Son of God, in Christ. Then thirdly, we read what kind of blessings we receive in Christ, "every spiritual blessing," that is, blessings communicated by the third person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "in the heavenly places" (or heavenlies) is peculiar to this Epistle. We find it five times: chapters 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10 and 6:12. It means both the nature of the blessings which we have in a risen and glorified Christ, and the locality, where our Lord is in glory. The three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in the third verse. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us; these blessings are in the Son and are communicated by the Holy Spirit. What follows is very interesting. In verses 4-14 we have the three persons of the Godhead revealed and their work in the redemption of sinners. Read verses 6, 12 and 14. Each is an utterance of praise--"to the praise of the glory of His grace" (verse 6); "that we should be to the praise of His glory" (verse 12); "unto the praise of His glory" (verse 14). Each of these verses marks the close of what is said about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-6 we read what the Father has done; verses 7-12 reveal what we have and are in the Son, in Christ; verses 13-14 reveal the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

Three great facts are mentioned of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
2. He hath predestinated us unto the Son-place in Christ.
3. He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

What wonderful statements these are! We are in them face to face with the deepest revelation. To deny this would stamp these words as the imaginations of a deceiver. Only revelation can make known that which happened before the foundation of the world. Whatever is in God's eternity, that unfathomable existence without beginning, is beyond man's ability to grasp and therefore unrevealed. But here the great truth is made known that God, before there was a world, planned His masterwork. With Him in His bosom was His blessed Son, the Son of His love. In Him, by Him and for Him all things were called into existence. Yet before this creation was effected, God knew the outcome. Surprise is an impossibility with God. He knows the end from the beginning. The whole story of man's fall and its results were not hidden from Him. And before it ever came to pass God made provision. And those who would accept Christ, as their Savior, He willed should be before Him holy and without blame, become partakers of His own divine nature. This God willed before the foundation of the world, and this is now, through grace, the portion of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, furthermore, He predestinated all who believe in Christ to the Son-place.

A brief word on "predestination." This word, which means "marked out" is nowhere found in connection with the Gospel, nor does it say anywhere in the Word, what some have said, that God has predestinated human beings to be lost. But while we do not read that He ever predestinated any one to be lost we read "God would have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4). God has nothing to say to a lost world about predestination. His grace, bringing salvation has appeared unto all men. God's offer of salvation is therefore to all.

The Authorized Version speaks of "adoption of children." This hardly expresses it correctly. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not adopted into the family of God; they are born into the family. The Greek has only one word "Son-place." We are placed into the position of Sons. Not alone hath God given to us His own nature, but He gives us, because we have that nature in and through His Son, the place as Sons. Think of what God might have done for those, who by wicked works are His enemies. He might have given us the place of unfallen angels, the wonderful ministers of heaven. What mercy that would have been! Or He might have lifted us to the dignity of an archangel, full of beauty and power. But even that would not have been the very best He could have done in the riches of His grace and love. He has made us Sons, like the Son, whom He raised from the dead and seated at His own right hand.

And then He hath accepted us in the Beloved One. All this God planned and willed before the foundation of the world. The Beloved One having been mentioned, we read at once of His work. Three facts are given of the work of the Son of God:

1. He redeemed us by His blood.
2. In Him we received the revelation of the mystery of His will.
3. In Him we obtain an inheritance (verses 7-12).

He came from the bosom of the Father to this earth to redeem us, so that God's eternal will might be accomplished. Redemption, the taking out of the condition in which we are by nature, is a necessity, and has been accomplished by the blood of the Son of God, which was shed on the cross. He paid the price and has set us free. The riches of His grace by the

redemption through His blood includes all our needs as sinners; the forgiveness of sins, mentioned here, is, so to speak, the foundation.

"Whosoever will" and "whosoever believeth" are the glorious terms of God's good news to all alike. But when we believe, we know that we are chosen and predestinated. Those who have believed on Christ are predestinated and they possess the Son-place. Then having believed, we know that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

The words which follow put before us some blessed and deep truths. Redeemed through His blood, having redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of grace, He hath made known unto us the mystery of His will. God wants His elect, His Church, to know the secret things of His will and what He hath purposed in Himself Therefore He hath made the riches of His grace abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence. God has been pleased to make known in Christ the mystery of His will. It is the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25), so that we know in Christ and through Christ the fulness of His purpose. That mystery of God is Christ, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood, was raised from the dead. God "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies"--"He 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 fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (1:21-23). This is the mystery: that Christ risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, is the Head and those who believe on Him constitute the Church, His body. This body is destined, according to the eternal purpose of God, to share the glory of the Head. This purpose is still in the future. The administration (or dispensation) of the fulness of times has not yet come. When it comes all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, will be headed up in Christ.

And in Christ we have an inheritance. In Him we have obtained an inheritance; it is equally true, that we are redeemed by His blood, His inheritance. And our inheritance in Christ is that we shall be like Him; be joint-heirs with Him and be forever with the Lord.

The work of the Holy Spirit is revealed in verses 13 and 14. Three things are also mentioned of Him and His work:

1. Hearing and believing resulting in the quickening by the Spirit.
2. The sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise.
3. The Holy Spirit the earnest of our inheritance.

These words are of great importance. The Son of God came to this earth to redeem us and because He has finished the work the Father gave Him to do, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, has come to do His work.

Three words are prominent in the thirteenth verse, the words "heard," "believed," and sealed." They go together. The Word of Truth, the gospel of salvation must be heard and believed; the hearing and believing results in the sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession takes place. (For a more complete exposition we refer the reader to our larger work The Masterpiece of God.)

A brief restatement of the work of the Godhead will be helpful:

1. We found God the Father has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. God the Son came down from Heaven's glory and redeemed us by His blood. God the Holy Spirit quickens those who hear and believe. He is here because Christ finished His work on the cross.

2. God the Father has predestinated us unto the Son-place. God the Son reveals, to all who are sons with Him, the mystery of His will, concerning the future of the new creation. God the Holy Spirit because we are sons, possesses us and keeps those whom He possesses. He is the Spirit of Sonship.

3. God the Father has accepted us in the Beloved. God the Son has given us in Himself an inheritance. God the Holy Spirit is the earnest of that inheritance.

Surely this is revelation from God. So blessedly simple, so profound that all the eternal ages will not suffice to sound its depths. No man could have ever discovered or invented such a plan. Let us bow before it in worship and yield our lives "to the Praise of the glory of His grace."

In verses 15-23 we have the first prayer in this Epistle; the second prayer is found at the close of the third chapter. Let us notice that the greatest revelation of God as given in this Epistle has two prayers connected with it. The revelation is given to His people that they might know it and enjoy it. Prayer is needed for this. First, there is thanksgiving (verses 15-16).

The prayer here is addressed to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." The prayer in the third chapter is made to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This corresponds most beautifully to the blessed revelation in the first fourteen verses of this chapter. "God and Father" are the blessed words, which stand in the foreground of this Epistle. God is light and God is love. The first prayer is a prayer for light, that His redeemed people may know, be enlightened; therefore it is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second prayer in the third chapter is for love, and therefore addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we find three petitions: 1. "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling." The hope of God's calling is that we shall be one with Him, whom He raised from the dead and to whom He gave glory. 2. That we may know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The riches into which God, the Father of glory, has brought us through Him, who laid His glory by, is told out in this Epistle. It is the rich Epistle of our riches in Christ. "The riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7); "the riches of the glory of His inheritance" (1:18); "rich in mercy" (2:4); "the exceeding riches of His grace" (2:7); "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8); "according to the riches of His glory" (3:16); these are the passages in which we read of His riches towards us and our riches in Him.

And what is the meaning "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"? We have an inheritance, and He has us for His inheritance. He is our inheritance, and we are His inheritance. The glory of Christ's inheritance are the saints, for whom He died, the many sons He brings to glory. The Church is the fulness of Him, who filleth all in all.

3. And the third petition is that we may know the exceeding greatness of His power which is to us-ward who believe." It is resurrection power, the power which raised Him from the dead and seated Him on God's right hand, which is to us-ward who believe. We can count on it. Ultimately the same power which raised Him up and carried Him through the heavens, will bring all the redeemed into glory.

In the presence of the words of verse 23 one feels more like worshipping than trying to expound their meaning. Marvelous words! They tell out the blessed masterpiece of God. Christ the Head; the Church, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, the body. The Head is in glory; the body not yet joined to the Head. He waits in glory; the saints wait on earth. The body needs the Head, but the Head also needs the body. "The Christ" will be complete when the body is joined to the Head by the mighty power of God. The Church as His body is His fulness; it makes Him complete. And when that is reached, when Head and body, Christ and the Church, are united in glory, then will the hope of His calling be realized and He will have the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and we shall know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward.

2. The Production of the Masterwork and its Destiny

CHAPTER 2:1-10

1. What we are by nature (2:1-3)
2. What God does--rich in mercy (2:4-6)
3. The destiny of the masterwork (2:7)
4. Saved by grace (2:8-10)

After the great revelation of the first chapter and the prayer which followed, the production of the masterpiece itself is now brought more fully into view. We have before us a revelation concerning our state by nature and how God takes us up and produces out of such material His masterpiece. The first ten verses of this chapter give us this story. They contain one of the richest portions of the whole Word of God.

The first verse tells us that we are by nature in the state of death--"dead in trespasses and sins." Man is dead spiritually; he is dead towards God (John 5:24-25). This fact that the unregenerated man is dead is much denied in our days. We hear of "the better self," or "the good spark" which is in everybody, and the truth God has revealed concerning man, that he is dead in trespasses and sins is but little believed. The next verse states the walk of the natural man. It fully shows the awful place in which man is as dead in trespasses and sins. The walk is according to his fallen nature; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the governing principles of this walk. We are enemies of God by wicked works. And behind all there stands the prince of the power of the air, Satan. He works in the children of disobedience, which here means the Jews. Of this our Lord spake when He said, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). And again it is written, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. (1 John 3:8). It is a solemn truth, which God has revealed concerning our condition as fallen beings, that we are in the grasp of the prince of the power of the air; that man is under this mighty being of darkness. To what a place of degradation man has been brought by sin! This likewise is disbelieved by the great majority of professing Christians. A

personal devil is ridiculed and his existence is denied.

In the third verse another description is added, "children of wrath." The "you" of the first verse is addressed to the Ephesians, showing what they were in their former condition. The "we" in the third verse means the Jews "among whom we also had our conversation." The apostle shows that the Jews were in the same condition; and he adds "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Jews and Gentiles are dead in trespasses and sins, are the enemies of God and children of wrath. And this truth is also increasingly denied. The Word of God is most positive, and tells us "that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). The denial of a future, conscious and eternal punishment of the wicked is becoming wide-spread; it is one of the marks of the latter day cults like Christian Science, Russellism, the New Theology, Spiritism and others. But the believer who knows the gospel and knows that he is "saved by grace" does not deny the truth of these first three verses of this chapter. It is our true photograph. Such material, God has to produce out of it His great masterwork.

After this dark picture of death, ruin and wrath, we read what God has done and does, for all who believe on His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. "But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love, wherewith He loved us" (verse 4). This is the blessed bridge, which leads out of the dark and dreary, hopeless condition. But God! Man is guilty and lost. But God! God now comes in and makes known the riches of His mercy. Yet a righteous, holy God cannot be rich in mercy unless His righteousness is fully met and maintained. His mercy must have for a foundation His righteousness. And this is blessedly the case. He is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith He loved us. He gave His only begotten Son. He made Him who knew no sin, sin for us. He made full atonement on the cross and now God can be rich in mercy. And what does He do with such as we are? Verses 5-6 tell the blessed story.

These verses in which we read of the believer's quickening, his resurrection with Christ and being seated in Christ in the heavenlies, take us back to the time when our blessed Savior Lord was quickened and raised from the dead and seated in glory. It is plain what God did for Him, who died on the cross, He has done for all, who believe on His Son. Many Christians are ignorant of this great truth, while others have difficulty in grasping it. Yet it is quite Simple. Every Christian believes that when the Lord Jesus suffered on the cross He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. With the Apostle Paul every believer is entitled to say in looking back to the cross, "He loved me, He gave Himself for me." We know all our sins were paid for by Him; all the punishment we deserved fell upon Him, our substitute. In Him we died. All this happened when we were not in existence at all. The sins He bore were not yet committed. God knew all about us and all about our sins and shame, the punishment we deserved, and His ever-blessed Son took all upon Himself. In the same sense God hath quickened us with Christ, raised us up and seated us in Him, when He did this for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. This is simple, yet so wonderful and deep, that it is incomprehensible. It was all done for us, who believe, when it was done for Him. God in His marvelous counsels in redemption has associated us with Christ. He has made all, who believe on Him, sharers of His life and nature; He brings us into the same relationship as sons, and finally into the same glory and inheritance. Let us bear in mind that all this was done for us in Christ. He is the first one who was quickened, raised up and exalted in glory, and associated with Him are all His

members; we share it with Him.

And all this becomes our blessed portion by faith in Jesus Christ. As we believe on Him, we are quickened, that is, we receive life, even eternal life and are saved by grace. Then we are risen with Him. We are now in Him, risen from the dead, the sons of God. Likewise in Christ (not with Christ) we are seated in the heavenly places. Now it is "in Him"; when He comes again we shall be "with Him" and share His glory. Here we have the summit of Christian position. We are not along representatively, but also virtually seated in Christ in the highest glory.

It is worth the while to review in a brief word the blessed revelations given in the first six verses of this chapter.

We saw first what man is by nature. Dead in trespasses and sins. Enemies of God under the prince of the power of the air, this is the result of such a condition. Children of wrath, because we are dead, His enemies and linked with Satan.

And now God has come in with His mighty power in the production of His masterwork. He gives life so that the dead condition is ended. Instead of enemies, we are constituted, by the resurrection of His Son, beloved sons of Himself. And in Christ Jesus, He makes of us children of glory, instead of children of wrath. Marvelous masterwork of God! May we praise Him for it all.

But one must ask in view of such riches of grace, as revealed in the preceding verses, What is the purpose of all this? The verse which follows gives the answer. We find ourselves face to face with the destiny of His masterpiece.

"That in the ages to come He might show (or display) the exceeding (surpassing) riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (verse 7). This is one of the richest and deepest statements in the Bible. Two ages follow the present age. The millennial age, and after that has lasted for a thousand years, the eternal state begins. In the coming age and in all eternity, God is going to make known His glory through and in His masterwork. All His redeemed will be with Him in glory. When He comes again He brings many sons to glory; and we shall reign and rule with Him over the earth.

But this is not all. in the eternal age, from eternity to eternity, God is continuing in this. He will bring forth something new in glory, new riches of Himself for those who are one with His well-beloved Son. From eternity to eternity He displays the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. How one is overwhelmed in the presence of such a statement! And how little after all we can understand all those coming riches in glory. What a destiny! The heart may well cry--nothing but glory! What is the little suffering, the little while down here, in comparison with such never ending glory!

Fittingly this great revelation ends with the blessed statement that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; and that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

3. The Mystery Made Known

CHAPTERS 2:11-3:21

1. The condition of the Gentiles (2:11-12)
2. But now in Christ Jesus (2:13-19)
3. The new and great relationship (2:19-22)
4. The Mystery made known and Paul's ministry (3:1-13)
5. The prayer (3:14-19)
6. The doxology (3:20-21)

With the eleventh verse of the second chapter we reach a new division in this Epistle. The great mystery of the masterwork of God, the Church, is next revealed by the Holy Spirit. We saw in the first chapter of this wonderful Epistle how God planned His masterpiece. Then we learned in the first ten verses of the second chapter how God deals with us individually and fashions lost sinners, who trust in Christ, into His masterwork. And now we are led higher, and the fact is made known that all believers are united into one body. This truth was briefly mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter (1:22, 23).

First, the condition of the Gentiles, the uncircumcision, as called by the Jews, is briefly described. They were without Christ; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; strangers from the covenants; and without hope and without God. Such was the condition of the great Gentile world.

Well may we remember in the dreadful days of apostasy, which are upon us, that Gentiles, who have had the gospel preached unto them, are turned once more from the light, yea, from God's best. Christendom in denying Christ is rapidly waning, and must eventually plunge into a greater darkness than the darkness of the Gentile world before the cross. Without Christ, without hope, and without God! Fearful and solemn words these are! When Christ is given up, His deity and His blood rejected, when men deliberately turn away from Him, and deny His person and His glory, they rush into the outer and eternal darkness "without hope and without God."

But now Christ being preached and believed in, Gentiles who were once far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The little word "now" is of importance.

This present dispensation of grace in which He makes known the mystery, which in other ages was not made known, that the Gentiles, once without Christ and without God, should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, is the "now" in which the surpassing riches of God's grace are made known. Now, after Israel rejected the King and the Savior, now, when He is upon the Father's throne, now, when the Holy Spirit is on earth to do His appointed work, now, during the present age, God makes fully known what He had planned before the foundation of the world. He is producing His masterwork, taking the material from Israel, and reaching out with His mighty power after the Gentiles, to put them into one body. The poor, miserable, naked beggar upon the dunghill, the Gentile, is taken up to sit among princes and inherit the throne of glory.

And all who believe are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Then we find three statements in verses 14 and 15: 1. He is our peace, making of both one. The parties mentioned here as made one are Jews and Gentiles. 2. Broken down the middle wall and abolished the law of commandments. Between

these two there stood a middle wall of partition, which separated them. This wall is the law. God Himself had put it up. But now in the cross of Christ, God has broken down this middle wall and made an end of the enmity which existed between Jews and Gentiles. And the law of commandments and ordinances finds its end in the cross. 3. Making in Himself one new man.

Jews and Gentiles, believing, trusting in Christ, made nigh by His blood, are made both one and constitute one new man. This is what God has accomplished, taking believing Jews and believing Gentiles, gathering them into one. This is the masterwork of God, He does during this age. When the kingdom age comes the Jews will receive their place of blessing and glory in their land, and the Gentiles will be greatly blessed and enjoy righteousness and peace. Both Jews and Gentiles will be in the kingdom then, but not as one body. In the present age a body is forming "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11). This new man is the church, and Christ is the Head of that new man. Grace flowing from the cross of Christ, where peace was made in the blood, takes up Jews and Gentiles and makes them one. When our Lord prayed in His high priestly prayer "that they may all be one as we are one," He must have thought of this great truth, now fully revealed in this Epistle by the Spirit of God.

In verse 16 we have two similar statements as in the preceding verses: 1. Both (Jews and Gentiles believing) reconciled unto God in one body. 2. The enmity slain by the cross. And furthermore He came and preached peace to both, to those afar off (Gentiles) and to those that were nigh (the Jews). Then follows the blessed result. "For through Him we both (believing Jews; and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Jew did not know anything in Old Testament times about "access unto the Father." He had a tabernacle and the way into the holiest was not yet made known. And the Gentile was without God altogether. But now believing Jews and Gentiles belong to the family of God, indwelt by the same Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship.

In verse 19 we hear of the new relationship into which believing Gentiles are brought in Christ. "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In verse 20 the Church comes into view, and we hear that Gentiles saved by grace and made nigh by blood "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone." The Church is compared to a building.

In the Old Testament God had a building in which He manifested His presence and His glory. The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple of Solomon were shadows of the Church, which God is now building. The foundation upon which the Church as the house is built, we find mentioned first. One of the common mistakes concerning the foundation upon which the Church is built, is that, which claims that the foundation are the prophets of the Old Testament. According to this view the Old Testament saints belonged to the Church, and the Church itself was therefore in existence throughout the previous dispensations. This view is often based upon the words we have under consideration, that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now if the prophets were mentioned before the apostles, there might be a possibility that the prophets of the Old Testament are meant. But it says "apostles and prophets." They are the New Testament apostles and prophets. Chapter 3:5 gives positive evidence on

this whole question. The Church is called a 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."

"Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" does not mean that the apostles are the foundation. The apostles are the foundation through their inspired teachings as Paul wrote, "I have laid the foundation." But he also adds "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:9-11). The Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Christ is the foundation. This the apostles taught. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone (Isa. 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Matt. 21:44; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4-5). "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (verse 21). The building, the true Church is fitly framed together, which means that God puts it together in His own marvelous way.

Solomon's temple gives a little illustration of this. When that temple was building, hammer, axe and tools of iron were not heard. "And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building." Every stone was prepared beforehand and fitted into the place where it belonged. How beautifully it illustrates the fitting together of the house, His Church! He chooses and prepares the material and puts each in its proper place (1 Cor. 12). What a contrast with man's methods in trying to increase "church membership"! The divine revelation is forgotten. Christendom has departed from the faith in these revelations concerning the one Church and its architect. But all the confusion, the wrong conceptions and attending evils, cannot frustrate the purpose of the Lord. He is building His Church. He takes the material and puts it as living stones in the place where it belongs. This is the work of His Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit dwells there. He dwells in the true Church, because He indwells every individual member of the body of Christ. We are the habitation of God. As He dwelt of old in the tabernacle, so He dwells in the Church through the Spirit. God does no longer dwell in an earthly house. The conception of a church building being a "holy place" which we must call "the house of the Lord" or "a temple" is absolutely wrong. It is the Jewish idea. God does no longer dwell in an earthly house and yet He has His habitation here. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst; that is a Church and the habitation of God through the Spirit. "Even now in the state of imperfection, by the Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers, that God has His habitation in the Church; and then when the growth and increase of that Church shall be completed, it will be still in and by the Holy Spirit, fully penetrating and possessing the whole glorified church, that the Father will dwell in it forever." (Dean Alford, Greek New Testament.)

In the first verse of the third chapter Paul speaks of himself as "the prisoner of the Christ, Jesus, for you Gentiles." He became a prisoner on account of the Gentiles, when on his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 22:21-22). And to him was made known the mystery which was hidden in other generations. And the mystery is "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

That Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with Jewish believers in a

distinct body is a new revelation. The Old Testament abounds in promises for the Gentile nations. These promises speak of righteousness and peace, which the nations of the earth are to enjoy. But they all stand connected with the age which is yet to come. That age is introduced by the visible manifestation of the Lord. At that time the people Israel will receive the place of headship among the nations. The Gentiles will join themselves to Israel, and Israel has the promise that the nations will seek the light and glory revealed in their midst. "And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee. Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and be filled with delight; and thine heart shall thrill, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the nations shall come unto thee" (Isa. 60:3-5).

Many other passages could be quoted, but in not one of them is it said that Gentiles should be joint-heirs. In this mystery of the Church there is revealed an inheritance which is far greater than any blessing promised to earthly Israel during the coming kingdom. Both, believing Jews and Gentiles are joint-heirs of Christ, and in the coming day of glory they will reign and rule with Him.

Then "of the same body" joint-members. The believing Jews on the day of Pentecost were formed into one body by the Holy Spirit. They became then one spirit with the Lord, and that marvelous organism, the body of Christ, had its beginning. Gentiles are joint-members of the same body; they are united with all the saints in one body. And therefore believing Gentiles are joint-partakers of His promises in Christ by the gospel. These promises do not concern the earth, but they concern the glory to come. Israel's promises will be fulfilled, and they will be under Christ as King, when He comes to reign. But the body of Christ has far greater promises in Christ. The body will be joined to the head, share the glory of the head and be where the head is. The Head, Christ, and the body, the Church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, joint-heirs, joint-members, joint-partakers--this is the mystery.

And of all this the Apostle Paul was the minister. Beautiful words, "Unto me, whom are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The great revelation had made him very humble.

He might have made much of his superior knowledge, of the great revelation given to him, and he might have paraded a kind of an official pride as the apostle to the Gentiles. But the high calling, the mystery made known unto him, the blessed ministry given to him, produced far different results. It humbled him into the dust before God. It could not be otherwise. Grace, such wondrous grace, as revealed through Paul, reaching down to such as we are, lifting so high with such an unspeakable calling and destiny, will ever humble us into the dust to give Him the glory. Grace necessitates this. The more we know of the blessed mystery of God's masterpiece, the less we shall think of ourselves and delight to take the lowest place. Truth learned or knowledge gained in spiritual things, which does not humble us and make us think less and less of ourselves, is a dangerous thing. Truth, must ever break us down and lead into self-judgment and self abasement.

The purpose of preaching the mystery concerning the church (verse

9-13) is twofold: 1. To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery; to make it known among men. 2. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. The heavenly hosts look on (1 Cor. 11:10) and behold by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

That which no prophet ever saw, what no human being could have imagined, what no angel ever knew, what was known alone to God, took place. The Church, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, began on earth with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. They see how this body is being built, fitly framed together, and they know the glory which awaits that body. Therefore now is made known unto angels by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

And because the angels possess this knowledge, they rejoice over one repenting sinner (Luke 15:7). They know what it means to the sinner, and more so to Christ, when another member is added to His body. Nor must we lose sight of another statement. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). We do not know how they minister to our need, but we know they do minister.

The second prayer in this epistle (verses 14-21) is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The petitions of the prayer are five: 1. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. 2. That Christ may dwell in your heart. 3. To comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height. 4. To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. 5. To be filled with all the fullness of God. The Holy Spirit who gave this prayer wants God's people to know more of Christ, to feed on Him and by knowing the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, to be filled unto all the fullness of God. Think of the dimensions of this love! We are to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height. But who can know all this? It will take eternity to comprehend it all. Look at the outstretched arms of the blessed One on the cross! Here we behold the breadth. "Come unto Me all"--that is the breadth of His love. The length is from eternity to eternity. The first chapter told us of the fact that before the foundation of the world He thought of us. He loved us before we ever existed. His love has no beginning and no end. it is an eternal love with which He loveth us.

And the depth! How deep, oh! how deep did He go down! The manger? The boyhood days in Nazareth? The manhood when He had not where to lay His head? The life that spent and was spent? Ah! the depths are far deeper. Let the hours of darkness give the answer, when He descended into the deep, dark waters of judgment and God's face was hidden from Him. Shall we ever know the depths of His love?

The height takes us into the heaven of heavens. Look into an opened heaven! See the glory-light! Behold there on that throne, there sits, not an angel, but a man! "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." And into that glory He has taken us. His love could never stop short of that. Where He is there the objects of His love shall ever be with Him. "The glory Thou hast given me I have given them." Oh! the breadth, the length, the depth, the height!

"To know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." We are to know

something which passeth knowledge. It is a paradox. We know that love, and the more we know it the more it passeth our knowledge. Shall we ever know fully the love that passeth knowledge? This ever must be our blessed occupation to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. And what are the consequences? "That ye may be filled unto (not with) all the fullness of God." In the measure in which we know the love of Christ and comprehend the dimensions of this love, in the measure in which we have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith and are rooted and grounded in love, in that measure shall we be filled unto all the fullness of God.

The blessed doxology ends this wonderful section of God's highest revelation. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." What assurance and what encouragement to pray. Let us ask much in spiritual things and He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

II. THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER (4-6)

1. Walking worthy of the Calling

CHAPTER 4:1-6

1. The walk in lowliness and meekness (4:1-2)
2. Keeping the unity of the Spirit (4:3-6)

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." This marks the beginning of the second part of the epistle. It is obvious then, to walk worthy as a Christian, one has to know the calling wherewith God has called us. This calling, as we have seen, is revealed in the first three chapters. The first exhortation is to walk "with all lowliness and meekness." He does not speak of doing some great work, or to seek special gifts and special power. Lowliness and meekness are to be manifested by the members of the body of Christ. These two words remind us of the Lord Jesus and the words which came from His blessed lips. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). He who had laid His glory by, thus emptying Himself, lived down here in lowliness and meekness. And we are called to walk even as He walked (1 John 2:6). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The Holy Spirit tells us then that the first thing in the walk of the believer is to manifest the lowliness and meekness of the Lord Jesus. Walking in meekness produces gentleness towards the brethren, the fellow-saints. And as we walk "with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" we manifest practically that we are members of the one body. Love is to be the governing principle towards all the saints of God.

In the second place we are to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are not told to produce the unity of the Spirit, but to keep it. What is this unity of the Spirit? It is the unity which God in His infinite grace has made Himself. All believers are members of the body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit dwells in each and He has put us into that body as members; the one body, and believers members

of that body, constitutes the unity of the Spirit. We are to own it by keeping it in the bond of peace. This unity can never be destroyed for it is the work of God. But it may be denied and the expression of it completely lost. Alas! this is the common thing about us. Sectarianism is a denial of this unity of the Spirit. We keep the unity of the Spirit when we recognize in every true believer a member of Christ and of His body. What will enable us to keep this unity and this walk worthy of our calling? We must constantly feed on the glorious realities of our redemption in Christ. What God has wrought for us and for all His saints, the fact that all are indwelt by the same Spirit, and that all have the same glorious destiny, must never be lost sight of.

The unity of the Spirit is revealed in verses 4-6. Again, the three persons of the Godhead are seen only in reverse order, the Holy Spirit first, the Son of God the second, and the God and Father third.

The Holy Spirit

1. One Body
2. One Spirit
3. One Hope

The Son of God, the Lord

4. One Lord
5. One Faith
6. One Baptism

The God and Father

7. One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all

The one body, which stands first, is the Church, the body of Christ. The fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. He came on the day of Pentecost and the Baptism of the Spirit then took place, by which the body of Christ is formed. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). The one hope is the hope of the Church, to be with the Lord in glory, to be like Him and share His glory. The next three linked with the Lord and are likewise connected with the Church. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, presents the aspect of public profession. The one Lord, is Christ; all Christians own Him professedly as Lord. The "one faith" is the faith in the Lord and the "one baptism" is water-baptism, which is both, the initiatory rite of Christian profession and an expression of that faith in the one Lord. And God is the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Of course this applies only to believers.

2. The Ministry and Its Purpose

CHAPTER 4:7-16

1. Ministry according to the measure of the gift of Christ (4:7-10)
2. The needed and permanent gifts (4:11)
3. The purpose and the goad (4:12-16)

Each member in the body of Christ has a specific place for a specific work. See Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:4-5. And the bestowal of gifts for service in the body is in His hands. He ascended upon high and triumphed over all enemies. He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. He triumphed over the devil, who has the power of death and stripped him of that power. And all who constitute His body share in His triumph. They are no longer under the power of Satan, but delivered from the power of darkness, they are His trophies. "He led captivity captive," i.e., those who were in captivity, or "a troop, a multitude of captives." The view held by some that the Old Testament saints are meant, whom He led forth from Hades is incorrect.

Psalm 68 is quoted. But we discover an omission. Psalm 68:18 reads, "Thou has received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The last sentence is omitted, for the rebellious are the Jews; they are as the rebellious nation not in view in Ephesians, though the day will come when Israel will be converted and the promised gifts will be bestowed upon that nation. And He who ascended also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. It means the deepest depths of suffering, the shameful death of the cross and that He was buried. (This passage has nothing to do with 1 Peter 3:18- The meaning of this Scripture will be fully explained in our annotations of the First Epistle of Peter.) As the Ascended One He has given gifts for the ministry in the body. These gifts are "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers." Other gifts are mentioned in First Corinthians such as the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, etc. These were not permanent gifts, and not absolutely necessary for the perfecting of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ.

The gifts mentioned here in Ephesians abide to the end until the Church is complete and removed from the earth. The apostles are the apostles of the beginning. The apostolate of Mormonism and similar cults is an invention. Nowhere does it say that Paul, Peter or John should have successors; all who lay claim to the title of apostle in the church are deceivers (Rev. 2:2). The doctrines of the apostles are in our possession as the supreme gifts of the exalted Lord to His body. New Testament prophets are such who speak the message of God for the comfort and exhortation of God's people. The evangelist preaches the gospel. The pastor and teacher are practically one. The teacher expounds the Word and teaches the doctrines of the Bible. And these gifts remain till the Lord comes for His saints. The gifts are for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. And each gift is not for a certain part of the church, but for the whole body. "Till we all come unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." This measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ will be reached when the body is joined to the Head. When the Church enters into His presence and He presents the church to Himself (Eph. 5:27), then this completion has come. Till then He will give the gifts to the Church, His body, for the upbuilding of that body. And He puts this body together and ministers unto its needs (verse 16).

3. The Walk in Holiness and Righteousness

CHAPTERS 4:17-5:21

1. Not as the Gentiles walk (4:17-19)

2. The putting off and putting on (4:20-32)
3. Followers of God (5:1-2)
4. Exhortations (5:3-21)

At this point the exhortations to walk in separation begin. The "therefore" of verse 17 refers us to the "wherefore" of chapter 2:11-12. What Gentiles are in their natural condition is here once more put before us. The grace of God takes the believer out of these conditions and puts power on our side to walk "no longer as the Gentiles walk." And how solemn is the description of what Gentiles are by nature! Nor must we overlook the fact, that beneath the thin veneer of our boasted civilization, which rejects Christ and the gospel, there is the same darkened understanding, the same alienation from God, the same blindness and the uncleanness of which these words speak.

Saved by grace these Gentiles had heard Christ and had been taught by Him. To walk according as the truth is in Jesus is the responsibility of all who know and follow Him. He is our pattern. The old man is put off and the new man is put on. We are not told to put off the old man by all kinds of endeavors and resolutions; it is already done. The old man was put away by the cross of Christ (Rom. 6:6). This is the blessed truth which delivers from doubt and bondage. And then we receive something in Christ, the new man, the new nature. Grace unclothed us and clothed us. Grace made an end of the old man and put upon us the new man. And this new man, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, which calls for a corresponding walk. But there is also a practical putting off and putting on. Of this we read in verses 25-29. In verse 26 there is a command to be angry and sin not. There is a righteous anger which is not sinful. The Lord Jesus exhibited that (Mark 3:5). When truth is perverted, or that blessed and worthy name is dishonored, a righteous feeling of displeasure arises in the heart, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Such a feeling is not sin. But we are warned "let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The wrath of man, if nourished, worketh not the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:20). How easy it is to harbor feelings which are sinful, and in doing so give place to the devil. Corrupt communications are not to proceed out of the mouth of a member of the body of Christ, "but that which is good for needful building up, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Speech is always to be with grace, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6). In view of such exhortations, the practice of certain evangelists to use "slang," vulgar and common expressions in public speech stands condemned.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye have been sealed unto the day of redemption." We are His temple and all must be avoided which displeases the holy guest. That He dwells in us and we are sealed by Him is the evidence of our eternal security. We are sealed by Him unto the day of redemption. We may grieve Him, but He will never leave those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. He abides with us forever. in verse 32 we find another exhortation how the members of the body of Christ should act towards each other.

We are to be imitators 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 savor. Then there are additional exhortations about fornication, all uncleanness, or covetousness, as well as other things. It shows the possibility of a child of God falling into these things. The true believer knows that in his flesh dwelleth no good

thing, and that only the power of the Holy Spirit can deliver him from the power of the flesh; therefore he walks in the Spirit. There can be no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God for such whose life is in these things. A child of God may fall and commit some of these things, but no true believer will continue to live in them.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (5:10. when our Lord was on earth He reproved the unfruitful works of darkness. His condemnation was aimed at the religious Pharisees and rationalistic Sadducees. He pronounced His solemn "woes" upon them. Walking as the children of light, therefore, means separation from evil, moral and religious, and a definite witness against it.

The exhortation in verse 14, to awake and arise, is not addressed to an unsaved person, but to a Christian. Many believers are in the state of spiritual sleep among the spiritually dead in the world; but the promise is given, that Christ will give light when the awakening comes. Another important exhortation is found in verse 18: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." "Be filled with the Spirit" does not mean another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another Pentecost. The Holy Spirit dwells in every child of God; He is the abiding guest. He is in us to fill us, and He will do so if we walk in the Spirit. May we open our whole heart to Him and walk in obedience, abiding in Christ, occupied with Christ, exalting Christ, and we shall know what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Some of the effects of it are mentioned in the verses which follow (verses 19-21). There is worship and thanksgiving. He is also the Spirit of love and grace--"submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

4. Manifestation in the Family-relationship

CHAPTERS 5:22-6:4

1. Wives representative of the Church (5:22-24)
2. Husbands representative of Christ (5:25-29)
3. The mystery: concerning Christ and the Church (5:30-33)
4. Exhortations to children and parents (6:1-4)

The exhortations which follow concern the Christian family. The mystery concerning Christ and the Church (verse 32) is to be manifested in the family relationship. While before we have seen the Church as the body of Christ, here in these verses we see the Church in her love-relation to Christ. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The union of husband and wife is used as a type of the union of Christ and the Church. Wives are mentioned first: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." And why? For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church; and "He is savior of the body." The wife is therefore to be in submission to her own husband in everything, as the Church is subject unto Christ. Thus the wife in her submission is to bear witness to the blessed relationship of Christ and the Church. She has the blessed portion of being in subjection. The question arises, What, if the husband is not a believer? Is she to submit in such a case? The Word of God gives definite instructions covering such a case, and adds a promise (See 1 Peter 3:1-2).

The husband is not to demand of the wife this submission, which is her place. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. He

stands in the Christian family as the representative of Christ and is called to love his wife. And how did Christ love the Church? He came from heaven's glory to be a servant. He served and is serving the Church. The husband's love towards the wife is to be expressed in loving service in her behalf and giving unto her, as unto the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Not the wife is to serve the husband, but the husband is to serve her in love, thus manifesting in a little measure the love of Christ for the Church. Beautiful is the description of the love of Christ for the Church. It is a love in the past: "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Thus there is a present love: "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Then there is His future love: "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." it is the love which passeth knowledge, the love which never changeth; the love which is eternal. Equally blessed is the truth contained in verses 30-33. We are members of His body, and of His flesh and His bones.

That we have here a reference to Adam and Eve as the types of Christ and the Church is obvious. While Adam slept God built the woman out of his side and then presented her to him. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," were Adam's words. She was taken out of his body, shared the same life and was also Adam's wife. Adam is the figure of Him that was to come (Rom. 5:14). Eve is the type of the Church. We possess His life and are of Himself, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. And the Church's destiny is to have dominion with Him over the new creation.

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. And the fathers are not to provoke the children to wrath, "but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And how much wisdom this takes! Parents must show constantly to the children the love and patience of Christ and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Then the promise will be made good. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

5. Exhortations to Servants and Masters

CHAPTER 6:5-9

The servants exhorted were slaves. Slavery existed throughout the Roman Empire at that time. Nowhere is slavery attacked in the New Testament, nor is there a statement telling believers that it was a sin to own slaves and incompatible with the gospel. Paul wrote a courteous letter to Philemon and sent it by Onesimus, the runaway slave, who probably had stolen money from Philemon, his master. The gospel is not here to reform the world, to meddle with social conditions and politics.

The slaves here exhorted were Christians. They all belonged to the one body where there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free. They were in Christ, saved by grace and seated in Christ in the heavenly places. What did it matter if they were but slaves! Did not God's well beloved Son walk on this earth as a servant, yea, the servant of all! In all their bonds they were the servants of Christ. Their service was to be rendered as unto the Lord and not unto men. The Lord would give them their reward. How happy these believing slaves must have been! And the Christian masters were to remember the one Master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons.

6. The Warfare and the Panoply of God

CHAPTER 6:10-20

1. The warfare (6:10-12)
2. The panoply of God (6:13-20)

Christian warfare or conflict is with the devil and his wiles, with the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with the spiritual armies of wickedness in the heavenly places (literal translation).

This revelation given here concerning the powers of darkness, the principalities, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the wicked spirits in the heavenly places, is important and demands a closer attention. The Scriptures clearly teach that there is a vast dominion of darkness over which Satan is the head and that, as the god of this present age, he has rulers over this world and a large army of wicked spirits in the heavenlies. He is the prince of the power in the air. The sphere above the earth, the aerial heavens and beyond are tenanted by these wicked spirits, which under the headship of Satan form with principalities and powers, his kingdom. How mighty this being is, what powers are at his disposal, how vast his dominion, how numerous the fallen angels, the wicked spirits which possess the heavenly places, no Saint has ever fully realized, nor can it be all known, till the day comes in which the God of peace shall bruise Satan completely under our feet. Satan has even access into heaven itself. The first two chapters of the book of Job acquaint us with this fact. See also 1 Kings 22:19-23.

But a day is coming when the old serpent, called the devil and Satan, will be cast out into the earth and his angels with him. This will happen according to the Apocalypse (Rev. 12), when the saints of God are taken into glory and Michael begins his great war against Satan. Then the heavenlies will be cleared of their wicked and unlawful occupants. They will be forced to the earth, where Satan for a brief period will exhibit his great wrath and institute the great tribulation. The devil and his angels will finally be cast into the lake of fire prepared for them (Matt. 25:41). All this we know from God's revelation, and it is a solemn revelation.

In our days the masses of professing Christendom are wholly indifferent to these truths. Others openly oppose them, sneer at them and reject them as superstitions. Well has it been said, "No one but an unbeliever can overlook and despise them." Behind all these denials and sneers, coming from the camps of higher criticism and the new theology stands the dark shadow of Satan. The rulers of darkness of this world, the wicked spirits, do all in their power to keep a lost world, with its supposed progress and scientific discoveries, in ignorance and darkness about themselves. And occultism, known by the names of spiritualism and Psychical research, tries to establish communion with departed spirits. In reality it is communion with the wicked spirits in the heavenlies, who use this unlawful intrusion to delude their victims and make them doubly secure for the impending doom.

And these wicked spirits are against the masterpiece of God. Those who are in Christ and lay hold in the power of His Spirit of the great and ever blessed truths revealed in this epistle, who know the hope of His calling,

who rejoice in God and the glory to come, who walk worthy of the calling, come face to face with these powers of darkness. They hate us as they hate Christ.

The wiles of the devil, not his power, we are exhorted to stand against. His wiles are all aimed at getting us away from the enjoyment of the fellowship into which God has called us, the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. If he succeeds in that he has dislodged us from our stronghold and then is able to attack us. The world over which he rules is at his disposal and he uses it to accomplish his sinister purpose. Many pages could be written on his tactics and not the half would be told. It is not so much by the gross things of the flesh and the world he works, though he also uses them; errors of all descriptions becoming more subtle and more cunning, are the chiefest wiles of this great being and the wicked spirits under his control. And how well he succeeds in our present time!

And we must put on the whole armor of God, the panoply of God. It is the only way that we can get the victory and stand and withstand. First, the loins are to be girt about with truth. Even so our Lord exhorted, "Let your loins be girded about" (Luke 12:35).

It is the girdle around the loins, which holds all things together. The girdle is the truth. What truth? The truth of heavenly things, heavenly blessings, acceptance in Christ, oneness with Him, the truth so fully revealed in this Epistle. This we need as a girdle to hold up our garments, our habits, so that in the warfare and conflict we may not be entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4). The truth is to govern our conduct, our affections.

The breastplate of righteousness. This covers the heart. It means having a good conscience. Not merely knowing that we are the righteousness of God in Christ, that we are righteous because we believe on Him, but it means a consistent walk with our position in Christ and the relationship into which the grace of God has brought us. It is again the walk, worthy of our vocation, obedience to the exhortations of the preceding chapters. Covered by this the devil cannot touch us. Such practical righteousness "love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned" keeps us in the realization and enjoyment of our relationship to God, in the fellowship with the Father and the Son. How often we fail in having on the breastplate of righteousness. Then we must seek restoration by confessing our sins (1 John 1:9).

The feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This does not mean the preaching of the gospel to others, Christian service or soul winning. We have through the gospel perfect peace with God. We know that God is for us, who then can be against us? This perfect peace we have, in which we stand is our preparation. And we have the peace of God as well, yea, the legacy our Lord left unto us, "My peace I give unto you." Therefore we are not terrified by our adversaries (Phil. 1:28). Israel wandered over the desert rocks and desert sands for forty years with shoes, which did not wear out. We too wander through the wilderness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, a peace which will last as long as God Himself. Knowing this Peace, knowing we are in God's hands, knowing that we are Christ's and Christ is God's, knowing that all things are ours, we can stand and withstand the wiles of the devil. He cannot touch one who rests in the peace of God and who trusts in the God of peace.

The shield of faith. This is to be "over all" (not above all" as in the Authorized Version). Faith in God, faith in His promises, faith in His Word, simple child-like faith is to cover the head and the body like a great shield. It is the exercise of an unwavering confidence in God. The fiery darts will thus be quenched. These "fiery darts" are indeed terrible weapons. The fire speaks of the wrath of God, of judgment, at least, from Him, and it is with this that the enemy would assail us. He is, we must remember, the accuser. His aim, as already said, is to bring distance in some sense between our souls and God. How great a necessity, therefore, to maintain this happy confidence in Him, which, while it does not excuse failure in the least, yet, in utter weakness, finds all its confidence in Him who has undertaken for us. "All the fiery darts of the wicked one" can thus be "quenched" by the "shield of faith" (F. W. Grant).

The helmet of salvation. The helmet rests upon the head. it covers the head, the seat of intelligence. Assurance of salvation past, present and future is this helmet. As we wear it and as it governs our mind and heart as well, the wiles of the devil cannot fall upon us. We are in possession of a salvation which is secure. No power in earth or heaven, the devil with all his demon powers, cannot spoil us of it. This gives not alone confidence, but boldness in the conflict. Sad it is to see the thousands of believers without the helmet of salvation, destitute of the assurance of salvation and therefore the easy prey of the devil's wiles, driven about by every wind of doctrine. Well has it been said: "Girded by the truth applies to the judgment of the inner man. Practical righteousness guards the conscience from the assaults of the enemy; the power of peace gives a character to our walk; confidence in the love of God quenches the poisoned arrows of doubt; the assurance of salvation gives us boldness to go onward."

The sword of the Spirit. It is the word of God, the only offensive weapon mentioned in the armor of God. It is to meet the devil and to make him flee from us. How our blessed Lord wielded this sword in the wilderness, how He met the devil by a "It is written" is well known to every Christian. Was there ever a time when God's people had greater need of laying hold with a firm grasp of the sword of the Spirit? Satan has succeeded by his wiles to dull the edge of that sword. The enemy also perverts and counterfeits the Word. What need then that as never before we go "to the law and to the testimonies." We must search the Word and have the Word search us. We must have the Word in our hearts and our hearts in the Word, and thus alone can we meet the enemy.

Praying always. We do not detach this from the armor of God. It belongs to it. Prayer always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, is next to the sword of the Spirit the most powerful weapon against the devil and his wicked hosts. We must read the Word and pray. Prayer and the Word cannot be separated. The searching of the Word must be done with prayer and prayer will be effectual through knowing the Word. Prayer is dependence on God; we lean on Him. And as we pray in the Spirit (not for the Spirit) we are to watch also and remember all the saints of God, the blessed members of the body of Christ, the masterpiece of God.

7. The Conclusion

In the preceding verses the great apostle asked the prayers of the saints for himself. Thereby he testified in a practical way to the great truth of the body of Christ, the church. The conclusions are brief. Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in Christ, would make known to them all things, and he was sent also by the loving apostle to comfort their hearts. What a marvelous document this epistle is! What a solid rock to stand upon! What revelations concerning God, and ourselves as redeemed by the blood of His Son! God grant that all His people may increasingly enjoy the riches of this richest portion of His Holy Word.

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