EPHESIANS

UNITED IN CHRIST!

"A Study of the Book
of
EPHESIANS"

by

Ron Christian

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

As author of this book, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscript of this book. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessings to many persons.

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: MOUNTAIN PEAKS of SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS!

SCRIPTURE: ***"...which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*** **(Ephesians 1:-23)**

TEXT: ***"God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places."*** **(Ephesians 1:23)**

INTRODUCTION

Paul was so enraptured with the riches of spiritual blessings that, in his attempt to communicate these blessings, he piled descriptive phrase upon descriptive phrase.

PROPOSITION

To glance at several of the great 'mountain peaks' of spiritual blessing, is to break out into a shout with Paul, and declare: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." (v. 3)

- **A. CHOSEN PEOPLE (vs. 3-4)**
- **B. DESTINED PEOPLE (vs. 5-6)**
- **C. REDEEMED PEOPLE (v. 7)**
- **D. FORGIVEN PEOPLE (v. 8)**
- **E. ENLIVENED PEOPLE (vs. 11-12)**
- **F. HOPEFUL PEOPLE (vs. 13-14)**
- **G. EMPOWERED PEOPLE (vs. 18-23)**

CONCLUSION

Are you enjoying your spiritual inheritance? You are a child of the King, so enjoy the privileges of royalty.

CHAPTER 1

MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS!

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been so excited about something, as you were relating it to someone else, that your mind got ahead of your tongue? There was so much to tell and you could not find the words to communicate your excitement.

That is often what happened to Paul. Paul was so full of Christ and the riches of Christ that Paul could not contain himself. Paul's letters to the Churches were love letters to dear friends. Paul was so enraptured with the riches of spiritual blessings that, in his attempt to communicate these blessings, he piled descriptive phrase upon descriptive phrase.

"In the Greek language the long passage from verse 3 to verse 14 is one single sentence. It is so long and so complicated because it represents not so much a reasoned statement as a lyrical song of praise. Paul's mind goes on and on, not because he is thinking in logical stages but because gift after gift and wonder after wonder from God pass before his eyes and enter into his mind." (Daily Study Bible, William Barclay Ephesians, pg. 88)

PROPOSITION

I would like for you to imagine that you are aboard a spiritual airplane. There is a mighty range of spiritual mountains, with towering mountain peaks of various heights to look upon as you fly above the range. Just as a plane flies quickly over a number of mountain peaks in a relatively short time, so I would like for you to get an airplane view of some of the great mountain peaks of spiritual blessing which Paul puts before our view in Ephesians, Chapter 1.

A. CHOSEN PEOPLE: ***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight."*** **(Ephesians 1: 3-4, NIV)**

Wonder of it all is that God would choose man! The infinite choosing the finite: the all-powerful choosing the very weak! God took the initiative to choose to save humanity. Said Jesus, ***"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name".*** **(John 15: 16, NIV)**

God chose to save the entire human race, but only those who accept God's universal offer of salvation, and become members of the choice (elect group).

To glance at several of the great 'mountain peaks' of spiritual blessing, is to breaks out into a shout with Paul, and declare: ***"Blessed be the God and***

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." **(v. 3)**

B. DESTINED PEOPLE: *"...he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One He loves."* (Ephesians 1: 5-6, NIV)

Even before the foundation of the world, God determined to adopt us as His children. The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every person. God claims the right to be our Father and us His children. "He determined in His love before time began to adopt us to Himself through Jesus Christ." (Barclay's Daily Study Bible, pg. 91)

"We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world; and God, through Jesus, took us out of that power into His power; and that adoption cancels and wipes out the past and we are made new. We have passed from the family of the world of evil into the family of God." (Barclay's Daily Study Bible; Ephesians, pg. 93)

C. REDEEMED PEOPLE: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."* (Ephesians 1: 7, NIV)

The meaning of redemption is 'to loose'. Man is in bondage to sin by reason of his own sinful nature and by reason of his own willful choice. Man is inadequate to free himself from the terrible bondage to sin. The man without Christ feels like crying out, "*Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from slavery to this deadly lower nature?*" (Romans 7: 24, NIV)

One ancient philosopher, Seneca, said about himself that he was a man not to be tolerated. "Men, he said with a kind of despair, love their vices and hate them at the same time. What men need, he cried, is a hand let down to lift them up." (Barkley's Ephesians; pg. 94)

It is Christ's death that loosed men from the bondage to sin. Christ's death appeased the wrath of God, and demonstrated at the same time God's love for the sinner. Christ's resurrection revealed God's power—a power so great that sin's chains could be broken. Christ's death was the substitutionary price of redemption, and Christ's resurrection was the availing power to set the prisoner free.

D. FORGIVEN PEOPLE: *"...that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."* (Ephesians 1: 8, NIV)

One of the greatest gifts or blessings from God is forgiveness. *"We have forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us."* (v. 8)

Forgiveness means the release of guilt, and that is a great blessing. For guilt drains away our vitality, and many times causes physical problems. Guilt shows itself even in one's facial expressions. There are young people with old faces, because of the marks of guilt on the soul, but there are old people with happy youthful faces because of sense of a forgiveness and fellowship with God.

A clear conscience is one of the greatest gifts possible. Said one lady to my wife: "I would give so much if I had peace with God."

The guilty conscience is a terrible plague. As Shakespeare had it in 'Richard the Third':

> **"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,**
> **And every tongue brings in a several tale,**
> **And every tale condemns me for a villain."**

But thanks be to God, "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath God removed our transgressions from us." God has buried our sins in the sea of His forgetfulness, never to be remembered against us again. What a great spiritual blessing!

E. ENLIGHTENED PEOPLE: ***"And he made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."*** **(Ephesians 1:9-10, NIV)**

The mystery or secret of God has been gloriously revealed in Christ, which is the unifying and redeeming of all of nature and of all humanity. God is sovereign and He will make even the wrath of men to praise Him. Evil will not triumph. Good and justice will have the final say. Right will be rewarded; evil will be punished. The godly will be saved; the ungodly shall perish.

However, ***"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*** **(II Peter 2:4, NIV)**

In olden times God did not share this plan with His people, but now He has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to His apostles and prophets and this is the secret: ***"that the Gentiles will have their full share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's sons; both are invited to belong to His Church and all of God's promises of mighty blessings through Christ apply to them both when they accept the good news about Christ and what He has done for them."*** **(Ephesians 3:6) The people of God are enlightened people who know they have good news for all people, for "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:13)**

F. ENLIVENED PEOPLE: Verse 12 says *"that we who have hope in Christ have been "appointed to live for the praise of his glory."*

What kind of life best brings praise and honor and glory to the Saviour? It is the life that is fulfilling the purposes of God, the life that is fitting into God's master plan for history. What is God's master plan for history? To bring all things and all people into unity and fellowship around the feet of Jesus!

Who are the people who are most alive, the people who are alive to God's purpose and plan? The people who are in Christ, for it are these people who are accepting their portion in God's scheme, to unite all people to Christ.

Enlivened people are reconciling people. *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."* People who see Christ as the great Unifier, as the great Reconciler, as the great Saviour of all men – these people are vitally alive, and thus enjoying the spiritual blessings for which they were created.

Christians should be the most alive, as they are ones who have a sense of destiny, purpose, and direction. They know where history is going. They know where nature is going. They know that, in spite of what appears, on the surface, that underneath the façade, God is working mightily to bring all things into subjection to His Son. All things and all people will someday bow at the feet of Jesus. "Stanley Jones said the awful events of earth did not disturb him because he knew 'how it will all come out.' Yes, of course. This is the secret of serenity in our work. The genuine Christian, in his depths, is not at sixes and sevens, for he knows that history has a goal divinely determined and that, whatever happens, Almighty God is moving redemptively to that great and grand goal." (The Minister's Ministries, Don Demaray; pg. 20)

Writes E. Stanley Jones, concerning his own experience of the aliveness of God in his life: "There is more unalloyed joy in being a Christian to the square inch than there is to the square mile outside him. When I started on a six-month evangelistic tour of the East, Mary Webster wrote and said: 'Have fun with Jesus.' Sounded flippant at first, but the more I thought of it the flippancy turned to fact. That is exactly what I'm having as a Christian. I am having fun, and it is with Jesus" (a Song of Ascents; E. Stanley Jones; pg. 342)

G. HOPEFUL PEOPLE: "*And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing your inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory."* (Ephesians 1:13-14, NIV)

Verses 13 and 14 reveal another great blessing in our spiritual inheritance. God tells us that future riches are assured. We have already seen that past mysteries are revealed and present life is enjoyed. Now we see that future riches are assured. The future is as bright as the promises of God for the believer. And to guarantee that our hope for future riches is not merely an illusion of the mind, God has given us the promised Holy Spirit, "which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."

"So what Paul is saying is that the experience of the Holy Spirit which we have in this world is a foretaste of the joys and of the blessedness of heaven; and it is the guarantee that some day we will enter into the fullness of knowledge, of power and of joy. It is the guarantee that some day we will enter into full possession of the bliss and the blessedness of God." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 101)

October 23, 1975, Merlin Adamson, missionary to Africa for nearly 20 years, died at the young age of 48 – at the height of his missionary career. He was my wife's cousin. We received a small note from his wife: "Of course we miss Merlin so very much but, it is comforting to know that he is with the One who loves him even more than we do. Heaven seems so much closer now that he is there."

H. EMPOWERED PEOPLE : " ***I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything ii every way."*** **(Ephesians 1:18-23, NIV)**

A group of students were asked if they thought Christianity was essentially a Demand or an Offer. How would you answer that question? After considerable thought, they realized that Christianity is an offer.

God has promised that His grace is sufficient for every problem of life. God said that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Paul affirmatively met life with a big 'Yes' when he shouted, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Christ offers adequate resources to meet every crisis of life. Paul declared that we are 'more than conquerors' through Christ (Romans 8). Christ our Anchor holds us in every storm of life. Paul testified that he had "learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want." (Philippians 4) What was the secret to living such a masterful life amidst all the changes and chances of life? "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Paul prayed for all believers that their spiritual eyes might be enlightened that they might see "the immeasurable greatness of God's power in us who believe."

The power that works in life of the believer is the same power that was best demonstrated in God's working with Christ. Paul notes four things which were accomplished through the exercise of God's power toward Christ: (1) Christ's Resurrection, (2) Christ's Ascension, (3) Christ's Dominion (Militant Victory), (4) Christ's Headship over the Church.

Just think! The same power that accomplished these mighty events is the power that is available for every believer! What a great spiritual blessing! The believers' aspiration toward effective living is fulfilled through the 'working of God's great might.'

What makes "Heaven seem so much closer"? What are the foundations and assurance and basis of such confidence? It is the Holy Spirit who makes heaven's future treasures real to us now, giving us a foundation for our hope. The Holy Spirit is God's promise to us that "the best is yet to be."

CONCLUSION

We have glanced at Eight Mountain Peaks of Spiritual Blessing. How blessed are God's People! They are:

1. **Chosen People (vs. 3-4)**
2. **Destined People (vs. 5-6)**
3. **Redeemed People v. 7)**
4. **Forgiven People (v. 8**
5. **Enlightened People (vs. 9-10)**
6. **Enlivened People (vs. 11-12)**
7. **Hopeful People (vs. 13-14)**
8. **Empowered People (vs. 18-23)**

In considering the multitude of spiritual blessings which belong to true believers, it is no wonder that Paul began his great Ephesians letter with the shout of praise: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 1:3, NIV)

Are you enjoying your spiritual inheritance? Remember daily that:

'God is so good to me.
God is so good to me
He holds my hand
He helps me stand
God is so good to me.'

You are a child of the King, so enjoy the privileges of royalty!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 1

1. What is your personal emotional reaction to the fact that the all-holy righteous) God of the universe would decide to choose sinful human creatures to become His "very own", and that He would decide to make such "fallen creatures" holy in His eyes? (Ephesians 1:3-4)

2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Even though God (through Christ) chose to save the entire sinful human race, only those individuals who choose to accept God's universal offer of salvation will actually be saved from their sins and be eventually given the gift of eternal life in heaven."

3. In terms of practical behavior and attitudes, what does it mean for a person to be 'holy' and 'blameless'? (Ephesians 1:4)

4. According to Ephesians 1:5-6, what did God determine (decide) to do, even before the foundation of the world? What, to you, does it mean to be called a 'son' of God, instead of a 'slave'? With the 'privileges' of sonship (in the 'family of God'), what are the 'responsibilities' (expectations) of sonship?

5. According to Ephesians 1:7, what is the meaning of 'redemption', and why is Christ's death and resurrection the 'means' and the 'power' by which redemption is accomplished for mankind?

6. Why is a sense of personal forgiveness perhaps the greatest need that human creatures have? (Note Ephesians 1:8) To one who confesses their sins (I John 1:9), what has God promised?

7. According to Ephesians 1:9-10, what is the mystery (secret) of God which He has gloriously revealed through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

8. What kind of life best brings praise and honor and glory to the Saviour?

9 Do you (as a believer) view Christ as the 'Great Unifier', the 'Great Reconciler', The 'Great Saviour of all mankind', or do you view Christ as the 'Great Divider of mankind' who arbitrarily chooses to save 'the elect ones' and to condemn the vast majority of the human race? (Note Ephesians 1:11-12) Do you believe God chose (destined) all human beings "to live for the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:12), or do you believe that God chose only a select number to live praiseworthy and God-honoring lives?

10. Why should Christian people, of all people in the world, be "most alive" and "most purposefully"?

11. **Do you believe that (in spite of the chaos and the obvious evil in the world) history has a divinely determined goal, and that, whatever happens, Almighty God is moving redemptively to that great and grand goal? Do you believe the 'timing' and the 'manner' by which God reaches the goal for human history can be 'frustrated' because of sinners' evil choices and and because of the prayerlessness and disobedience of professing Christians?**

12. **From your own personal experience of life, tell if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There is more unalloyed joy in being a Christian to the square inch than there is to the square mile outside him." (Note Ecclesiastes 12:1; I Peter 1:8; I Timothy 6:17)**

13. **What is the 'guarantee' for a believer that his hopes for future riches (in heaven) are not merely an 'illusion of his mind' ('wishful thinking')? (Note Ephesians 1:13-14) Share your response (reaction) to the following statements: "It is the Holy Spirit who makes heaven's future treasures real to us now, giving us a foundation for our hope. The Holy Spirit is God's promise to us that 'the best is yet to be'."**

14. **Do you believe that Christianity is essentially a 'Demand' or essentially an 'Offer'? Why?**

15. **According to Ephesians 1:20-23, what four things were accomplished through the exercise of God's power toward Christ?**

16. **What power is available to you, to enable you to fulfill your strong aspiration to live a truly effective life?**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: CHOSEN TO BE CHOICE PEOPLE!

SCRIPTURE: ***"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: [2]Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3]Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. [4]For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love."*** **(Ephesians 1: 1-4)**

TEXT: "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love."

INTRODUCTION

How would you feel if someone taught that all persons are not created on equal terms? Which some are preordained to eternal life, and others are preordained to eternal damnation?

Does the Bible teach that God, in His eternal decrees, chose some to be saved and some to be lost? Did God choose us before the foundation of the world to be saved or to be lost? Does man have anything to say about his eternal destiny?

PROPOSITION

I propose to you that God chose the human race corporately to be saved and made mankind's salvation possible through what Christ voluntarily did at the Cross, thus putting all men into a savable relationship. In Christ, God choose to save all, but only those who accept God's choice become in reality the chosen ones of God.

A. UNIVERSAL POTENTIAL BLESSINGS ARE MADE POSSIBLE TO ALL MANKIND THROUGH CHRIST

B. GOD'S CHOICE IS NOT AN ARBITRARY PARTICULAR CHOICE OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS FOR SALVATION, BUT GOD'S CHOICE IS A CORPORATE CHOICE OF ALL MANKIND FOR SALVATION. GOD CHOSE TO DO THIS EVEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD!

C. GOD SENT CHRIST TO EARTH TO BECOME THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH DIVINE INTERACTION TO SAVE MANKIND COULD BECOME REALITY.

D. EACH INDIVIDUAL CAN PERSONALLY ACCEPT CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS, AND BY ACCEPTING CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT AS HIS PERSONAL ATONEMENT FOR SINS, BECOME AN ELECT (CHOSEN) MEMBER OF CHRIST'S BODY.

E. FAILURE TO BECOME HOLY AND BLAMELESS RESULTS IN FORFEITING ONE'S ELECTION AND SPECIAL STANDING WITH GOD.

CONCLUSION

The Universal atonement objectively accomplished by Christ on the cross, is sufficient for all and effective for those who accept the benefits of the atonement personally. The atonement that is universally sufficient becomes particularly efficient to those who accept the benefits of the atonement personally!

CHAPTER 2

CHOSEN TO BE CHOICE PEOPLE!

INTRODUCTION

How would you feel if someone taught that all persons are not created on equal terms? That some are preordained to eternal life, and others are preordained to eternal damnation? That before you came into the world, God had already predetermined whether you were to be saved or to be lost?

John Calvin taught this very thing to hundreds. He wrote, "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death."

Does the Bible teach that God, in His eternal decrees, chose some to be saved and some to be lost? Did God choose us before the foundation of the world to be saved or to be lost? Does man have anything to say about his eternal destiny?

How terrifying to believe the following, as stated by John Calvin: "We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment."(Quote in 'Elect in the Son'; by Robert Shank, pg. 47)

Think of it! Calvin taught, "One is saved or lost by eternal decrees! It is not surprising that when this idea of 'fixed-fate' laid hold of a poet of another century, he was moved to write:

> **'God, ever merciful and just**
> **With newborn babes did Tophet (Hell) fill;**
> **Down into endless torments thrust**
> **Merely to show His sovereign will.**
> **This is that Horrible Decree!**
> **This is that wisdom from beneath!**
> **God (O detest the blasphemy!)**
> **Hath pleasure in the sinner's death.'**
> **(Quoted in Thumb-nail Sketches of Doctrinal Patterns)**

Does the Bible teach that God, in His eternal decree, chose some to be saved and some to be lost? What saith the Scripture?

Did God choose us before the foundation of the world to be saved or to be lost? Does man have anything to say about his eternal destiny?

PROPOSITION

I propose to you that God chose the human race corporately to be saved and made mankind's salvation possible through what Christ voluntarily did at the Cross, thus putting all men into a savable relationship. In Christ, God chooses to save all, but only those who accept God's choice become in reality the chosen ones of God.

A. UNIVERSAL POTENTIAL BLESSINGS ARE MADE POSSIBLE TO ALL MANKIND THROUGH CHRIST

***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* (v. 3)**

God, in Christ, has chosen to bless the entire human race. "...'us' (v. 3) should be taken in its wider meaning...and should not be limited to the Apostle...nor to the Jewish Christians, but applies to his people, all men, who have become or will become Christians." (Quoted by Shank, 'Elect In the Son', pg. 45, from Lange)

B. GOD'S CHOICE IS NOT AN ARBITRARY PARTICULAR CHOICE OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS FOR SALVATION, BUT GOD'S CHOICE IS A CORPORATE CHOICE OF ALL MANKIND FOR SALVATION.

C. GOD CHOSE TO DO THIS EVEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD!

Although God did not predetermine mankind's fall into sin, God foreknew man would fall into sin. His foreknowledge of man's fall did not in any way determine man's fall into sin. God chose to create a creature that was free to choose to obey or to disobey. "For the thing that makes us uniquely human is that, unlike the other creatures, we are able to say both 'yes' and 'no' to God. Man does not do the will of his Creator by necessity. The stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has the unique and frightening ability – he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons." (God's Unfolding Purpose; Suzanne de Dietrich; pg. 36)

D. GOD SENT CHRIST TO EARTH TO BECOME THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH DIVINE INTERACTION TO SAVE MANKIND COULD BECOME REALITY.

Jesus was chosen by God to be sent into the world to bring salvation to mankind. (John 10:36, 5:37, 6:27, 12:49, 16:28 and John 17)

Was Christ's earthly life and death essential to make possible God's election of man in Christ? Could not God simply have decreed man's salvation without Jesus dying on the Cross? No! Even though God wanted

to save mankind, God could not save sinful humanity without the Holiness of God being honored and without the penalty of sin being paid (the penalty of sin being death).

Christ's sacrifice is the answer to God's holiness and the basis for man's justification. The atonement of Christ was absolutely essential for the salvation of man.

God loved mankind before creation – before the fall of man – but God could only save mankind through the death of Jesus on the Cross.

What God purposed and intended in eternity – namely, the choice (or election) of the human race for salvation and sonship - Christ made possible in time through His death on the cross. Without Christ's death on the cross, providing atonement for sin, the intention of God would never have been realized. There is n o way that any man could have been chosen by God for sonship without the historic work of Christ on the Cross. There is no election (or choice) of man to salvation outside of Christ and His work on the Cross! God's choice of humans for salvation and sonship could only become a reality because of what Christ did on the cross. We are chosen in (or through) the Beloved Christ!

Remember, God could only see His choice (desire and will) to save mankind become a reality because of what Christ did on the Cross. Also, realize that Christ did not have to come to earth, and neither did Christ have to die.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said, "Put away thy sword; thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and He shall immediately give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:52-54)

Notes Shank: "Thus, Jesus was completely voluntary in His death and laid down His life of Himself, by His own free choice. The voluntary character of His death made it the precise moment and the authentic act of election for time and eternity.

"The Father chose that the Son should die and gave Him up to death...but only on condition that the Son should choose to die. The decision for death was made, not only in the counsels of eternity before creation; in the FINAL deliberation, Jesus in Gethsemane made it. In His decision in Gethsemane, Jesus was completely free and faced real options. The Father would have concurred immediately and unquestionably in His decision for either option. Thus, the decision of Jesus was finally decisive. And because He was completely free in the final decision. His decision in Gethsemane to drink the cup, and the death that followed, became the authentic decision and act of election, irrevocable and eternal." (Elect In the Son, pg. 65)

E. EACH INDIVIDUAL CAN PERSONALLY ACCEPT CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS, AND BY ACCEPTING CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL

ATONEMENT AS HIS PERSONAL ATONEMENT FOR SINS, BECOME AN ELECT (CHOSEN) MEMBER OF CHRIST'S BODY.

The purpose for which one freely chooses to accept Christ's atonement is in order that he might become holy and blameless before God.

We are chosen to be 'holy', chosen for the purpose of separation from the world's values and standards. *"Come out from among them and be ye separate", saith the Lord, "and I will receive you and ye shall be my sons and daughters."* Not different just to be different, but different for a purpose. We are chosen to be like God, with godly values and attitudes; chosen for the purpose of separation from the world's values and standards. Believers are to stand out as different – with values of God controlling their behavior. This means that we are never to look at people as means but as ends, never as things to be used but as eternal beings to be served. The 'thingfication' of persons is always the tragic result in a society that considers gadgets more important than God! Christians are chosen by God to restore compassion to relationships and value to persons.

Notes Barclay, "It must always be remembered that this difference on which Christ insists is not a difference which takes a man out of the world; it makes him different within the world. It should be possible to identify the Christian in the school, the shop, the factory, the office, the hospital ward, everywhere." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 89)

We are also chosen to be 'blameless', that is, without blame and blemish and without guile and deception. We are not to be double-minded but single–minded. Our hearts are to be pure, and our motives worthy of Christ. We need daily to pray that God will cleanse the thoughts of our heart and mind.

The term - 'blameless' – refers to the Old Testament animal sacrifice that could only be offered to God if no blemishes were found in it. The animal must be perfectly formed and healthy before it could be used to offer to God. The offering of our lives – be it our home life, our personal life, our recreational life, or our work life – must be the best possible.

God's choice people must be people who are giving their very best to God, "Our talents may be few, they may be small, but unto God is due our best, our all!"

Every animal sacrifice had to undergo the scrutiny of the priests before it was used as a sacrifice for God. Only the very best animal could be offered to God. So it is with us. Our lives too must undergo the scrutiny of God. He knows the thoughts and intents and desires and attitudes of our hearts. All things are 'naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do'. We must not offer God our second-best. We must not give God the left–over's of our lives. He deserves the very best.

We must present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God. We are not faultless. Our body is weak, our mind is weak, and our conduct is not perfect, but our heart can be fully surrendered to God. "To will one thing – to do God's will" – that is a description of a pure heart. The sacrifice of a broken and a contrite spirit – this is the sacrifice acceptable to God. ***"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."*** **(Micah 6:8)**

It is a great privilege to be a chosen person, but with that blessing comes a great responsibility to be holy and blameless.

E. FAILURE TO BECOME HOLY AND BLAMELESS RESULTS IN FORFEITING ONE'S ELECTION AND SPECIAL STANDING WITH GOD

Only those who remain in Christ, only those who diligently seek to live a holy and blameless life, will remain as part of the elect Body of Christ.

God, before the foundation of the world, chose us (the corporate human race) to be saved through Christ. But each individual must accept God's choice to save him, and when accepting that divine choice, he must 'give diligence to make his calling and election (individually and personally) sure."

Those who are 'saints' (Ephesians 1:1) – (that is, the 'called out' persons who are holy and consecrated) remain in that relationship to God as they remain 'faithful' (v. 1) (that is, personally devoted) to God in Christ Jesus. ***"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus".*** **(Ephesians 1:1)**

God's will is that all will be saints (chosen out of the world to be God's special people), but only those who initially and continuously respond to God's offer of election in Christ become saints and remain saints. That is, only those who make an initial faith response to God's call to election become saints, and only those who are ***'faithful in Christ Jesus'*** **(v. 1), remain as saints (that is, remain as 'elected ones'). "Thus the order 'saints, faithful' is seen to be perfectly natural. The two thoughts are complementary: God's will, man's answer. So the thought of the social consecration to God precedes the thought of the continuous individual faith by which the members of the body keep their place in it." (Westcott, 'Elect In the Son' quoted by Shank, pg. 54)**

CONCLUSION

God has chosen to save the entire human race. God made this possible through the voluntary sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The life and death and resurrection of Christ provide the basis for the salvation of all mankind. God's intention to save the human race finds it potential reality in the work of Christ.

Because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, all of the human race corporately and every person individually is in a savable relationship. The work of Christ is so great that it is sufficient to save all. God is not willing that any should perish and Christ has made it possible for all to be saved.

But, what Christ has provided in terms of a universal atonement, each person must individually accept in order to become a part of Christ's elect body. God chose to save all, but that divine intention only becomes reality as each person becomes vitally attached by faith to Christ who is God's instrument for salvation.

You are chosen by God to become a choice people. Have you personally accepted God's call to a life of holiness and purity and devotion?

Respond to God's call of love today! The universal atonement objectively accomplished by Christ on the cross, is sufficient for all and effective for those who accept the benefits of the atonement personally. The atonement that is universally sufficient becomes particularly efficient to those who accept the benefits of the atonement personally!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 2

1. **How would you feel (respond and react) if someone taught you that all persons are <u>not</u> created on equal terms, that some are preordained to eternal life, and others are preordained to eternal damnation, that God actually created some persons to be damned and created some persons to be saved, that before you personally came into the world (i.e., before you were born), god had already predetermined whether you were to be a "member of God's elect family"?**

2. **Does John Calvin's doctrine (belief) in Predestination demolish any sense of God's justice and righteousness and love?**

3. **According to the Bible, did God choose you (i.e., predestination you) to be saved or lost eternally? Are you a 'free agent' with the God-given capacity to respond positively to God's offer of forgiveness and eternal life, or are you destined to be lost eternally regardless of what you do (if God has chosen not to save you)?**

4. **Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statements: "God chose the human race corporately to be saved and made mankind's salvation possible through what Christ voluntarily did at the Cross, thus putting all persons into a savable relationship. In Christ, God chooses to save all but only those who accept God's choice become in reality the chosen ones of God."**

5. **Was Christ's earthly life and death essential to make possible God's election of man in Christ (i.e., to make possible the salvation of mankind)? Could not God simply have decreed the salvation of mankind without Jesus dying on the Cross?**

6. **According to Scripture, was Christ 'obligated' to die on the Cross? (Note Matthew 26: 52-54) If Christ had chosen not to sacrifice His life on the cruel Cross of Calvary, could mankind have been saved from sin and enjoy forgiveness and eternal life?**

7. **Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Each individual can personally accept Christ's Work on the Cross, and by accepting Christ's universal atonement as his/her personal atonement for sins, become an elect (chosen) member of Christ's Body (Church)."**

8. **According to Scripture (Ephesians 1:4) for what purpose has God chosen you (i.e., when you freely choose to accept God's offer of salvation, through Christ, what does God expect you to become)? What does it mean for a person (believer) to be "holy" and "blameless"?**

9. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Only those who remain in Christ, i.e., only those who diligently seek according to**

God's will to live a 'holy' and 'blameless' life, will remain as a part of the 'elect' Body of Christ."

10. **Tell with what degree of confidence you believe the following statements accurately reflect Scriptural teaching: "God, before the foundation of the world, chose US (i.e., the corporate human race) to be saved through Christ. But each individual must accept God's choice to save him, and when accepting that divine choice, he must 'give diligence to make his calling and election (individually and personally) sure.'"**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: MAN – CREATURE OF FREEDOM OR FATE?

SCRIPTURE: ..."***He Predestined Us to Be Adopted as His Sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— [6]to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.***" **(Ephesians 1:5-14)**

INTRODUCTION

Are you free to determine your own eternal destiny, or was your eternal destiny fixed by some divine decree before the foundation of the world? Did God only choose to save certain human beings or did God choose to save the entire human race?

Ephesians 1 deals with these questions. How you interpret this important chapter will determine the answers to these questions?

PROPOSITION

God wills that all persons be adopted as spiritual sons and daughters. Christ has made such adoption possible for every person, through His atoning death.

A. GOD'S POSITIVE PURPOSE REVEALED
- **1. God's Eternal Purpose Ordained (Sonship through Christ, v. 5).**
- **2. God's Progressive Purpose Operative (Unity in Christ, v. 10).**
- **3. God's Perfected Purpose Consummated (Total Redemption through Christ, v. 14).**

B. MAN'S POSITIVE FREEDOM EXERCISED
- **1. Free To Be Sons, Not Slaves (vs. 5-8)**
  - **a. Adoption as Sons (v. 5)**
  - **b. Redemption from Bondage (v. 7)**

C. **FORGIVENESS FROM SINS (v. 7)**
   1. **Free To Be United, Not Divided (vs. 9-10)**
   2. **Free To Be Confident, Not Fearful (vs. 11-14)**

CONCLUSION

If you truly believe Christ, God will send His Holy Spirit into your heart to give assurance of present salvation and a guarantee of future total redemption when you receive your heavenly inheritance.

CHAPTER 3

MAN – CREATURE OF FREEDOM OR FATE?

INTRODUCTION

Are you free to determine your own eternal destiny, or was your eternal destiny fixed by some divine decree before the foundation of the world? Did God only choose to save certain human beings or did God choose to save the entire human race?

Ephesians 1 deals with these questions. How you interpret this important chapter will determine the answers to these questions?

PROPOSITION

God wills that all persons be adopted as spiritual sons and daughters. Christ has made such adoption possible for every person, through His atoning death.

A. GOD'S POSITIVE PURPOSE REVEALED

1. God's Eternal Purpose Ordained (Sonship through Christ): *"In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."* Ephesians 1:5?

Was it God's eternal purpose only to ordain a limited, fixed number to become adopted sons, or was it God's eternal purpose and intention to adopt all persons as his children? Who does 'us' refer to in Ephesians 1:5? Does it refer to a chosen number of individuals, determined by divine decree, or to the total corporate human race? If only a select number by divine decree, then how can we say '*in love*' (v. 5) He predestined? Is <u>divine love</u> consistent with a divine decree to damn those to destruction who were not chosen for adoption as sons?

From a serious study of the book of Ephesians (and all of Scripture) we conclude that God predestined (or determined) that 'us' should include the entire human race. God predestined the entire human race to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will. (v. 5) God's will is that all persons be saved. God does not will that any should perish! *"Who wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth?"* I Timothy 2:4; "[9] *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* 2 Peter 3: 9; [16] *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[a] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* [17] *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*" John 3: 16, 17; "[1] *For the grace of God that brings*

salvation has appeared to all men". Titus 2: 11; "[21] Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me." **(Isaiah 45:21)**

2. **God's Progressive Purpose Operative (Unity In Christ) –** ***[10]to put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*** **(Ephesians, 1:10)**

So, first, God's eternal purpose ordained is that all persons should be adopted as spiritual sons. (v. 5) But divine intention and purpose to adopt all as sons could only be made possible through the blood of Christ (v. 7), which atoning blood makes possible release (redemption) from sin's bondage and relief (forgiveness) from sin's guilt. God's eternal purpose to save the human race could not be realized without the atoning work of Christ on the cross!

That which God has ordained (universal salvation) becomes possible through Christ's accomplished work on the cross (universal atonement). Because Christ died, God's eternal intention can be fulfilled, namely, the salvation of all mankind. Christ's atoning sacrifice places all persons in a savable relationship.

But even though all persons are in a savable relationship, all persons are not automatically in a saved relationship. Universal atonement makes possible the salvation of all, but only personal faith in Christ makes actual salvation operative. Although Christ died in order to reconcile all, all are not personally reconciled to Christ. God's eternal purpose – universal salvation of mankind – only becomes God's realized purpose as persons personally receive Christ's salvation.

God's eternal purpose is progressively being realized as all things in heaven and on earth are submitting to the lordship (headship) of Christ (v. 10). God's sovereign will is being worked out on the stage of human history, as persons are becoming united in Christ.

If Ephesians 1: 5 speaks of God's eternal purpose ordained (sonship through Christ), then Ephesians 1: 10 speaks of God's progressive purpose operative in time (uniting all persons to Christ). Christ wants to unite all persons. (Ephesians 2: 13-18)

3. **God's Perfected Purpose Consummated (Total Redemption - Through Christ) –** ***[14]who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*** **(v. 14)**

Ephesians 1: 14 speaks of God's perfected purpose consummated (total redemption of those who are God's possession). God has chosen to save all (v. 5). Christ provided a universal atonement (an unlimited atonement), making forgiveness and redemption possible for all (v. 7). God's grace has been lavished upon the human race (vs. 7b, 8a). God's objective intention is to save the human race corporately (vs. 11, 12). But only those who hear the Gospel (word of truth') and who believe the message of salvation become a part of God's new race of people (the body of Christ). Those who hear and believe (v. 13a) are those who receive God's Promised Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is responsible to fulfill God's saving purpose in the lives of those who respond to God's saving purpose.

After we personally placed our confidence in Christ and in His saving message, we were "stamped with the promised Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance, until the day when God completes the redemption of what is His own; and that will again be to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1: 14))

So, is man a creature of fate or a creature of freedom? Ephesians 1 definitely teaches that man is a creature of freedom! Man is made in God's own image, and as such is free.

a. God freely chose to save mankind corporately, even before the time when mankind (in Adam) freely chose to fall into sin!

b. Christ freely chose to come to earth to voluntarily die for the sins of mankind, thus placing all mankind in a savable relationship through Christ's unlimited atonement.

c. Each person can freely choose to accept or to reject God's salvation. Man is free to accept or to reject God's salvation, but man is not free to accept or to reject the consequences or results of right or wrong moral choice. To choose Christ is to choose forgiveness and redemption and ultimately a heavenly inheritance (presently guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who seals the believer's heart). God has a positive purpose (salvation for all). Will you make a positive response (faith in Christ to receive personal salvation)?

We have looked at God's Positive Purpose Revealed:

1. **God's Eternal Purpose Ordained (Sonship through Christ) – (v. 5)**
2. **God's Progressive Purpose Operative (Unity in Christ) (v. 10)**
3. **God's Perfected Purpose Consummated (Total**

Redemption through Christ. (v. 14)

B. MAN'S POSITIVE FREEDOM EXERCISED

1. Free To Be Sons, Not Slaves (vs. 5-8)

Even before the foundation of the world, God determined to adopt us (the human race) as His children. The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every person. God claims the right to be our Father.

The freedom that is ours through Jesus Christ is described in terms that are thrilling: adoption as sons (v. 5), redemption from bondage (v. 7), and forgiveness from sin (v. 7).

a. Adoption as Sons (v. 5).

Even before the foundation of the world, God determined to adopt us (the human race) as His children. The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every person. God claims the right to be our Father and us His children. "He determined in His love before time began to adopt us to Himself through Jesus Christ." (Barclay's Ephesians 1: 5)

God has destined us to be sons, not slaves! To be called children of God is to be called the objects of God's special care, love, and attention! "What is man that thou art even mindful of him?" But, just think, "What is man that thou art willing to make him a son of the living God!"

"We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world; and God, through Jesus, took us out of that power into His power; and that adoption cancels and wipes out the past and we are made new. We have passed from the family of the world of evil into the family of God." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 93)

b. Redemption from Bondage (v. 7).

What is the relationship between redemption and adoption? Perhaps Galatians 4: 4-7 best shows that relationship. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave, but a son and if a son then an heir."

The meaning of redemption is 'to loose'. In every case (where the word is used) the conception is the delivering or the setting free of a man from a situation from which he himself

was powerless to liberate himself, or from a penalty which he himself could never have paid." (Barclay's Galatians, pg. 93)

Sin renders people helpless. "The power of sin i*s the law sin.*" (1 Corinthians 15: 56)

"7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."[a] 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, becomes death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[b] for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin." **(Romans 7: 7-25, NIV)**

When men are gripped by sin they feel helpless to deliver themselves. Is there any hope? Paul answers, *"In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood."* (Ephesians 1:7) The powerful blood of Christ is the answer to the powerlessness of men who are in the grip of sin! The man who is in bondage to sin feels like crying out: *"Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm*

in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?" **(Romans 7: 24) Thank God, Jesus Christ is our great Liberator! "It is still true of Christ that by His power He can liberate men from this helpless slavery to the things which attract and disgust them at one and the same time." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 94)**

c. Forgiveness from Sin.

Redemption from sin means deliverance from the slavery of sin. Not only is there deliverance (redemption) from the habits of sin, but there is also forgiveness of the sins themselves. Deliverance from what I am – a slave! Forgiveness for what I have done – sin!

If you truly believe Christ, God will send His Holy Spirit into your heart to give assurance of present salvation and a guarantee of future total redemption when you receive your heavenly inheritance.

Wrong moral choice (sin) always leads to wrong moral consequences (bondage). Christ not only releases one from the consequences of wrong moral choice, but Christ forgives one for the wrong moral choice that led to bondage in sin. Not only does Christ release the prisoner of sin, but also Christ relieves the prisoner of the guilt of the crime, which resulted in imprisonment. The present bondage is broken (redemption), and the past guilt is resolved! Not only are bad habits broken but also a troubled conscience is cleansed! Forgiveness means relief and redemption means release, and both are made possible through Jesus' blood (Ephesians 1:7). ***"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us."*** **(Ephesians 1:7, 8a, NIV)**

Why does God redeem us? Why does God forgive us? Is there something about us that makes us worthy or appealing? Never! God redeems and forgives because God chooses to redeem and to forgive, not because we are worthy! We cannot earn or deserve or purchase God's favor. God's grace – unmerited favor – is initiated totally by God. God loves us, not because we are lovely, but because 'God is love'. The very nature of God's love is not a sentimental love, but a suffering love. We are redeemed and forgiven 'through His (Christ's) blood.' (Ephesians 1:7) Love which bleeds is love which saves!

God could neither redeem man from the bondage of sin's consequences, nor forgive man for the guilt of wrong moral choices, without the atoning blood of Christ! It is not an

eternal divine decree, which is the instrument of man's salvation. It is the shed blood of Jesus Christ, which is the instrument of man's salvation.

The will and pleasure of God was to save humanity from sin, but this divine intention in eternity could only become realized in time if Christ should choose to consent to the Father's request that He die an atoning death on Mount Calvary!

Christ had to die, not in the sense of absolute necessity, but in the sense of redemptive necessity. Only through the blood of Christ could God's holy nature be honored and man's salvation be guaranteed. Even though God the Father requested God the Son to come to earth to die for mankind, in reality, there are not three parties involved in this transaction (God, Jesus, Man), but rather there are only two parties involved in this transaction (Holy God and Sinful Man). For when Jesus died, God died! It was God who came, in the person of the Son, to take the penalty of sin upon Himself! "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself!" Life is in the blood! When Jesus' blood was shed, God's life was poured out. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins!" So redemption and forgiveness are possible only because of Christ's shed blood! "The blood, the blood!" – this is my pleas, this is my salvation.

2. FREE TO BE UNITED, NOT DIVIDED. (vs. 9-10)

Christians are called to unity, for God is a unifying God. Christians are free, not to divide, but to unite men around Christ.

Not free to do your own thing, but free to do God's thing. Not free to go your own way, but free to go God's way. Not free from responsibility, but free through responsibility. Not free from the group, but free in the group. Not free to be independent, but free to be interdependent. Not free from social concerns, but free to meet social needs. Not free from authority, but free under authority. One is free when he fulfills the purpose for which he was created. Christians are created to unite all things in Christ!

A brick is not free when it is thrown aside, never to be used in a building. It is 'free' when it finds its place and purpose in the wall of a building. A large 'work horse' is not free when it is never harnessed to work. Rather it is free when it is given opportunity to pull a load, thus fulfilling its purpose for existence.

A Christian is not free when he is given no responsibility. A Christian is truly free when he finds his purpose in creation and in the Church of Jesus Christ. When he is 'carrying his share of the load'. When he is using his spiritual gifts within the Church. When he is functioning

as a healthy and cooperative member of the Body of Christ. He is free when he is in love and unity with other members of God's family. God's purpose is a corporate purpose. A Christian therefore is free when he is seeking to unite all things and all persons around the feet of Jesus. When he is involving himself in helping God to realize His ultimate purpose for His world. *"For God has allowed us to know the secret of His plan and it is this: He purposes in His sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in him."* (vs. 9, 10; Phillips)

A Christian is free when he is involved in helping to fulfill God's Master Plan for the Human Race – *"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."* (v. 10: NIV)

What are some practical ways in which Christians can involve themselves in God's reconciling purpose? When a Christian involves himself in bringing God and men together and in bringing men together with men in loving fellowship, then that Christian is helping to fulfill God's purpose of uniting all on earth around the feet of Jesus!

Christians are to be ministers of reconciliation. Paul said, *"So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."* (II Corinthians 5: 20; RSV) As Christians, we are actively to seek sinners. We are to put our arms around sinners and draw them to the Saviour!

Christians also help to fulfill the ultimate uniting purpose of God when Christians love one another. *"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God."* (I John 4: 7; NIV)

There should be no place among Christians for the sectarian spirit! What is the sectarian spirit? It is that spirit among Christians which results in dividing true Christians because of secondary issues of doctrinal distinctive.

All Christians of various denominations should be so united under the lordship of Christ that no difference of Biblical interpretation on secondary issues should divide them.

Unfortunately, differences among true Christians often result in the Christian fellowship being destroyed. Criticism, divisions, carnal jealousy and competition, these are the results when Christian groups elevate secondary issues rather than unite together because of their common love for Christ!

Whenever Christians manifest any spirit other than love, they are hindering the cause of Christ and frustrating the purpose of God, which is *"to unite all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth."* (Ephesians 1: 10; RSV)

Persons who are 'in Christ' are free, not to divide, but to unite all people!

3. FREE TO BE CONFIDENT, NOT FEARFUL (vs. 11-14)

How can you have confidence that you are included in Christ? You can have confidence that you are a Christian and on your are way to heaven, if you have responded in faith to the Good News of Salvation. (v. 13)

Believing is trusting in God, taking God at His Word, and transferring your trust from yourself to God alone, for God alone has a plan for human salvation. (v. 13)

There are those who appear to be very confident, very self-reliant, and self-assured. Those persons seem to manifest no doubts, no fears. Often they are brash and bold and brazen. They seem to have the 'world by the tail'. They enjoy intimidating others with their confident words and actions. It seems that such people know how to pull all the right ropes to become successful. It seems that they make all the right decisions. They boast that they are self-made persons. They have stored up plenty for the future, and seem to have no fear of the future.

But such confidence is an illusion! Such confidence is built on a crumbling foundation! Such confidence is the product of spiritual ignorance – a lack of understanding of God's master plan for history!

What is the basis of confidence? Understanding "the purpose of His (God's) will." (v. 11) What is the purpose of God's will? That each person, as a part of the corporate human race, recognizes that he is chosen and predestined in Christ to be saved from sin. (v. 11) That, each person, as a part of the corporate human race, is individually chosen. (v. 13) That each person who accepts God's salvation be confident that the "best is yet to be". Why? Because heaven is the inheritance of the believers, guaranteed to believers by the promised indwelling Holy Spirit. (v. 14)

Ephesians 1: 11, 12 speaks of God's objective intention to save the human race corporately. This divine intention to put the human race corporately into a savable relationship is made possible through Christ.

Ephesians 1: 13a speaks of individual human response to God's plan of salvation. Those who respond to God's plan of salvation are those

who first hear the word of truth (that is, the 'word of truth' that God has chosen to save the human race through Christ). After hearing the 'word of truth', these persons believe the message of salvation which is made possible 'in Christ'/ hearing and believing the 'word of truth' results in receiving God's promised Holy Spirit who gives assurance of a future inheritance.

Ephesians 1: 13b and 14 speaks of God's gift of assurance and confidence to the believing heart. *"In him, when you believed, you were marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory." (NIV)*

The believer's confidence is related to the past, present, and the future – in his understanding of God's past saving intention (v. 11), in his relationship to God's present saving power (v. 13), and in his assurance of God's future heavenly inheritance (v. 14).

Confidence does not originate in the fulfillment of one's own self-centered will, but confidence rather originates in the fulfillment of God's will – namely, the salvation of mankind through Christ. If one is not saved through Christ, he has no basis for confidence and every reason for doubt and fear!

CONCLUSION

You have heard the Good News of God's intention to save the human race from sin and of Christ's provision for such salvation. Now it is necessary for you to believe this saving message. *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'*

If you truly believe Christ, God will send His Holy Spirit into your heart to give assurance of present salvation and a guarantee of future total redemption when you receive your heavenly inheritance.`

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 3

1. **According to Scripture, does God's grace enable you (a 'fallen' and sinful creature) the ability to choose your own eternal destiny, or was your eternal destiny 'fixed' (determined) by some 'divine decree' before the foundation of the world?**

2. **Was it God's eternal purpose only to ordain a limited, fixed (predetermined) number to become adopted sons, or was it God's eternal purpose and intention to adopt all persons as His children? Who does 'US' refer to in Ephesians 1: 5 – a chosen number of individuals, determined by 'divine decree', or the total corporate human race?**

3. **Is 'divine love' (Ephesians 1: 5) consistent with a divine decree to damn those to destruction who were not chosen for adoption as sons?**

4. **According to Scripture, whom does God 'will' to save from eternal death and destruction? (Note 1 Timothy 2: 4; 2 Peter 3: 9; John 3: 16-17; Titus 2: 11; Isaiah 45: 21)**

5. **Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: "God's eternal purpose – universal salvation of mankind – only becomes God's realized purpose as persons personally and individually receive Christ's offered salvation."**

6. **According to Ephesians 1: 13-14, what is man's part and what is God's part, in realizing the salvation of a human soul in time and in eternity?**

7. **Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every person." Was it God's intention (even before the creation of the world) to 'adopt' you as His very own child? (Note Ephesians 1: 5) If so, what was God's 'motivation' to do so?**

8. **What is God's 'answer' to mankind's 'problem' of bondage to sin? (Note Ephesians 1: 7a and Galatians 4: 4-7)**

9. **Have you personally experienced 'deliverance' (redemption) from what you are – a slave to sin – and 'forgiveness' from what you have done – sinning? (Note Ephesians 1: 7)**

10. **Is it true that wrong moral choice (sin) always leads to wrong moral consequences (bondage)? Why do so many persons apparently think they can break (violate) God's moral laws (like the 10 Commandments, Exodus 20) and not reap the consequences of their wrong moral choices? (Note Galatians 6: 7-8)**

11. If you (as a sinner who has broken God's moral laws, resulting in moral and spiritual 'bondage') cannot earn or purchase or deserve God's favor and forgiveness and moral freedom, then what is the 'source' of your forgiveness and redemption? Whose blood provides for your personal atonement and deliverance from sin? (Note Ephesians 1: 7-8) As long as a person is 'proud' and 'self-sufficient' is it possible for him to be forgiven and redeemed? Why not?

12. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Christ had to die, not in the sense of absolute necessity, but in the sense of redemptive necessity." If Jesus (who agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane in light of the pain of the Cross which He faced) had chosen NOT to have offered Himself as a sacrifice, would God the Father have quickly concurred and allowed His Son to escape the death of the Cross?

13. Check the following statements which you believe accurately describe the meaning of a Christian's "freedom":

    ____a. Not free to do your own thing, but free to do God's thing.

    _____b. Not free to go your own way, but free to go God's way.

    _____c. Not free from responsibility, but free through responsibility.

    _____d. Not free from the group, but free in the group.

    _____e. Not free to be independent, but free to be interdependent.

    _____f. Not free from social concerns, but free to meet social needs.

    _____g. Not free from authority, but free under authority.

14. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement: " A Christian is free when he is involved in helping to fulfill God's Master Plan for the Human Race – "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1: 10, NIV). In what specific ways would you personally like to help fulfill God's Master Plan for the Human Race? Is it your sincere desire to be a "minister of reconciliation"? (Note 2 Corinthians 5: 20) Is it your earnest desire to actively "seek sinners" – to "put your arms around sinners and draw them to the Saviour" – in order that God's eternal plan might eventually (and quickly) be fulfilled, according to Ephesians 1: 10"? What attitude of one Christian toward a fellow Christian helps to fulfill God's purpose of "uniting all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1: 10)? (Note I John 4: 7)

15. If it is God's will to "unite all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1: 10), is it right and proper for sincere Christians to divide over "secondary doctrinal differences"? Is it possible (and even helpful) for Christians to dialogue and to debate regarding doctrinal differences, if (in the process) fellow believers determine not to 'destroy the fellowship' and seek to better understand the Truth (as seen from various and differing viewpoints)?

16. **Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: "Whenever Christians manifest any spirit other than love, they are hindering the cause of Christ and frustrating the purpose of God which is 'to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth." (Ephesians 1: 10)**

17. **From a Biblical viewpoint, what does it mean for a person to 'believe in Christ'? (Ephesians 1: 13) In what (or whom) have you placed your personal confidence for eternal life (heaven hereafter)? Is it possible for a person to experience personal assurance (confidence) that, when he dies, he shall experience the 'glories of heaven' for his eternal destiny? (Note Ephesians 1: 14)**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: POWER OF THE CHURCH!

SCRIPTURE: "[15]For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16]I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. [17] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious father, may give you the spirit [A] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. [18] I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19]and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, [20]which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21]far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22]And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church; [23]which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:15-23)

TEXT: "Í will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (Matthew16:18)

INTRODUCTION

In all of human history there has been no greater or more powerful institution than the Church. It has shaped human history in every age.

The true Church of Christ is not a building or a denomination, but rather the company of all true believers of all races in all ages. Christ Himself founded the Church and paid it the highest possible compliment by calling it His own Body!

PROPOSITION

Let us closely investigate the prayer which Paul prayed for the Church. From this prayer we learn of (1) the Character of the Church, (2) the Enlightment of the Church, and (3) the Commission of the Church.

- A. CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH (vs. 15-16)
- B. ENLIGHTMENT OF THE CHURCH (vs. 17-21)
  - 1. Man's Commitment
  - 2. Spirit's Illumination
- C. CONTENT OF ENLIGHTMENT (vs. 18b – 22)
  - 1. Realization of Hope
  - 2. Realization of Glorious Inheritance
  - 3. Realization of God's Power

D. COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH (vs. 22-23)

1. Christ is the Head of the Body

2. The Church is the Body of Christ

CONCLUSION

How great is the power of the Church! Its chief characteristic is love, its illuminator is the Spirit, and the commission is reconciliation. The Church alone has hope, eternal riches, and spiritual power to offer to a needy world.

CHAPTER 4

POWER OF THE CHURCH!

INTRODUCTION

In all of human history there has been no greater or more powerful institution than the Church. It has shaped human history in every age. Thousands have given their lives for the faith of all true believers of all races in all ages. Christ Himself founded the Church and paid it the highest possible compliments by calling it His own Body!

Paul the great apostle was instrumental in seeing the message of the Church carried to the far reaches of the known world of his day. He wrote letters to the newly formed congregations of believers, telling them of their glorious privileges as members of the Body of Christ – The Church.

One such letter is the Epistle to the Ephesians. Recorded in this letter is one of Paul's prayers from which we learn important truths concerning the Church.

PROPOSITION

Let us closely investigate the prayer which Paul prayed for the Church. From this prayer we learn of (1) the Character of the Church; (2) the Enlightment of the Church; (3) the Commission of the Church.

A. CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH (vs. 15-16)

Paul wrote, "*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you.*" (Ephesians 1:15. 16a)

In this introductory statement to his prayer, he describes the character of the true Church of Christ. The Church must be characterized by both loyalty to Christ and love for men.

Throughout history there have been those who have had a professed loyalty to Christ, but who have not had any love for men.

Monks and hermits have 'bent over backwards' attempting to be loyal to Christ and to avoid the contamination of the world. Some ascetics have sought spiritual perfection by denouncing all beauty as evil and torturing their own bodies to suppress all fleshly desires. "In Syria, for example, St. Simeon Stylites lived for thirty years on top of a pillar sixty feet high, braving pain and harsh weather." (Wallbanks's Civilization Past and Present, pg. 368) More moderate ascetics simply spent their lives in monasteries, separated from the world of men, to study and to contemplate on the things of God.

The Pharisees were known for their strict orthodox lives. Observing thousands of minute laws, they were proud of their righteousness. However, they despised the common man, publican or Gentiles, as the untouchable filth of the earth. A ttempting to be God-lovers and men-haters at the same time, Jesus called them white-washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the house of dead men and all corruption." (Barclay's Matthew 23: 27)

In the early formation of Spain, Isabel and Ferdinand introduced the Court of Inquisition to enforce religious orthodoxy. Thousands of Jews and Muslims were burned to death, and many lost all their property. Cold orthodoxy can never take the place of warm Christian compassion.

Neither the Pharisees nor the heresy hunters of the Spanish Inquisition exemplified the character of a true Christian in the Church of Christ. Jesus taught that love for God is best expressed through love for men. Jesus taught that when a person does deeds of kindness in an uncalculating manner for the least of one's fellowmen, such a person does the deed for Christ. (Matthew 25: 31-46)

Love for God must be shown in deeds of kindness for ones fellowmen. Kindness must be expressed out of a heart of love, and not as an attempt to pile up a reward for one's self.

Francis of Assisi was born into a home of wealth. He could have enjoyed the ease and comfort of luxury. However, one day he met a loathsome-looking leper. Seeing that his life was incomplete, he determined to dedicate his life to ministering to lepers, and helping the poor and lowly.

Barclay tells of Martin of Tours, a Roman soldier, and a Christian, who met a beggar on a cold winter day. The beggar asked for alms, but because Martin had no money, Martin cut his soldier's coat in two and gave half of it to the shivering beggar man. That night Martin had a dream in which he saw Jesus surrounded by angels in heavenly places, and Jesus was wearing half of a Roman soldier's cloak. When one of the angels asked Jesus, *"Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?"* Jesus answered, *"My servant Martin gave it to me".*

***To the one who has loving care for his fellowmen, Jesus will say in the judgment, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, enter into possession of the Kingdom which has been prepared for you since the creation of the world, For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you gathered me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick , and you came to visit me; in prison, and you came to me." (*Barclays Matthew 25:34-36)**

John well knew the importance of loving one's fellowmen as well as loving God. He wrote: *"We love, because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And*

this commandment we have from Him that he who loves God should love his brother also." **(I John 4: 20-21)**

B. ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE CHURCH (vs. 17-21)

The major part of Paul's prayer is for the enlightenment of the Church. In his prayer he describes the means by which enlightenment is received, and the content of that enlightenment.

1. Man's Commitment

The word in Greek for wisdom is Sophia and is used for the wisdom or understanding of the deep things of God. The deep things of God cannot be understood by casual religious observance. Barclay relates how that Goldsmith once said: "As I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest." (Barclay's commentary on Ephesians, pgs. 1004) The uncommitted man is not only the unchristian man but also certainly the unenlightened man.

The deep things of God cannot be perceived through passive intellectual consent, but only through active commitment of the total being. The whole personality of man with his emotions, will and intellect, is actively involved in the quest for deep, spiritual knowledge. It is a basic fact of the spiritual life that commitment precedes knowledge. One cannot expect to know Christ until he has first given himself to Christ. Part of commitment involves diligent study of the bible. Through meditation, reading, memorization, and study, one confronts the eternal truths of God.

2. Spirit's Illumination.

If commitment is man's part, then illumination is the Spirit's ministry. Isaiah spoke of the ministry of the Spirit to the coming Christ (Branch), when he wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the reverence of the Lord." (Barclays Isaiah 11: 2)

C. CONTENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT (vs. 18b – 22)

Paul not only relates the means of enlightenment, but also the specific results, or content, of this enlightenment.

1. Realization of Hope.

Paul's first request is that Christians might realize their glorious hope. The subject of hope is very relevant for all ages. We live in an age of great despair.

There are many evidences of this despair.

There is a marked dissolution in the home life. This is evidenced by a rising rate in divorce oftentimes caused by immorality and alcoholism. The tragic results of divorce are seen in maladjusted children, mentally disturbed adults, and bitter remorse and memories. The break-up in the home life is further evidenced by juvenile delinquency often caused by parental indifference. Adolescents' misuse of leisure is seen in consumption of trashy novels, TV programs, and illicit moving pictures. Multiple crimes, dishonesty, disregard for authority, and an increasing prison population are tragic commentaries on the dissolution of American home life.

Our age of despair is further seen in the continual race tension, caused by hatred, intolerance, and prejudice. War, disease, and starvation add to the despairing picture of our age. Mankind in America is preoccupied with material things. Although few would dare to pose as atheists, the popular philosophy of our day is atheistic in practice. A great many people are positivists, and as such have no belief in spiritual values, but only in what can be verified through the senses. Man today is clutching to things, instead of striving for God.

In contrast to this despairing picture, the Christian is called to hope of a happy destiny. Some circumstances in life cannot be avoided, but the Christian has hope despite unfavorable circumstances.

What is the reason for this hope? The reason for the Christian hope lies in God's call. The Christian is a chosen person. (I Peter 2: 9) God chose His people before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4)

What Is The Essence Or Substance Of Our Hope?

a. **<u>To receive spiritual blessings in the life.</u> (Ephesians 1: 3). Despair is replaced with joy. God brings unity out of the discordant elements of disunity. Turmoil is dissolved and peace is restored. Jesus said, *"I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* The bleak picture of despair vanishes when man is reconciled to his Creator.**

b. **<u>To receive eternal life after death.</u> God who has destined us in love to be His son, through the forgiveness of our sins, has also given us the hope of eternal life. The child of God will see Jesus face to face. This is the glorious hope to which the Christian has been called.**

2. Realization of Glorious Inheritance.

It is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die, but after death comes the judgment. Punishment awaits the unrepentant sinner, but a great reward awaits the faithful follower of Christ.

It is the realization of this glorious inheritance that Paul wants Christians to have. Peter was also well aware of this inheritance when he wrote, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."* (I Peter 1: 3, 4)

Barclay in his commentary on Matthew 6: 1-8, has shown well the necessity of rewards in the Christian life. Jesus taught that there were rewards for those who followed Him. Without reward, life would be meaningless. Unless goodness achieves something, it is really good for nothing. There must be a goal and result for good actions. To say that there are no rewards or punishments is also to say that the end of the good and bad man is the same. To say that the destiny of all men is the same is to conclude that God does not care how a man lives, and that God is therefore unjust and unrighteous. Good must be rewarded and sin punished, if there is any sense to justice.

This reward is not material but spiritual in nature. It consists in satisfaction for work well done for God. It consists in being given a greater responsibility after one task is successfully accomplished. The greatest reward of all is to enjoy the presence of God in life and to spend eternity with him in heaven.

The true follower of Christ is not preoccupied with the rewards that he will receive. He does not think of what he deserves to receive, but thinks only of what he can give. Because love governs his relationship to God and man, he realizes that he will always be in debt to God and man.

He child of God cries out:

"If the whole ream of nature were mine
That was a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

How foolish it would be for a drowning person who is saved by a lifeguard, to offer ten dollars as a repayment for saving his life. The rescued person owes his life to the lifeguard.

How futile it is for a man, redeemed by Christ, to attempt to repay Christ. He is eternally a debtor to his Saviour.

3. Realization of God's Power.

The greatest demonstration of God's love was the cross. The greatest demonstration of God's power was Jesus' Resurrection and Exaltation.

What is the meaning of Jesus' Resurrection and Exaltation?

a. <u>It showed God's power over physical death.</u> Christ's body did not corrupt, but was gloriously changed into a new incorruptible body. Paul taught that physical death was not the end for the Christian. The Christian shall also receive a new, incorruptible, and resurrected body someday. (I Corinthians 15: 20-22)

b. <u>It showed God's power over spiritual death.</u> Paul wrote, "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; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2: 14, 15)

c. <u>It showed God's power over the realm of spiritual wickedness in high places.</u> Paul said that the enemy of good was not physical but spiritual in nature. (Ephesians 6: 12) the cause of all wickedness is Satan.

d. <u>Paul declared that Christ was made to sit in the heavenly places,</u> "far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." This declaration affirmed Paul's faith in Christ's complete sovereignty over the entire universe. There is no ruler or principality that is more powerful than Christ. All of the hosts of hell are subject to the authority of the Almighty Christ!

It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and made Him to have rule over all things, that is available for the individual child of God! Christ in the Christian is His hope of glory. Greater is He who lives in the heart of the believer, than he who is without, trying to thwart the purposes of God through subtle temptation. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to the Christian, to guarantee victory over sin and eternal life with God.

D. COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH (vs. 22-23)

Paul declares in Ephesians 1: 22-23. That God has made Jesus *"the head over all things for the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

In these words Paul vividly describes the commission of the church to the world. He uses the analogy of the human body to communicate this truth. He says that (1) Christ is the head of the body, and that (2) the Church is the body of Christ. Let us investigate each of these two truths.

1. Christ is the Head of the Body.

Christ is the lordship and headship over all things in the universe. He has a definite purpose to work out in the world. The unfolding of history has revealed the definite purpose to work out in the world. The unfolding of history has revealed the mystery of the redemptive plan of God for all mankind – Jew and Gentile alike. It is God's purpose to unite all of the discordant elements of disunity within the universe, in Christ. Paul earlier wrote in this chapter (vs. 9, 10) *"For He (God) has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth."* The great purpose of God is reconciliation of the entire world unto Himself through Christ. Christ is at the headship of the plan.

But just as the brain must have a body as its complement to carry out its will, so Christ must have a complement on earth to carry out His plan for mankind. That complement to Christ is the Church.

2. The Church is the Body of Christ.

The Church is the repository of God's truth, and the instrument of reconciliation to the world. It is the hands, feet, and voice of Christ to accomplish His purpose among men. It is the visible reflection of the invisible God, and is the chief representative of God to man. The Christians who make up the Church are ambassadors of God's grace, and heralds of God's message of redemption.

The Church, which has learned of the deep mysteries of God's truth through the illumination of God's Spirit (Ephesians 1: 17-21), is able to offer hope to a despairing world, eternal riches to poverty-stricken sinners, and spiritual power to the downtrodden and weak. How great are the responsibilities, but also the privilege, of the Church!!

"There is a legend which tells how Jesus went back to heaven after His time on earth. Even in heaven He bore upon Him the marks of the suffering and the Cross. The angels were talking to Him, and Gabriel said: 'Master, you have suffered terribly for men down there'. 'I did', said Jesus. 'And,' said Gabriel, 'do they all know about how you loved them and what you did for them?' 'O no,' said Jesus, 'not

yet. Just now only a few people in Palestine know.' 'What have you done' said Gabriel, 'to let everyone know about it?' Jesus said, 'I have asked Peter and James and John and a few others to make it the business of their lives to tell others about me, and the others still others, and yet others, until the farthest man on the widest circle knows about what I have done.' Gabriel looked very doubtful, for Gabriel knew well what poor stuff men were made of. 'Yes,' he said, 'but what if Peter and James and John grow tired?" What if the people who come after them forget? What if away down in the twentieth century people just don't tell others about you? Haven't you made any other plans?' And Jesus answered: 'I haven't made any other plans. I'm counting on them.' To say that the Church is the Body, the complement of Christ, exactly means that Jesus is counting on us." (Barclay's commentary on Ephesians, pg. 109)

CONCLUSION

How great is the power of the Church! Its chief characteristic is love, its illuminator is the Spirit, and the commission is reconciliation. The Church alone has hope, eternal riches, and spiritual power to offer to a needy world.

Christ Himself formed the Church, and is the foundation of its structure.

Samuel Wesley wrote of the power of the Church when he wrote his hymn on the Church.

"The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord
She is His new creation, by water and the Word:
From Heav'n He came and sought her, to be His holy bride:
With His own blood He brought her, and for her life He died."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 4

1. According to Ephesians 1: 15-16, what are the two distinguishing characteristics of members of the Church of Jesus Christ?

2. Is it possible to be loyal to Christ, and at the same time to be unloving towards one's fellow human beings? (Note Ephesians 1: 15-16; I John 2: 9-11; I John 4: 7, 8, 20, 21)

3. If it is true that the 'deep things of God' cannot be perceived through passive intellectual consent, but only through active commitment of the total being, describe practical and concrete ways in which you can demonstrate your total commitment to finding the 'deep things of God'.

4. As it relates to your knowledge and experience of God, give your interpretation of the following statement: "It is a basic fact of the spiritual life that commitment precedes knowledge."

5. If commitment of one's mind and emotions and will is an indispensable condition, what is the other indispensable condition for spiritual enlightment? (Ephesians 1: 17-18; I Corinthians 1: 10-12)

6. What is the reason for your hope, as a Christian believer? (Note I Peter 2: 9; Ephesians 1: 4)

7. What is the essence or substance of your hope, as a Christian believer? That is, because you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, what do you anticipate receiving in the earthly life and in the life hereafter?

8. Why is it not "unspiritual" for a Christian to believe in and to anticipate "rewards" for his life of loyalty to Jesus Christ? Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "To say that the destiny of all persons is the same, is to conclude that God does not care how a person lives, and that God is therefore unjust and unrighteous. Good must be rewarded and sin must be punished, if there is any sense to justice in this universe!"

9. If a Christian must believe in "rewards (because of his sense of justice), what should preoccupy the mind and the attention of a humble follower of Christ? Even though a Christian believes in "rewards" (both here on earth and after physical death), does a true Christian take "pride" in those "rewards" and does he feel that he "earns" and "deserves" those rewards? Is a true Christian preoccupied with an attitude of "getting" or of "giving", of desire for "personal rewards" or of desire for "sacrificial service to mankind"?

10. If the greatest demonstration of God's love was the cross of Christ on Mount Calvary, what was the greatest demonstration of God's power? (Note Ephesians 1: 20-21)

11. **Share at least three ways in which the power of Christ's resurrection is manifested. (Note I Corinthians 15: 20-22; Hebrews 2: 14-15; Ephesians 1: 20-22)**

12. **Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statement: "The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to the Christian, to guarantee victory over sin and eternal life with God."**

13. **According to Ephesians 1: 20-22, who enjoys the lordship and headship of all things and all persons in the universe?**

14. **Just as a human brain must have a body as its complement to carry out its will (plans and decisions), so Christ must have a complement on earth to carry out His plans for His world. Who (or what) is Christ's complement to carry out (accomplish) His plans?**

15. **Because the Church (The Body of Christ) has learned of the deep mysteries of God's truth through the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1: 17-21), what is the Church able to offer to the world of fallen human beings?**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT: THE POWER OF PRAYER!

SCRIPTURE: ***"15For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*** **Ephesians 1: 15-23**

TEXT: ***"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."*** **(James 1: 16, NIV)**

INTRODUCTION

Paul the apostle was a great prayer warrior! His recorded prayers are illustrations of his great prayer life. When Paul prayed, things happened! Why? Because Paul knew God! He knew personally and experientially the hope of God, the riches of God's inheritance, and something of God's immeasurable power.

PROPOSITION

When we, like Paul, pray with the right motivation and in the right mood, we will discover the magnitude of prayer. The eyes of our hearts and the eyes of the hearts of those for whom we pray will be opened to know what is the hope to which God has called us, what are the riches of God's glorious inheritance, and what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power in us! in other words, to pray effectively will mean that we and others for whom we pray will be given Hope in place of despair, Riches in place of poverty, Power in place of weakness!

- **A. MOTIVATION FOR PRAYER (v. 15)**
  - **1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**
  - **2 Love for all the Saints**
- **B. MOOD OF PRAYER (vs. 16-18a)**
  - **1. Continual Thanksgiving for the Saints (v. 16)**
  - **2. Knowledge of Glorious Inheritance**
  - **3. Knowledge of God's Great Power**
    - **a. Resurrection Power**

b. Confident Trust in the Saviour (vs. 17, 18)

C. MAGNITUDE OF PRAYER (vs. 18b-23)
1. Knowledge of Hope
2. Knowledge of Glorious Inheritance
3. Knowledge of God's Great Power
   a. Resurrection Power
   b Ascension Power
   c. Dominion Power

CONCLUSION

God enheartens us when we are discouraged! God enriches us when we feel poverty-stricken! God energizes us when we get weak and impotent! God wants to give us hope in place of our despair! God wants to give us riches in place of our poverty! God wants to give us power in place of our weakness!

CHAPTER 5

POWER OF THE CHURCH!

INTRODUCTION:

For over 10 years I had the privilege of being a member of a small prayer group, composed of older persons, who met weekly in a home of one of its members for Bible Study and prayer. Participating in that group was one of the greatest experiences of my life. The coordinator of that group – the one who called members on the phone and who made the detailed arrangements as to time and place – was the oldest member of the group. Some of you knew her well – Mrs. Grace Birkinbine, who died in September 1979 at the age of 93! When she and others in the group prayed, they didn't stutter! Their prayers were tender, but they were fervent and intense in their praying! When those older people prayed, it seemed like heaven came down to earth! I have held the funerals for all the persons in that group, but I shall never forget their godly lives and their fervent prayers! James 5: 16 says, *"The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results."* (Living Bible)

Those older folks were real prayer-warriors! I often asked them to pray for me, for my ministry, and most of all, for our Church.

Paul, the apostle was a great prayer warrior! His recorded prayers are illustrations of his great prayer life. When Paul prayed, things happened! Why? Because Paul knew God! He knew personally and experientially the hope of God, the riches of God's inheritance, and something of God's immeasurable power.

PROPOSITION:

When we, like Paul, pray with the right <u>motivation</u> and in the right <u>mood</u>, we will discover the <u>magnitude</u> of prayer. The eyes of our hearts and the eyes of the hearts of those for whom we pray will be opened to know what is the hope to which God has called us, what are the riches of God's glorious inheritance, and what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power in us! In other words, to pray effectively will mean that we and others for whom we pray will be given Hope in place of despair, Riches in place of poverty, Power in place of weakness!

Let us then look at Paul's prayer in terms of (1) Motivation for Prayer, (2) Mood of prayer, (3) Magnitude of Prayer.

A. MOTIVATION FOR PRAYER (v. 15)

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was grateful for the Ephesians believers who exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The object of one's faith determines the value of one's faith. Everyone has faith in someone or in something, but the one in whom you place your faith makes all the difference in the

world! Only those who have faith in Christ have a future! Faith is commitment, trust, and loyalty.

2. Love for all the Saints.

Faith and love are the distinguishing marks of all true Christians. It is impossible to have true faith in God without having genuine love for one's fellow Christians. Writes John in his epistle: *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."* (I John 2: 9-11)

***"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* (I John 4: 7, 8, RSV)**

***"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandant have we from him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also."* (I John 4: 20, 21)**

Christianity is not just having right beliefs. But Christianity is having right relationships. Faith without the practical works of love is a dead faith. Christianity is not an 'either-or' situation, but it is rather a 'both-and' situation. It is both thought and action. It is both prayers to God and good works among men. It is both faith in Jesus and love for Christians!

As I recall from my reading, there was a time when John Wesley considered entering a life of total contemplation, away from the society of men, in solitude and prayer. A friend, however, who was wise in his understanding of Christianity, warned Wesley against that tendency. Wesley was shown (and thereafter taught others) that there is no such thing as a solitary Christianity. We cannot go to heaven alone. We must either find friends or make friends to take to heaven with us! Wrote Wesley, after learning this lesson himself: "The Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. Christianity is essentially a social religion, and ...to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."

The characteristics of all true Christians and all true churches are loyalty to Christ and love to men.

Faith in God and love for men must be two parts of one whole. The life of personal devotion to God and the life of active caring for men must go on, hand in hand.

I have known of professing Christians who claimed to know God but who at the same time were very critical of their fellow men, even their fellow Christians. Notes Barclay, "However orthodox a Church is, however pure its theology, and however noble its worship and its liturgy, it is not a true church in the real sense of the term unless it is characterized by love for its fellow men." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 103)

For instance, the Pharisees claimed loyalty for God and at the same time they were contemptuous in their treatment of their fellowmen. "The heresy hunters of the Spanish Inquisition and of many another age had a loyalty to Christ which made them persecute those who thought differently from them." (Ibid; pg. 103)

The Christian must be characterized by both loyalty to Jesus Christ and love for others. Such were the Ephesians. "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you." It is no wonder that Paul was so strongly motivated to pray for such persons!

B. MOOD OF PRAYER (vs. 16-18a)

1. Continual Thanksgiving for the Saints (v. 16)

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

What a wonderful attitude with which to pray! Paul was not unaware of people's faults and sins, but Paul accepted people as they were and loved them into what God wanted them to become. He saw people as 'saints in the making', not as sinners filled with flaws. Paul could have been critical if he chose to be, but instead of focusing on the faults of his fellow believers, he focused on their beauty and strength and potential. It is still true that thanksgiving covers a multitude of faults, that thanksgiving and praise brings out the best in others. It is still true that we tend to live either up or down to people's expectations of us and evaluation of us. People grow in the atmosphere of appreciation but shrivel and die in the atmosphere of criticism and faultfinding.

My wife (many years ago) spoke affectionately to one of her day-care children, a beautiful 3 year-old girl. She was so well behaved and sweet and tender and loving and responsive. The little girl, very matter-of-factly replied to my wife, "My mother tells me that I am her 'little angel'!" Nothing wrong with the self-image of that little girl!

"Someone asked a black minister, pastor of a growing and dynamic church how he accomplished it. He replied: 'I hold a crown a few

inches above my peoples' heads and watch them grow into it.'" (The Song of Ascents; Jones; page 39)

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "It is faith in man, founded on a faith in God, which believes belief out of the unbelieving, faiths faith out of the faithless, and loves love out of the loveless. It produces that which it believes in." (Ibid; pg. 39)

2. Confident Trust in the Saviour (vs. 17, 18a)

If the mood of our prayers should be thanksgiving for the saints (in spite of unsaint like qualities that are sometimes seen), our mood in our prayers should also be trust in our Saviour.

Paul trusted that God would open the eyes of the hearts of his friends, enlightening them to the knowledge of God's wonderful resources and gifts.

Paul trusted God to give the Ephesians believers a 'spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him'.

"The words 'wisdom' and 'revelation' are closely coupled, yet district. Pope's comment is apt, it seems to me: 'the Spirit is the giver of revelation objectively and the source of wisdom subjectively.'" (Prayer and Life's Highest; Rees; pg. 15)

In Revelation, God gives the vision of Himself to believers. God is the self-revealed One. Man cannot find God through searching. Man can only discover God because God has chosen to reveal Himself.

Wisdom is personal knowledge of God, as God's revelation of Himself is personally appropriated and applied to the believer's life. Says Paul Rees, "They (revelation and wisdom) are two sides of one coin...first the revelation, then the wisdom by which its significance is grasped!" (Ibid; 15, 16)

In praying for others, we must express both thanksgiving and trust. Thanksgiving for our fellow-believers and trust in our great God who has chosen to reveal Himself to the sincere believer and who enables the believer to apply the revealed knowledge to his personal life! The God, who reveals the truth to us, is the same God who enables us to apply the truth to our personal lives. That is, God, through His Spirit, will enable us to personalize and to internalize and to experience the revealed truth.

C. MAGNITUDE OF PRAYER (vs. 18b-23)

Paul was motivated to pray for the Ephesians because Paul observed the Ephesians' loyalty toward the Saviour and love for the saints.

Paul's mood of prayer was twofold: thanksgiving for the saints and trust in the Saviour.

The magnitude of prayer is seen in the three things for which Paul prayed the Ephesians might be enlightened to: (1) Hope, (b) Riches of God's inheritance, (c) Power.

1. Knowledge of Hope

Emily Dickinson once wrote, "Hope is a thing with feathers." By this she meant that hope is both beautiful and fragile!

Hope is beautiful. It is the dash of flavor in the stuff of everyday life. Without hope a person soon becomes depressed and even physically ill. A man grows hopeless when he thinks that his actions make no difference in the outcome of his little life.

Hope is beautiful because it drives men to great exploits. But hope is also very fragile. Hope must be grounded in nothing less than a living God if hope is to survive in a world of despair. Even Christian believers are not immune to the threats of despair!

When on every side the pessimist is sounding forth his voice, is there any real basis for hope? Paul believes that there is wonderful hope for the Christian! He prays that the eyes of the hearts of the Ephesian believers may be opened that they may know the hope, to which God has called them.

"On every side the voice of the pessimist sounds; there never was a time when it was more necessary to sound the trumpet-call of Christian hope. If the Christian message is true, and if God is as Jesus Christ taught us that He is, then the world is not on the way to dissolution but to consummation." (Barclay's Ephesians: 106)

The future belongs to God and to His people. Wrote the Psalmist: *"Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth."* (Psalms 146: 5, 6, NIV) Wrote Jeremiah, *"But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."* (Jeremiah 17: 7-8)

Christians must rejoice in hope even when circumstances seem so hopeless. Remember, there are no hopeless situations, only people who have grown hopeless about them! May God open the eyes of our hearts to know the hope to which He has called us!

2. Knowledge of Glorious Inheritance

An inheritance is a gift which one receives from another. As a gift, an inheritance cannot be said to be earned, purchased, or necessarily deserved.

Paul prays that the Ephesian believers might have the eyes of their hearts opened to know *"what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."* (Ephesians 1: 18)

If knowledge of Hope encourages the believer, then knowledge of Inheritance enriches the believer. How rich is our inheritance in Christ! Words cannot describe what God has prepared for believers. *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him!* (I Corinthians 2: 9) *The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us who are Christians!* (Romans 8: 18) *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is."* (I John 3: 2) *"For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* (I Corinthians 13: 12)

On one occasion, the apostle Paul *"was caught up into Paradise"* – whether in the body or out of the body, he was not sure (II Corinthians 12: 3). So glorious was that experience of Paradise, that when Paul returned to earth, he was unable to explain the glory of it all. He said that he heard things that *"cannot be told, which man may not utter"*! (II Corinthians 12: 4)

Think of "the enrichment, the unimaginable enhancement, of those who are the subjects of His (God's) redemption and the objects of His affection and pleasure"! (Prayer and Life's Highest; Rees; pg. 18)

If there were no heaven to gain and no hell to shun, living for Christ would be still worthwhile! Living for Christ gives enough 'heaven on earth', that if there were not 'heaven hereafter', life would still be worth it all! But living for Jesus means not only a spiritual heritage here – love, joy, peace, companionship – but it means an eternal inheritance hereafter! To be a Christian is to gain some 'heaven' here and a lot of heaven hereafter!

How do we know that we as Christians have an inheritance awaiting us? Because Ephesians 1: 13, 14 tells us that Christians are *"sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our Inheritance until we acquire possession of it."* If the 'earnest payment' – the blessed, indwelling Holy Spirit – is so wonderful, how much more wonderful is the full inheritance in heaven going to be! Our inheritance is *"uncorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God*

through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." **(I Peter 1: 3, 4)**

"And God has reserved for his children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it, because you trust him. It will be yours in that coming last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here." **(I Peter 1: 4-6, Living Bible)**

3. Knowledge of God's Great Power

"Then – following on in a crescendo effect – the apostle prays that their enlightened eyes will behold 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe.' Something to enhearten us? Yes. Something to enrich us? Yes. And now, in addition, something to energize us. Yes.

"Here is the capstone of the prayer. Without this the eyes of the Christian heart would not see enough. We may cherish high hopes, but what if they turn out to be but a tissue of idle dreams? We may exult in the wealth of the heritage that we have in Christ and He in us, but what if that heritage is made shabby and is wasted by mean carnalities and trampling defeats and a generally uninspiring spectacle of spiritual ineffectualness?

"Do we not rightly ask: By what means are we to march steadily toward the fulfillment of the hope set before us? By what resources can the glory of the inheritance be kept from fading?" (Prayer and Life's Highest; pg. 19)

The answer is found in God's great power – "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe." (v. 19)

How can this power be described? It is the power of God which was demonstrated amazingly when God raised Christ from the dead, when God ascended Christ to the place of authority, when God put all evil powers under the feet of Christ and made Christ the Head of the Church (vs. 20-23)!

Do you sometimes feel that your hope grows dim because of despairing circumstances? Do you sometimes feel that your heavenly inheritance is unreachable and fading because of your human weaknesses and your spiritual failures and sins? Then take heart! God has good news for you!

If hope enheartens us, and if our inheritance enriches us, remember also that God's power energizes us! (Paul Rees; Prayer and Life's Highest; pg. 19) Our hope is not an illusion and our inheritance is

not fading, because God's mighty power is working within us. Our hopes will be fulfilled, our dreams will become realities, and our inheritance will be realized! Why? Because God is at work within us, helping us want to obey him, and then helping us do what he wants! (Philippians 2: 13, Living Bible)

As quoted earlier, "And God, in his mighty power, will make sure that you get there (to heaven) to receive it (the heavenly inheritance)." (I Peter 1: 5, Living Bible)

If there is any question as to the adequacy of God's power to keep us safe from evil and to take us to heaven to receive our reward, then those questions should be turned into exclamation marks when one observes a description of God's mighty power that works within us.

That power is immeasurable but Paul has to find some yardsticks to gauge its greatness, so Paul says that God's power can be described in three great ways.

a. **<u>Resurrection Power.</u> The power God *"accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead."* (v. 20) "When sin had done everything in its power to destroy Christ, when men had gone to the limit of human action to eliminate Christ, the Resurrection of Jesus was the proof that God's power is stronger than man's sin and that God's purpose cannot be stopped by any action of men." (Barclay's Ephesians pg. 106)**

b. **<u>Ascension Power</u> – "*and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.*" (v. 20) God's power gave Jesus the place of authority at the right hand of the Father!**

c. **<u>Dominion Power</u> – *"far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church."* (vs. 21-23)**

   "What Paul is saying is that there is not a being in heaven or on earth to whom Jesus Christ is not superior and than whom He is not greater." (Barclay's Ephesians; pgs. 106, 107)

CONCLUSION:

Are you motivated to pray for others? May we see in one another loyalty for Christ and love for one another (v. 15), and as a result be motivated as never before to pray for one another!

What should be the mood of our prayers? Thanksgiving for one another – not criticism! Focus on the positive, not the negative in one another. Along with thanksgiving for the saints should be trust in the Saviour – trusting God to open the eyes of the hearts of believers to realize how great God is and how great are his offered gifts for believers! (vs. 16-18)

Being motivated to pray in the right mood, let us begin to grasp the magnitude of prayer. Amazing things can happen through prayer! God can meet all our needs as we earnestly pray for one another.

God enheartens us when we are discouraged! God enriches us when we feel poverty-stricken! God energizes us when we feel weak and impotent!

God's almighty Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts in order that we might realize how much God loves us. God wants to give us hope in place of our despair! God wants to give us riches in place of our poverty! God wants to give us power in place of our weakness!

I call you today to pray, pray, pray!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 5

1. Have you ever experienced (or are you presently experiencing) the joy of being a participant in a small group, which focuses upon prayer and praise and sharing (of life's pleasures and pains)?

2. If you pray with the right motivation and in the right mood, what can you expect in terms of personal benefits to you and in terms of enrichment of those for whom you pray?

3. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The object of one's faith determines the value of one's faith."

4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Faith and love are the distinguishing marks of all true Christians."

5. Do you think it is possible to have true faith in the living (invisible) God without having genuine love for one's (visible) fellow Christians? (Note I John 2: 9-11; 4: 7, 8, 20, 21)

6. Tell what is meant by the following statement: "Christianity is not an 'either-or' situation, but it is a 'both-and' situation."

7. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Christianity is essentially a social religion, and to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."

8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: " However orthodox a church is, however pure its theology, and however noble its worship and its liturgy, it is not a true Church in the real sense of the term unless it is characterized by love for its fellow men."

9. Why should you (as a believer) look at your fellow believers as 'saints in the making', not as 'sinners filled with flaws'? How have you learned to 'deal' with (i.e., respond to) those fellow believers (or non-believers) whom you find 'irritating' or 'offensive' or 'insensitive' or 'uncouth' in their behavior and mannerisms?

10. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: "People grow in the atmosphere of appreciation, but shrivel and die in the atmosphere of criticism and fault-finding."

11. How would you make a distinction between 'revelation' and 'wisdom', as stated in Ephesians 1: 17?

12. Tell, from your own personal experience, if the following statements have been 'true' in your own "walk with God": "The Spirit reveals the truth openly to all, but only those who desire the truth and receive the truth through study and prayer and surrender, actually enjoy the revealed truth of God. Revelation received becomes wisdom experienced! God gives

revelation and wisdom, not indiscriminately, but individually to those who seek God with their whole heart. The person who has a casual approach to God will never know the deep things of God – he will never know the 'wisdom' of God!" (Note Jeremiah 29: 12-13)

13. **Give your personal interpretation of the following quotation (by Emily Dickinson): "Hope is a thing with feathers." "Feathers." In a world filled with tragedies and uncertainties, what can a believer do to keep himself out of the 'pit of despair'? When on every side many pessimists are sounding forth their voices of despair and futility is there any real basic for hope and encouragement?**

14. **Do you believe that the world is on its way to 'dissolution' or to 'conservation'? Do you believe that the future belongs to God and to God's people? (Note Matthew 5: 5; Psalms 146: 5-6; Jeremiah 17: 7-8)**

15. **Tell what the following Scriptures teach a believer about his spiritual and eternal inheritance – I Corinthians 2: 9; Romans 8: 18; I John 3: 2; I Corinthians 13: 13; 2 Corinthians 12: 4.**

16. **In light of the many injustices, mysteries, inequities, losses, grief, tragedies which most (if not all) Christians endure (experience) on this planet, tell why you can (as a believer) confidently make the following declaration: "If there were no heaven to gain and no hell to shun, living for Christ would still be worthwhile! Living for Christ gives enough 'heaven on earth' that if there were not 'heaven hereafter', life would still be worth it all".**

17. **How do we know that we as Christians have an inheritance awaiting us? (Note Ephesians 1: 13-14; I Peter 1: 3-6)**

18. **By what means are we to march steadily toward the fulfillment of the hope set before us? By what resources can the glory of the inheritance be kept from fading? (Note Ephesians 1: 19)**

19. **According to Ephesians 1: 20-23, in what four ways was God's mighty power demonstrated conclusively?**

20. **When you (as a believer) sometimes feel that your hope grows dim because of despairing circumstances, and when you (as a believer) sometimes feel your heavenly inheritance in unreachable and fading because of your human weaknesses and your spiritual failures (sins), what truth (revealed by God and historically demonstrated) can greatly energize you? (Note Ephesians 1: 20-23)**

21. **Tell with that degree of conviction you (as a Christian) believe the following statement: "Our hopes (as Christians) will be fulfilled, our dreams will become realities, and our inheritance will be realized, because the Holy Spirit is at work within us, helping us want to obey him, and then helping us do what he wants!" (Note Philippians 2: 13)**

22. Whether you are alone, or are a participant in a 'small group of believers', verbalize (out loud) the following 'faith affirmation': "God's mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at the Father's right hand of authority is the same power that is now at work in my own life – to give me hope in place of my despair, to give me spiritual riches in place of my spiritual poverty, to give me strength in place of my weakness! Hallelujah!

OUTLINE - CHAPTR 6

SUBJECT: THE PROFILE OF DEATH!

SCRIPTURE: ***[1]As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2]in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3]All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. [4]But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5]made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*** **(Ephesians 2:1-5)**

TEXT: ***"And you...were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...but God...made us alive together with Christ."*** **(Portions of verses 1, 2, 4, 5)**

INTRODUCTION

There are many people in our modern world that would never outrightly deny the existence of God, but these same people are living as if there were no God! They are 'practical atheists'. They believe in no reality other than that which they can perceive through their five physical senses. They are the thoughtless common people of today who live only for today!

PROPOSITION

The spiritually dead are those who are morally disobedient, sensuality dominated, objects for divine wrath!

- **A. MAN-CENTERED, NOT GOD-CENTERED (Humanism)**
- **B. MATERIALISTICALLY-BENT, NOT SPIRITUALLY-MOTIVATED (Materialism)**
- **C. WORLDLY-MINDED, NOT SPIRITUALLY-MINDED (Secularism)**
- **D. DISOBEDIENT, NOT OBEDIENT**
- **E. SENSUAL, NOT SPIRITUAL (Sensualism)**
- **F. CHILDREN OF WRATH**

CONCLUSION

The predicament of man is sin, which brings death, but the provision of God is life through the loving mercy of God. The provision of God's mercy and grace is greater than the predicament of man's sin and death. Without God's initiative of love and grace, we would all be helpless.

CHAPTER 6

THE PROFILE OF DEATH!

INTRODUCTION

There are many people in our modern world that would never outrightly deny the existence of God, but these same people are living as if there were no God! They are 'practical atheists'. They believe in no reality other than that which they can perceive through their five physical senses. They are the thoughtless common people of today who live only for today! Of such people Paul wrote, *"Their future is eternal loss, for their God is their appetite...and all they think about is this life here on earth."* (Philippians 3:19, Living Bible) These people are earth-bound materialists!

Rev. Harold Brockhoff spoke one time on the nationwide 'Lutheran Hour' on the subject of 'Authentic Life'. He noted, "A minister in our neighborhood was out making calls one afternoon and he rang the bell of a certain house and a woman came to the door, her apron on, flour on her hands – she was holding a can of cherries. She very shortly told him that she didn't know anything about what he had come to talk about and that she wasn't interested in finding out either. Then after a few minutes of conversation, as she was about to close the door, the minister asked 'Do you mind if I ask you what you have in your hand?' And she answered 'A can of cherries'. He said, 'Do you mind if I ask you where you got them?' She said, 'Down at the corner, at the store'. And then he asked 'Do you mind if I ask what you're going to do with them?' Still polite even after this third question she answered 'Why, I am going to put them into a pie.' And then the minister said, 'If you don't mind the observation, those cherries are in a better shape than you are. We know what they are – they are cherries. And we know where they came from – they came from the store. And we know where they are going. And from your conversation you have no idea of who you are, you don't understand your roots and where you came from and how you got here, and why you're here and don't know where you are going, or why you're going there.' After a short moment of stunned silence, the good woman said, 'Won't you please come in'?"

Are you like the woman in the story, living only for this life? Are you so preoccupied with the trivial things of time that you have forgotten the weightier matters of eternity? 'Only one life to live, t'will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last!'

PROPOSITION

The life of sin is the life of death! The godless life is the miserable life – the life out of fellowship with God. Life without God is life without hope! Only in Christ can a sinner find life eternal.

Spiritual death is the general description given to the sinner without God. Spiritual death results in following the course of this evil world. Spiritual death results in following the prince of the power of the air – Satan! The spiritually dead

are those who are morally disobedient, sensually dominated, objects for divine wrath!

Let us more closely look at this profile of the sinner.

The man without God is spiritually dead! No spiritual life in him! No relationship with God! No life of God within! No fellowship with God! Ignorant of God! Perhaps some information about God, but no personal, intimate knowledge of God personally! Let us look at some of the features in the profile of the sinner without God.

A. MAN-CENTERED, NOT GOD-CENTERED (Humanism)

He is Man-centered, not God-centered. He basically worships man, not God. Like the woman in the above-mentioned story, the sinner is living as if there were no God!

There are many humanists today who center on man, not on God. As Romans 1:28 says, *"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct."* Humanists refuse to acknowledge God! Both formal and practical atheists have denied God. The following statement comes from the Humanist Manifesto: "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created...We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-atheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity." (Battle Fort The Mind; pg. 86; LaHaye)

There are those who think that if they had more of this or more of that, they would finally be completely satisfied. But it is an illusion! Money can't satisfy!

B. MATERIALISTICALLY BENT, NOT SPIRITUALLY MOTIVATED (MATERIALISM)

When one follows the course of materialism in this world, it means following, not only humanism (worship of man), but also materialism (worship of money). One multi-millionaire was asked, "How much money does it take to make a person happy?" He replied, "Just a little more!" There are those who think that if they had more of this or more of that, they would finally be completely satisfied. But it is an illusion!

The road of materialism is a dead-end road for at least four reasons: (1)

1. Because of the inheritability of laboriously-gained riches – *"And I am disgusted about this, that I must leave the fruits of all my hard work to others."* (Ecclesiastes 2:18, Living Bible) (2) Because riches can cause sleepless anxiety. – *"He who loves money shall never have enough...The man who works hard sleeps well whether he eats little or much, but the rich*

must worry and suffer insomnia." **(Ecclesiastes 5:13, Living Bible) (3) Because riches can be easily lost – *"There is another serious problem I have seen everywhere – savings are put into risky investments that turn sour, and soon there is nothing left to pass on to one's son."* (Ecclesiastes 5:13, Living Bible) (4) *Because money cannot be taken with you when you die. "Do not be dismayed when evil men grow rich and build their lovely homes. For when they die they carry nothing with them."* (Psalms 49: 16, Living Bible)**

Listen to the testimony of a young businessman, seeking satisfaction in earth's wealth, while all the time realizing that God alone can really satisfy him. "In my life the process goes on. My faith is in frequent conflict with my obsession to participate in the consumption of this world's fruit. I often feel like a child in a candy store. I wander past the fields of sweet delights, gazing at the vast assortment of choices. All the while in mind the echoes of my mother's words warn me against the consequences of over-consumption. Yet, the warnings go mostly unheeded, and I continue to confidently, if not somewhat guilt-tinged, select items which I feel sure will satisfy my desires ['surely this one will be the last...Oh, just one more']. It's only when the toothache attacks, or the stomach revolts that I consciously pursue my mother's care, knowing that her caring arms and infinite wisdom will sooth my injuries. Her loving character will forgive my errant ways and soon everything will be all right again. In chagrined humility I wish I could follow her will, knowing full well that if I don't give in to her will and wisdom completely, I will soon make the same mistakes again. Oh, the tribulations of being an undisciplined child!"

The greedy materialist, who has grown fat on the accumulation of material goods, remains dissatisfied because of the leanness of his soul. To his bitter disappointment he learns that life does not consist in the abundance of things that a man possesses. His riches have only given ulcers to his stomach and taken peace from his mind. His false friends stand by to mock him, and his sad delusion turns to suicidal despair. The crackle of the dollar and the glitter of the coin have lost their appeal, for he finally learns that everything does not have its price and that there are qualities that have no monetary value. Sliding down the slope of life on his bed of perpetual pain, caused from his indulgent living, the disillusioned materialist realizes that he has been the subject of a cruel tyrant. The sweet wine of frivolous living has left a bitter taste in his mouth. The swinging music of his youth remains as a strange echo in his mind to mock him as a fool. Too many learn too late that "*the lover of money shall not be*

satisfied with money, nor the lover of wealth with his gain; this, too, is futility." **(Ecclesiastes 5:10)**

How often have we eaten at earth's tables, only to be left starving in our souls? Let us learn to feast at God's table.

C. WORLDLY-MINDED, NOT SPIRITUALLY-MINDED (Secularism)

Notes Dr. C. Curry Mavis: "Modern man has a clear vision for secular goals, but dull vision for spiritual goals. It seems that some evil spirit, to use Kierkegaard's figure, has put a pair of glasses on the nose of this generation. One of the lenses is a powerful magnifying glass; the other is an equally strong reducing glass. Our generation looks at the secular things through the strong lens and at the spiritual things through the reducing one." (Psychology of Christian Experience; pg. 103)

Wrote James; *"Don't you realize that making friends with God's enemies – the evil pleasures of this world – makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God."* (James 4: 4, Living Bible)

Wrote John; *"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires – the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance, these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever."* (I John 2: 15-17, Living Bible)

D. DISOBEDIENT, NOT OBEDIENT

We have described the phrase, 'following the course of this world' in three ways: (1) Man-centered, not God-centered, (2) Materialistically-bent, not spiritually motivated, (3) Worldly-minded, and not spiritually-minded.

The profile of the sinner is further described with this phrase: 'following the prince of the power of the air'.

Behind all worldliness is an evil power at work, influencing and controlling the lives of godless people. Dr. Joad was an atheist before World War II. "He then came to believe in the fact of God, and he tells us why. He said that the second war convinced him that the bible was at any rate right as far as this, that there is a principle of evil at work. He said that he could not explain the war in any other way; he could see that it was not accident, not negative, but that there was a devilish evil power at work, 'the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'" (Lloyd-Jones, God's Way of Reconciliation; pgs. 22, 23)

This prince of the power of the air is none other than Satan. Paul describes this terrible being of evil in Ephesians 6:12 – *"He is a powerful force who leads a host of evil beings against the people of God." "We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies – the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world."* (Living Bible) Behind the visible godless organizations and plans and actions of evil men stands the invisible power of evil in the form of Satan and his forces. Satan is "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience."

Moral disobedience and rebellion against the true God! Challenge of all authority and discipline! The disobedient person is 'doing his own thing' living life by his own instincts and desires, not by God's will! He is self-centered, self-assertive, seeking to be his own god! He denies his creatureliness, and attempts to be his own god. He takes things into his own hand, never seeking the counsel of God. He usurps God's authority! All of created nature is built on the principle of surrender, but man refuses to surrender to God's kingdom!

He lives his life under the control of the present evil world. He organizes his life apart from God.

His morality, if he has any at all, is based, not on the revealed principles of God's Word, but on the whims of his own corrupt heart. He does that which is right in his own eyes, not what is right in the eyes of God! He defies God's moral laws, and deliberately does that which he knows will bring the wrath of God against him! *"Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them."* (Romans 1:32)

E. SENSUAL, NOT SPIRITUAL (Sensualism)

Every man is either living by the passions of his flesh or by the higher dictates of his spirit. He is either a fleshly person or a spiritual person.

Notes Barclay, "The flesh is the lower part of our nature; the flesh is that part of our nature which gives sin a bridgehead and a point of attack...The flesh is anything in us which gives sin its chance; it is human nature without God. To live according to the dictates of the flesh is simply to live in such a way that our lower nature, the worse part of us, dominates our lives." (Ephesians pgs. 117, 118)

The sinner without God easily yields to temptation. He puts up no resistance. He has no discipline. Adultery is a sin of the flesh, but so is idolatry, hatred, wrath, strife, envying, heresies, etc., according to Galatians 5: 19-21. "*[19]The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;[20]idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions [21]and*

envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Such a person is living by his senses, not by the dictates of his conscience. He is basically a hedonist – one who lives by the pleasures of the flesh. "If it feels good, do it" is the motto of his life. Their god is their stomach! They live by their bodily desires and passions and instincts!

In contrast to this kind of easy indulgence, Paul was disciplined: ***"So to run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I'm not just shadowboxing or playing around. Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside."*** **(I Corinthians 99: 23, 27, Living Bible)**

F. CHILDREN OF WRATH

Paul goes on to describe the man of sin. "We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Notes Barclay, "There is no man who deserves anything but condemnation. If God treated us as we deserve, there would be nothing but condemnation and punishment for the best of us. It is only His love in Christ which has forgiven the men who deserved nothing but punishment from Him, men who had grieved His love and broken His law." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 118)

CONCLUSION

The predicament of man is sin, which brings death, but the provision of God is life through the loving mercy of God. The provision of God's mercy and grace is greater than the predicament of man's sin and death. Without God's initiative of love and grace, we would all be helpless.

"But God' is the phrase that describes God's powerful initiative of grace to save man!

He loved us when we were yet in sin. He regenerated us by His mighty power – made us alive together with Christ. He made us sit with Him in heavenly places – He allowed us to fellowship with Him in the heavenly realms!

All of this is made possible because of God's grace – unmerited favor towards man – and because the sinner in simple faith has trusted God to save him.

Have you placed your faith in Christ Jesus? Have you responded to God's call of love?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 6

1. How can the philosophy of 'Humanism' best be described and characterized?

2. Why are those persons who 'glorify man' (and mankind's potential) rather than 'glorify God' (and His power and majesty) described by the Bible as 'Fools'? (Note Psalms 14: 1)

3. What is the 'chief characteristic' of the philosophy of 'materialism'?

4. Why is it true to say that 'money cannot satisfy the soul's thirst'?

5. Why is the 'road of materialism' a 'dead-end road'?

6. If it is a fact that, because of God's creation of the world and because of the Incarnation of Christ, Christianity considers the 'physical and material aspects of reality' more important than any other world religion, then how should a Christian respond to the material world and to the earning of material wealth (money)? If Christians are strictly forbidden to worship money (which is 'materialism'), then what attitude should Christians have toward money (and towards 'material things' in general)?

7. With what words would you describe a 'Secularist'?

8. Do the visible things of this world sometimes seem more 'real' to you than invisible things of God? If so, then what do you do to 'refocus' your 'spiritual eyes' upon the 'unseen spiritual world'?

9. According to 1 John 2: 15-1-7, what specifically are some of the 'evil desires' which you as a believer, must avoid (and guard against)?

10. According to James 4:4, why is it so vitally important to "void the evil pleasures of this world"?

11. Who is "the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience"? (Note Ephesians 2:2; 6:12)

12. If you were asked to "paint a word portrait" of "the sons of disobedience", what words and phrases would you select?

13. Give as many concrete descriptions as you can of a "Sensualist." (Note Galatians 5: 19-21) In contrast to a "Sensualist", how is a Christian called to live? (Note Galatians 5: 22-26; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27)

14. Tell with what degree of conviction and 'feeling' you agree with the following statements: "If God treated us as we deserve, there would be nothing but condemnation and punishment for the best of us. it is only His love in Christ which has forgiven the men who deserved nothing but punishment from Him, men who had grieved His love and broken His law."

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT: SELFISHNESS OR SERVICE?

SCRIPTURE: ***[1]As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2]in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3]All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. [4]But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5]made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*** **(Ephesians 2:1-5)**

TEXT: ***"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*** **(Ephesians 2: 8-9)**

INTRODUCTION:

Every man is confronted with one major decision in life. The response to this decision determines one's eternal destiny. The decision one must decide about is this – 'Will I travel the high road or the low road of life?"

PROPOSITION:

A. THE LIFE OF SELFISHNESS
- **1. Cause of Selfishness – Dead In Sins and Trespasses**
- **2. Description of Selfishness**
  - **a. The Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived "In The Way This Present Age Lives It."**
  - **b. A Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived In Disobedience.**
  - **c. The Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived "At The Mercy Of The Desires Of Our Lower Nature."**

B. THE LIFE OF SERVICEE
- **1. Quest for New Life**
- **2. Discovery of New Life**
- **3. Illustrations Of Quest And Discovery Of New Life.**

CONCLUSION

Man is a sinner by nature and by practice. Man is in desperate need of healing for his soul. A man is not saved by means of any personal achievement or works. However, after one is saved by faith, he will spend the rest of his life in service to God. The converted soul will want to do all he can for God in order to express gratitude to Christ for His marvelous love and mercy. A man is saved solely by

faith, but faith that is genuine will be expressed through a life of good works. In each of the illustrations we have noted, conversion was followed by a life of service and good works. The secret to a life of fullness and service is surrender to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 7

SELFISHNESS OR SERVICE?

INTRODUCTION:

Every man is confronted with one major decision in life. The response to this decision determines one's eternal destiny. The decision one must decide about is this – 'Will I travel the high road or the low road of life?"

What is the low road of life? The low road is the road that far too many people are traveling. It is the road of selfishness and self-centeredness, which eventually leads to destruction.

What is the high road? The high road is the road that few too many people are traveling. It is the narrow road of service and self-giving, which eventually leads to eternal joy.

PROPOSITION:

Paul describes both types of life in his letter to the Ephesians. He first paints a dismal picture of the selfish Christless life and then tells how to find the high road of life – the road that leads to self-giving and Christ-centered living. Let us contrast the two types of life and note how one can get on the high road of life.

A. THE LIFE OF SELFISHNESS

1. Cause of Selfishness – Dead In Sins and Trespasses

Paul vividly portrays the way life without Christ. "*When you were dead in your sins and trespasses, those sins and trespasses in which you once walked, living life in the way this present age lives it, living life as the ruler of the power of the air dictates it, that spirit who now operates in the children of disobedience – and once all we too lived the same kind of life as those children of disobedience do, a life in which we were at the mercy of the desires of our lower nature, a life in which we followed the wishes of our lower nature and our own desires, a life in which, as far as a human nature goes, we deserved nothing but the wrath of God, as the others do.*" (Ephesians 2:1-3, Barclay)

The life of selfishness is the life that is dead in sin and trespasses. As Barclay notes, "Sin is the failure to hit the target of life; sin is the failure to be what we ought to be and what we could be." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 111)

Barclay also defines trespass. "It is taking the wrong road, when we could have and should have taken the right one; it is missing the truth that we might have known and should have known; and

therefore sin is the failure to reach the goal and journey's end we ought to have reached." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 112)

When one lives a self-centered life, he has failed to hit the target of life. One's life is meant to be lived for others. God designed man with the capacity to give of himself to others. The distinctive characteristic that sets man apart from all other animals is the quality of self-giving. When man is dead in sin, he is thwarting this capacity, and thus not realizing his true manhood.

The life of selfishness is the life that is traveling the wrong road; which leads to the wrong destination. The life that is in turned upon its self is the shallow and shriveled life. It is the dull, drab, and hallow life, which has failed to travel the road that leads to rich fulfillment through self-giving.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SELFISHNESS

The selfish life is the Christless life. The selfish life is the life that is dictated by the "ruler of the power of the air" – Satan. What is the description of the life without Christ?

a. The Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived "In The Way This Present Age Lives It." (Ephesians 2, Barclay) The values of the world and the values of a Christian are different. The world places greater value upon what it can get, and not on what it can give. The hand of the world is a grasping and greedy hand; the hand of the Christian is an open and sharing hand. The heart of the world is calloused; the heart of the Christian is compassionate. As Barclay has so well put it, "The essence of the world's standard is that it sets self in the center. The essence of the worldly man is, as someone has said, that 'he knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.' The world's motive is the profit motive; the Christian's dynamic is the desire to serve." (Barclay's Ephesians, pgs. 115-116)

b. A Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived In Disobedience. A Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived In Disobedience. Sin is failure to do what we know we ought to do, and failure to be what we know we ought to be. Disobedience is sin, and sin is outright failure to hit the target of life, when we could hit the target if we would. Disobedience is walking behind the light of God's spoken Word – God's written Word – the Holy Bible.

Failure to heed the will of God as revealed through the conscience, results in disobedience.

c. The Selfish, Christless Life Is A Life That Is Lived "At The Mercy Of The Desires Of Our Lower Nature." The selfish, Christless life is a life that is lived *"at the mercy of the desires of our lower nature."* (Ephesians 2:3, Barclay) As Barclay says, "To live according to the dictates of the flesh is simply to live in such a way that our lower nature, the worse part of us, dominates our lives." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 118) To live according to the dictates of our lower nature, involves both sins of the body and sins of the spirit. Paul's list of the works of the flesh include both sins of the body and sins of the spirit: *"Sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, bad temper, rivalry, factions, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like that."* (Galatians 5:19-21, Phillips)

The Christless, selfish life is under God's condemnation. Paul wrote, *"As far as human nature goes, we deserved nothing but the wrath of God, as the others do."* All of us are hell-deserving sinners, but Christ has made a provision for man's sins.

B. THE LIFE OF SERVICE

1. Quest for New Life

How can a person who is self-centered become a person who gives himself in service for others? How can a person who is conforming to the standards and values of the present age come to live a life that is controlled by noble Christian values? How can a person who is dictated by the prince of this world, Satan, become released from such captivity? How can the rebellious, disobedient life be transformed into the obedient life? How can one be released from the bondage of passionate desires? How can the appetites of the lower nature be subdued in order that the high and noble qualities of life can be realized? How can the condemnation that befits the sinner be removed, and peace of mind and soul be found?

These are the questions that are clamoring to be answered for the person who is weary of the self-centered life.

Paul readily acknowledged that he himself lived the self-centered life, the life of estrangement and alienation. To the weary soul who is seeking a new way of life, Paul gives clear instructions. To the one who is dead in trespasses and sins,

Paul declares, *"God, because He is rich in mercy, and because His great love with which He has loved us, made us alive in Jesus Christ, even when we were dead in trespasses (it is by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Christ, and gave us a seat in the heavenly places with Christ, because of what Christ Jesus did for us."* (Ephesians 2: 4-6, Barclay)

2. Discovery Of New Life

The solution to the self-centered life is Christ. Christ can enable a person to live a life of service for others and reject the selfish values of this present age. Christ can enable a person to forgive the offender, to love the unlovely, to comfort the comfortless, and to befriend the lonely. Christ can give deliverance to those whose lives are filled with fear because of Satan's bondage. Christ can remove the seeds of bitterness and rebellion, and implant the seeds of love and obedience. Christ can replace guilt with a sense of forgiveness, and reawaken the lost aspirations in the breast of men. Christ can strengthen and redirect the lost will of man. In short, Christ "breaks the power of cancelled sin, and sets the prisoner free."

Paul declares the secret to realizing this new life: *"It was nothing you could or did achieve – it was God's gift of grace which saved you. No one can pride himself upon earning the love of God."* (Ephesians 2: 8, 9; Phillips)

Why it is that man cannot achieve his own salvation through his own effort?

It is, first, because God is absolutely perfect and holy and man is unable to satisfy the absolute perfection and holiness, which God requires. When Isaiah saw God he declared: *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."* (Isaiah 6:4) Moses declared: "*Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."* (Exodus 15: 11) Because man is a sinner, he can never by his own merit satisfy the demands of a Holy God.

Man is unable to achieve his own salvation, secondly, because sin is a crime against the love of God. A human analogy may serve to illustrate this truth. Suppose a son who was raised in a Godly Christian home, rejected his Christian training, went astray, and broke the law of the country. Suppose the boy is fined and imprisoned for one year as a punishment for his crime. After the boy has paid his penalty, he is released and the law can no longer inflict punishment for the crime.

Although the boy is no longer in debt to the law, he is in debt to his loving parents whose heart he has broken. The boy cannot achieve a right relationship with his parents on the basis of his own merit; he can only freely receive forgiveness from his parents.

And so it is with God. Man has not only broken God's laws, but more particularly, man has broken God's heart. Man can only find salvation and a right relationship with God, through the free act of God's grace and mercy. Man is in a helpless condition and must openly receive help from God. No payment can be offered as an attempt to merit that help. God is on the giving side and man is on the receiving side.

The price of God's forgiveness is costly. The most beautiful life had to be smashed to a cross where he died an agonizing death, in order that man might be redeemed from a life of selfishness and sin.

To the Christ, the Cross meant suffering, death, and self-denial. To the sinner, it means a humiliating death to self, in order that he might become alive to Christ. The cry of the sinner is, "Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?" In view of the Cross, there is no place for boasting. It is at the Cross that the repentant soul finds the "Burdens of his heart rolled away."

3. Illustrations Of Quest And Discovery Of New Life.

Let us look at specific illustrations of man's quest for God, which finally led to the gateway of faith.

Martin Luther spent years in a monastery as a Catholic monk. He performed many indulgences and went through strenuous acts in hopes that he would merit his way to heaven. On one occasion he climbed the stairs of a sacred shrine in Rome, on his hands and knees, and kissing each step, in hopes of saving his soul from purgatory. Luther wrote the following about himself: "I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work." (Bainton, pg. 34)

Luther tells of his discovery of God's forgiveness and love. "My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did

not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet, I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connections between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven..." (Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther by R.J. Bainton)

In John Wesley's younger life, he rigorously disciplined his life and attempted to live such a good life that he should be sure to merit God's favor and salvation. He fasted, prayed, often read the Scriptures, and performed many good works. Later in life he said, "Doing so much and living so good a life, I doubted not that I was a good Christian." (Blueprint For A Christian World by Mary Alice Tenney, pg. 70)

On the evening of May 24, 1738, John Wesley received assurance of salvation. He had previously tried to save himself through his own works. Wesley records in his diary: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley was saved by grace through faith, and not by any merit of his own. The remainder of his life was spent in performing works of love and mercy, by which he expressed his gratitude to God for his peace.

John Newton is another who was overwhelmed by the grace and love of God. As a converted slave-trader, Newton was inspired to express his testimony in poetry. He wrote the familiar song, "Amazing Grace".

"Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see."

Barclay relates a vivid statement made by Denney. "Denney used to say that the great function of Christianity was in the last analysis to make bad men good." (Barclay's Acts, pg. 193) How meaningful and true is the song, "Christ Receiveth Sinful Men". Man must depend completely on Christ for salvation.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"
(Rock of Ages)

CONCLUSION

Man is a sinner by nature and by practice. Man is in desperate need of healing for his soul. A man is not saved by means of any personal achievement or works. However, after one is saved by faith, he will spend the rest of his life in service to God. The converted soul will want to do all he can for God in order to express gratitude to Christ for His marvelous love and mercy. A man is saved solely by faith, but faith that is genuine will be expressed through a life of good works. In each of the illustrations we have noted, conversion was followed by a life of service and good works. The secret to a life of fullness and service is surrender to Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 7

1. **What is the 'major decision' with which every person is confronted in his/her life?**

2. **From a Christian (i.e., Biblical) viewpoint what does it mean for a person to take the 'high road' of life?**

3. **How, specifically, is a life without Christ portrayed in Ephesians 2: 1-3?**

4. **Do you place greater value upon what you can get in life, or upon what you can give in life? If you have chosen the 'high road' of unselfishness, how are you specifically seeking to manifest such a life, in terms of your actions, goals, projects, and relationships?**

5. **How is life which is lived "at the mercy of one's lower nature" described in Galatians 5: 19-21?**

6. **how can a person who is self-centered become a person who gives himself in service for others? (Note Ephesians 2: 4-5)**

7. **Put a check by the following statements which describe the changes which you experienced when you confessed your sins and when you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ:**

   a._____**I was enabled to forgive those who offended me.**

   b.____ **I was empowered to love some of the unloved persons around me.**

   c.___ **I was sensitized to some of the hurting persons near me, and I became a more compassionate person.**

   d.____ **I became less self-preoccupied and more others-oriented, with a desire to befriend the lonely ones around me.**

   e.____ **I was released from much of my bondage to fear and terror, and I became more peaceful and poised.**

   f.____ **I was delivered from my attitudes of deep-seated bitterness and resentments, and I received power to forgive those who hurt me.**

   g.___ **I was delivered from my attitudes of rebellion and pride, and I was given a more humble and teachable spirit.**

   h.____ **I was delivered from my feelings of debilitating guilt, and I received a sense of liberating forgiveness and peace and reconciliation.**

i.____ I was delivered from a spirit of futility and despair and hopelessness and meaninglessness, and I received a spirit of purpose and meaning and hope and joy, with lost aspirations within me awakened and rekindled.

j.____ My sense of loneliness was replaced with a sense of fellowship and friendship with God and with fellow believers.

k.____ My weakened and broken will was strengthened and redirected towards 'holy purposes'.

8. Why is it that man cannot achieve his own salvation through his own effort?

9. Give your personal reaction or response to the following:

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: THE PROVISION of GRACE

SCRIPTURE: ***" [1]As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2]in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3]All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. [4]But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5]made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. [6]And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, [7]in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. [8]For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*** **(Ephesians 2: 1-10)**

TEXT: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

INTRODUCTION

I once heard of a young man who was considered by all of his friends to be a most dedicated Christian...But he had never personally trusted Christ as his Savior. He was very moral, very devoted, very sincere, very religious, but he was not saved from his sins. He was trusting in his own righteousness to save him!

The provision of God's grace is adequate to deal with the sinful predicament of man. God alone, through the atoning work of Christ, can save man from sin. Man is saved by God's grace, through the exercise of personal faith in Christ, resulting in a wonderful transformation and a life filled with good deeds.

A. SOURCE of SALVATION – GRACE

What is the source of salvation? God's mercy - "God, who is rich in mercy". (v. 4)

God does not give us what we deserve - justice - but what we don't deserve and desperately need - mercy!

What is the source of salvation? God's love - "But because of his great love for us, God...made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions." (vs. 4, 5)

God's love - what is it like? God's love is uncaused, unconditional, steadfast, personal, and eternal!

B. POWER of SALVATION - TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

'Quickened us' - speaks of new life from Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 17)

'Raised us up' - resurrection to new life. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that raises the new believer to new life!

'Made us sit in heavenly places' - speaks of intimate and victorious fellowship with God!

C. INSTRUMENT of SALVATION - FAITH

Saving Faith - transfer of trust from one's self to one's Savior.

Saving Faith - always accompanied by genuine repentance.

Saving Faith - is more than mere intellectual assent to Christian doctrines (James 2:19).

Saving Faith - means man cannot earn God's favor by giving God a gift.

Saving Faith - involves three things, namely knowledge, conviction, and trust.

D. RESULT of SALVATION - GOOD WORKS

Man is saved by grace, through faith, for good works.

Works do not merit our salvation, but works are the result of our salvation.

Works do not demonstrate our worth to God, but works demonstrate our love to God.

We can never repay love, but 'works of faith' is the appropriate response to God's unrepayable love.

Works do not save us, but we cannot be saved without works. (Unless we are like the repentant thief on the cross, close to Jesus).

CONCLUSION

Recognize the Source of your Salvation - God's Grace (i.e. His unmerited favor, love, and mercy). Experience the Power of your Salvation - a totally transformed life! Understand the Instrument of your Salvation - Saving faith, which means casting yourself helplessly and hopefully on the Savior. Appreciate the Result of your Salvation - a life of good works as demonstrations of love for the Savior.

CHAPTER 8

THE PROVISION OF GRACE!

INTRODUCTION

I once heard of a young man who was considered by all of his friends to be a most dedicated Christian. He was raised in a godly home. He rigidly adhered to religious discipline, attending church regularly, memorizing Scripture, and living a clean life. This young man was very interested in missions. In fact, so interested in missions that he learned to prepare meager meals for himself so that he would have extra money to give away to missions! From all outward appearances, he was the epitome of Christian devotion and discipline. But one day, this young man heard the Gospel plan of salvation presented in a very simple and compelling way. When learning of God's grace and love, the young man melted. He realized that during his years of religious training as a child, he had learned about Christ but had never truly given his life to Christ. His outward life of religious respectability could never suffice for the inward corruption of his heart. He had never been personally converted. He had never personally trusted Christ as his Savior. He was very moral, very devoted, very sincere, very religious, but he was not saved from his sins. He was trusting in his own righteousness to save him!

The provision of God's grace is adequate to deal with the sinful predicament of man. God alone, through the atoning work of Christ, can save man from sin. Man is saved by God's grace, through the exercise of personal faith in Christ, resulting in a wonderful transformation and a life filled with good deeds.

A. SOURCE OF SALVATION - GRACE

Salvation originates in God! Paul paints a dreadful picture of life without God.

'Dead in transgressions and sins'; 'following the ways of this world'; the worship of man (humanism); the worship of money (materialism); the worship of things and total preoccupation with time (secularism); 'possessed by a spirit of disobedience' - the spirit of Satan who is the ruler of the kingdom of the air, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts; 'objects of wrath' - these are the phrases which describe the terrible life of ungodliness and sin. This constitutes the profile of sin, and death!

'But God' - these words describe God's grace initiative to save mankind. These words introduce God's mercy, God's love, God's forgiveness, God's transforming power. In short, God's salvation! "The first thing is this which God does to us, not primarily what you and I do ourselves." (Lloyd-Jones; God's Way of Reconciliation; pg. 72)

Notes John Baillie, "Can I, looking back on my own life and history, truthfully describe it as an eager quest? Was it I who was all the time

seeking an elusive God, or was I the elusive one, artfully evading a God that was seeking me? And if haply there has been a finding, is it I who have at last found Him whom I sought, or is it He who has found me? Was I all that time knocking at His door or He at mine? Was it I who had the toil and trouble of the enterprise, or was it He? And shall the glory now be His or mine? Shall I sing of my achievement or of His gift? For me at least there can be but one answer.

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me'
It was not I that found, 0 Saviour true
No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
For thou wast long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovedst me.

Invitation to Pilgrimage; Baillie; pg. 85)

This Divine Initiative is what shows clearly the great contrast between Christianity and the other world religions. For instance, Hinduism has Scriptures showing men's austerities in storming heaven's gates to disturb God's calm loftiness through human persistence. But Christianity declares the startling fact that God always takes the first step - the initiating step. It is not God's reluctance, but man's reluctance, that must be overcome. It is not man searching for God, but God climbing down the ladder to find man! In India, there is a picture of an armless god. But the God of Christianity is not armless. Jesus is God's arm reaching out to lost humanity!

Religion is the record of Man's proud attempts to reach God; Christianity is the story of God's loving pursuit of sinful Man!

Prayer: "O Thou 'Hound of Heaven', you loved me when I was loveless; you sought me when I was lost; you cared for me when I was indifferent; you pursued me when I was running away from Life. Thank you for hounding me with such Love!"

What is the source of salvation? God's mercy: "God, who is rich in mercy" (v. 4).

God does not give us what we deserve - justice - but what we don't deserve and desperately need - mercy!

What is the source of salvation? God's love - "But because of his great love for us, God...made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions." (vs. 4, 5)

God's love - what is it like? God's love is uncaused, unconditional, steadfast, personal, and eternal! God loves us regardless of our moral condition!

B. POWER OF SALVATION – TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

"And God...made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...and raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." (vs. 5, 6)

Notes Lloyd-Jones: "What is true of us spiritually is similar to what happened to our Lord physically when he was raised from the dead."

'Quickened us' - speaks of new life received from Christ. (II Corinthians 5: 17).

Regeneration - is a new disposition, directing the believer to use his facilities in a right and godly way.

"Raise us up"- a resurrection to new life. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that raised the believer to new life! A complete change from death to life! No longer in the grave of sin!

'Made us sit in heavenly places' - speaks of intimate and victorious fellowship with God! The believer no longer belongs to this present evil world! He is a citizen of heaven, under the control of the Holy Spirit. Influenced not by the world, but by the blessed Holy Spirit. The believer is raised to a realm near to the heart of God!

All of this - regeneration (quickening), resurrection to new life, and ascension to new fellowship in heavenly places - is accomplished because the believer is brought into vital union with God! 'Together in Christ' is the phrase that describes the mighty work of salvation and transformation. It is all accomplished because of union with Christ.

God's accomplished work of salvation on earth leads the believer to look forward to a glorious future - the coming ages where God will show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in kindness to us in Christ Jesus. The present work of salvation is great but the work of salvation on earth is the prelude to greater things ahead in heaven. In heaven there are 'incomparable riches of grace' which are awaiting the true believer! (v. 7) Eye hath not seen, not ear heard, nor did mind comprehend what God has prepared for those who love Him!

How powerful is God's salvation - both as an accomplished fact on earth and as an anticipated fulfillment in heaven!

C. INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION - FAITH

We are not saved by faith, but we cannot be saved without faith! We are saved by God's grace, through the exercise of faith in God's grace! Notes John Murray, "Faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone. In faith we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation...Faith is a whole-soul movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences." (Redemption Accomplished and Applied; pg. 106, 107)

One is saved by grace through faith. Faith is a transfer of trust from one's self to one's Saviour.

Saving faith is always accompanied by genuine repentance. Repentance is a change of attitude toward sin. Faith is a change of attitude toward the Saviour, from one of rejection to one of acceptance and surrender.

Saving faith is "putting you in the care of one who can do something. It is a transfer of trust for salvation from self to Christ." (Stan Walters)

Saving faith is more than a mere intellectual assent to the existence of God. James wrote: "You say that you believe that there is one God. Excellent! The demons also believe the same thing - and shudder in terror." (James 2:19, Barclay) The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God, and even trembles on account of this belief, but the devil is still the devil!

Faith is the total commitment of one's total self to Christ. Faith is "not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart." (Wesley's Sermons; vol. 1; pg. 14)

Faith is throwing yourself upon God, like a drowning man throws himself upon the strength of the lifeguard. Only when one ceases to struggle and abandons himself to the Divine Lifeguard, is he saved.

How is man saved? *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."* (Ephesians 2: 8, 9, NASB)

Says Wesley, "If thou couldst do all things well, if from this very hour, till thy soul should return to God, thou couldest perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past...But suppose perfect obedience, for the time to come, could atone for the sins that are past, this would profit thee nothing; for thou art not able to perform it; no, not in any one point." (Wesley's Sermons; vol. 1; 66)

The one who attempts to bargain with God and who feels that he can keep his side of the contract soon learns how weak and corrupted he really is. He who attempts to practice the Christian virtues on his own strength, will end the experiment in despair. True faith involves recognition of man's weak and sinful nature, and resulting total dependence upon the all-together holy Creator. "If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already. So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, 'Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present.' Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction." (Mere Christianity; C.S. Lewis; pg.125)

Faith means that man cannot earn God's favor by giving God a gift. Faith is total abandonment to God in love, realizing that God is the total owner of all and that man is the grateful recipient of all.

Faith involves three things - knowledge, conviction, and trust. Knowledge of the facts regarding Christ's death and resurrection, conviction that the facts are more than historical facts but that they are facts with contemporary and personal importance, and trust in those facts as the basis for one's personal salvation. If one has a strong conviction that the facts concerning Christ are true, then he will commit his total being to Christ. It is only when this last step is taken - the step of full commitment - that we have exercised the kind of faith that saves from sin and saves for heaven! One has come to rely upon Christ alone for salvation!

It is Jesus who saves us. It is not our faith which saves us, but it is Jesus who saves us! However, without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). It is impossible to be saved without the exercise of faith. Faith is the upward reach of man's hand toward the downward reach of God's saving hand! The man who is on the solid rock nearby saves the man who is sinking in the quick sand. However, the sinking man cannot be saved without extending his hand to the strong hand of the man on the rock. It is not the extension of the hand which saves, although one in such a state could not be saved automatically without cooperating with the man on the rock. Christ is our Saviour, but He cannot save us automatically. We must reach out with the handclasp of faith!

Works do not save man. It is impossible to get into Heaven on the basis of one's good deeds! Why? Because "at your finest", you are an unprofitable servant. "There is something to be forgiven in the best things you ever do. If you put all your service into one scale - all your good turns and all your kind thoughts - and, in the other scale, your mean thoughts, your unkind words, your shabby motives, your gross self-centeredness and all your bad turns (which you have probably forgotten) can you doubt which way the scale would go down?" Can you hear the righteous sentence 'Thou art

weighted in the balance, and found wanting'?" (Sangster's 'Daily Readings'; pg. 359)

D. RESULT OF SALVATION – GOOD WORKS

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(v. 10)**

While good works save no man, man is saved <u>for</u> good works. Man is saved <u>by</u> grace <u>through</u> faith, <u>for</u> good works. Works are important to God. Works do not merit our salvation, but works are the result of our salvation. Works do not demonstrate our worth to God, but works demonstrate our love to God. We can never repay love, but 'works of faith' is the appropriate response to God's unrepayable love.

> **'Were the whole realm of nature mine,**
> **That were a present far too small**
> **Love so amazing, so divine,**
> **Demands my life, my soul, my all.'**

A saving faith is a working faith! Works do not save us, but we cannot be saved without works! Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." The fruits of good works are the natural results of the right rootage in Christ! ***"Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds."*** **(Titus 2: 7, RSV)** ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*** **(Matthew 5:16)** ***"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."*** **(Hebrews 10: 24, NIV)**

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Revelations 20: 12)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it he good or bad." **(II. Corinthians 5: 10*)* It is not merely knowing the truth, but doing the truth that determines one's eternal destiny.It is not optional but an absolute imperative that Christians be filled with good deeds. It is feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the destitute, visiting the sick, befriending the stranger, visiting the imprisoned, comforting the sorrowing - these practical acts of love that will be looked upon at the judgment. Said Jesus,** ***"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."*** **(Matthew 25: 45, 46)**

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and

destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." **(James 2: 14-18)**

CONCLUSION

Have you received God's salvation? I say 'receive', for salvation is a gift which one must humbly receive. You can't earn, purchase, or deserve this gift. You must receive it and then spend the rest of your life in grateful acts (deeds) of love.

Put your faith in Christ today, be transformed, and then spend your life performing deeds of love.

Recognize your Source of Salvation - God's Grace (unmerited favor, love, and mercy). Appreciate and experience the Power of Salvation - transforming your total life (quickening you, raising you, and seating you beside the Father - which all leads to the further experience of God's incomparable grace in heaven). Understand your part in salvation. The Instrument of your salvation is faith. Faith is casting yourself helplessly and hopefully on the Saviour. Appreciate the Result of Salvation - a life of good works as demonstrations of love for the Saviour.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 8

1. Is it possible for a person to receive 'religious training' (and learn the doctrine of Christianity), as a child and a teen, and nevertheless fail to experience personal conversion to Christ as Savior? Is it possible for a person to be outwardly respectable and yet inwardly 'corrupt' morally and spiritually? Why is the danger of one "trusting in his own righteousness to save him" especially great in the life of a person who has habitually attended church and who has been raised in a "Christian Home"?

2. Can you characterize your past life, as a practicing sinner, as a time when you were eagerly seeking to know God or as time when God was eagerly seeking you? Were you, at that time, knocking on God's door, or was He knocking on your door? Was it you, or was it God, who took the 'initiative' in the quest for your salvation?

3. Tell if you agree with the following statement: "The Divine Initiative is what shows clearly the great contrast between Christianity and the other world religions." Why or why not?

4. If God does not give us (sinners) what we deserve, namely justice, what does God give to us? (Note Ephesians 2: 4)

5. To one (a sinner) who is "dead in trespasses and sins", what does God offer and what motivates God to make such an offer? (Note Ephesians 2: 4-5)

6. What words would you use to describe the nature and uniqueness of God's love?

7. How would you describe "spiritual regeneration"? (Note 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Ephesians 2: 5-6)

8. In terms of 'regeneration ' (quickening, 'resurrection to new life', 'ascension to new fellowship in heavenly places') share your own experience of 'personal vital union with God'.

9. What significance can be attached to the fact that the following three words (phrases) in Ephesians 2:5-6 are in the 'past tense' - 'made us alive', 'raised us up', 'and seated us'?

10. What can the person, who has appropriated the offered gifts of God look forward to after his physical death? (Note Ephesians 2:7)

11. Give your interpretation and explanation of the following statement: "We are not saved by faith, but we cannot be saved without faith."

12. Give your explanation of the meaning of "Saving Faith".

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: "THE MOST TERRIBLE THING POSSIBLE!"

SCRIPTURE: ***"[11]Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—[12]remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. [13]But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [14]For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, [15]by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, [16]and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [17]He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. [18]For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. [19]Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, [20]built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. [21]In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. [22]And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."*** **Ephesians 2:11-22**

Text: "Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

The most terrible circumstance on earth is bearable if a person knows Christ, if he has a future hope and a blessed destiny. The most wonderful circumstances on earth – power, position, wealth, knowledge, health – are nothing if a man is 'without Christ', for the future of such a person is dark with the doom of death!

The most terrible thing possible is to be 'without Christ', to be 'separate from Christ'. Paul describes man's terrible condition without Christ in four descriptive ways. We must look at each of these four descriptions in Ephesians 2:12.

A. "EXCLUDED FROM CITIZENSHIP IN ISRAEL"

1. Those Who Are Not Christians Do Not Enjoy The Fellowship Of God's People.

B. "FOREIGNERS TO THE COVENANTS OF PEOPLE OF PROMISE"

1. One Of The Most Terrible Things That Can Be Said About An Unbeliever Is That He Does Not Know God's Word And Cannot Claim God's Promises As His Own!

C. "WITHOUT HOPE"

1. Christ Gives One A Future Which Is Bright! Hope Becomes Wishful Thinking If It Is Not Grounded In The Living God!

D. "WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD"

1. 'Living Without God' Is Living Without Any Personal, Subjective Experience Of God. It Is Possible To Know About God Without Knowing God.

CONCLUSION

Christ makes the difference in a person's life! To know God personally (through Christ) results in: (a) a new peace (v. 14); (b) a new family (vs. 13, 19); (c) a new attitude; (d) a new confidence (v. 18); (e) a new citizenship (v. 19); (f) a new fellowship with the saints (v. 20); (g) a new place and purpose in God's plan (vs. 20-22).

CHAPTER 9 -

"THE MOST TERRIBLE THING POSSIBLE!"

INTRODUCTION

What is the most terrible thing that could possibly happen to a person? There are many undesirable circumstances of life. It is not a desirable circumstance to find yourself in a state of ill-health or in a state of suffering from an incurable disease. I have a friend who is slowly but surely dying of Parkinson's disease. He has had this dreadful disease for years. No longer can he walk. He is confined to a wheel chair or to his bed at all times. He must depend on his wife to turn him in his bed or to feed him food. No one considers this a desirable condition. But that man is a beautiful saint of God, kindly, tender, gentle, and sweet in his spirit!

There are other undesirable circumstances in life. Like living in a country where the government does not permit religious freedom. There are today thousands of Chinese Christians who must gather together in the woods for public worship. They meet secretly, hoping their service will be uninterrupted by the police. Often these Chinese believers travel long distance to have the chance to meet with other fellow believers. Life in a land ruled by a dictator is not considered a pleasant life, and yet some of the greatest people in the world today live in such an environment!

There are those who are imprisoned for their Christian faith. Is life behind bars pleasant? Ask Corrie Ten Boom who spent time in Nazi prisons because she expressed love and active compassion for the persecuted Jews! Her family died in such a prison! But in spite of her bitter and dark experiences in prison, she could testify that there is no pit so deep but what God's love goes deeper yet!

There are those parents who are heartbroken because their children are born deformed or diseased. I know of a couple on our block whose three children were all born of the same incurable disease. Two of their three children have already died of the incurable disease, and there is a possibility that the third child could die prematurely, even though that child has lived to teenage years with the disease. Can you think of anything worse than having children who are born with an incurable disease? And yet, some of the greatest and most lovely people in the world are children who are handicapped or parents of handicapped children! The family whose two children have already died of an incurable disease is a dedicated Christian family! One of the children who died was a grade school child. A few hours before this Christian child died, he called his mother to his bedside. The child told his mother that he saw Jesus standing at the top of some stairs, with arms outstretched, bidding the child to come to heaven. The child said to the mother, "Mama, I see Jesus. I want to go to heaven, but I want you to come with me!"

What is the most terrible thing that can happen to a person? Is it to lose a loved one in death? The sorrow and grief associated with the loss of a loved one is very difficult! No doubt about it! I walked a few of the steps through the dark valley of

sorrow and tragedy which my brother experienced when his fifteen year old daughter suddenly died on the night of August 14, 1981. I listened on the phone in the middle of the night when my brother broke the tragic news to me. Early Saturday morning I sat on the couch close to my brother as he buried his head in my lap and wept like a baby, recounting the tragic events of the night before. I listened on the phone as he broke the news to my dear mother and two sisters. Never have I heard such an agonizing shriek from my mother as the news was relayed to her. I stood with my brother beside the casket as he viewed for the first time the embalmed body of his dear Christian teenage daughter. How helpless I felt as he said over and over, 'Sharla, I love you. I love you. O Sharla, I love you.' How I wished, as he kissed her dead face that life could someway come surging back into her body! I preached the funeral message for my niece, and viewed the 400 persons who had gathered into my brother's church in Greeley to pay their respects and to express sympathy. I watched as scores of them wept. I was a member of the large family who went together as we viewed the body of Sharla for the last time at the close of the funeral service.

Is the loss of a child or close loved one the most terrible thing that can happen? In spite of the sorrow, or should I say, because of the sorrow, my brother's faith in God has grown so much stronger! His love for others is tender! I have seldom seen a more tender and loving person, a person who has reached out to others more kindly, than my brother. God has comforted him in a way, beyond words to describe.

What is the most terrible thing that can be said about a person? That he is consigned to a life of poverty, a life of hard work with meager wages, a life with minimum food and maximum discomforts?

What is the most terrible thing that can be said about a person? That he is confined in a prison because of his religious or political beliefs, treated worse than an animal?

What is the most terrible thing that can be said about a person? That he is the parent of a handicapped or deformed or diseased child? Or that he is a parent whose heart is broken because of the untimely and tragic death of a child?

I will tell you what the most terrible thing is that can be said about a person.

"There is nothing more terrible that can be said about anybody than this – 'without Christ', 'living apart from Christ'... (Ephesians 2:12) There is nothing worse than that!" God's Way of Reconciliation; Lloyd-Jones; pg. 168

You may be the specimen of perfect physical health, but if you are 'without Christ'; you are going to lose not only your health someday, but your soul.

You may be the choice citizen of a land where democracy is practiced and freedom is enjoyed, but if you are 'without Christ'; you are a slave of your own passions and an object of divine wrath!

You may be a rich person, able to enjoy the world's pleasures – fashionable clothes, expensive cars, well-furnished homes, plush vacations – but if you are 'without Christ' you are a pauper indeed! Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" ... "Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses!"

The most terrible circumstances on earth are bearable if a person knows Christ, if he has a future hope and a blessed destiny. The most wonderful circumstances on earth – power, position, wealth, knowledge, health – are nothing if a man is 'without Christ', for the future of such a person is dark with the doom of death!

How does Paul describe the terrible positions persons are in who are 'outside Christ'? Ephesians 2:12 says, "*Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*"

PROPOSITION

The most terrible thing possible is to be 'without Christ', to be 'separate from Christ'.

What would be the most terrible thing that could happen to a fish? To be taken out of the water – the natural environment! What is the most terrible thing that could happen to man? To be separated from God, to be separated from the one for whom he is created. Birds are made for the sky, fish are made for water, lungs are made for air, and a stomach is made for food. Man is made for God and man is restless until he rests in God!

To be separated from Christ is the most terrible thing that can be said about a human being! This is why Genesis 3 is the darkest page in the Bible, for Genesis 3 describes man's terrible fall from God. Man failed to stand the test and thus to prove his love for the Creator. Man fell from the height of splendor to the depth of despair, from the beauty of perfection to the vileness of distortion, from the joy of fellowship to the anguish of separation, from the freedom of innocence to the bondage of guilt, from the strength of health to the weakness of disease, from the glory of life to the corruption of death, from the richness of an heir to the poorness of an outcast, from the fullness of knowledge to the shamefulness of ignorance.

Paul describes man's terrible condition without Christ in four descriptive ways. We must look at each of these four descriptions in Ephesians 2:12.

A. "EXCLUDED FROM CITIZENSHIP IN ISRAEL"

The Jews had a special place in the plan of God. The Gentiles did not enjoy that special place. The Jews were God's chosen people to carry out a special plan in history, namely, to bring God's Son into the world. Gentiles did not experience that special feeling of unique citizenship as specially chosen people of God.

Since the Church is God's chose" people today, it is proper to say that Christians enjoy a special relationship to God which sinners do not enjoy. In the loose sense of the term, all humans – saints and sinners – are God's children. Certainly, God created all persons, and therefore by right of creation, all persons can claim a special relationship to the Creator, a relationship which animals cannot claim.

But only Christians can claim an intimate relationship with God, a relationship made possible because of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Christians are God's special possession, God's family, God's people, because Christians are redeemed by the blood of Christ. They are citizens of the 'new Israel' – the church!

Those who are not Christians do not enjoy the fellowship of God's people. They are 'excluded from citizenship in Israel" (the Church, the people of God). They don't have fellowship with God's people. The church is not a comfort to them but only a source of conviction. They have no real desire to go to Church, the songs seem strange to them. The preaching seems foreign to them. They don't enjoy the benefits of Christian fellowship! Church attendance is not a delight but drudgery to them! They would not know how to act in a prayer meeting. The terminology of Christians is like a foreign language to them!

I talked to a young father about the importance of bringing his young children to our Sunday School. I knew this man was raised in a parsonage, and I knew his father was for many years an active minister. When speaking to him about getting his children involved in Sunday School, he responded defensively. He stumbled for words but he made it clear to me that he felt there were hypocrites in the church, and he relayed to me his complaints concerning insensitive church members, whom he saw as a child, mistreat his preacher father. He was trying to present a defense for his failure in raising his children in Church.

It was obvious to me that, in spite of religious training in a parsonage, he was 'separated from Christ', for he was excluding himself from 'citizenship in Israel' – the Church.

People who have no desire to fellowship in God's House of worship are only revealing that they are 'without Christ' – that they are 'excluded from citizenship in Israel' – the Church!

"The most terrible thing about a man who is not a Christian is that he is outside that circle and does not belong to the people of God." Lloyd-Jones; 169

B. "FOREIGNERS TO THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE"

God made covenants with His people, the Jews. The Gentiles knew nothing about these special covenants, these special promises.

God today makes covenants of promise to His people, Christians. Sinners know nothing about these special and wonderful promises.

1. One of the most terrible things that can be said about an unbeliever is that he does not know God's Word and cannot claim God's promises as his own!

   There was once a sheep herder who was poor for years, until abundant oil supplies were discovered on his property. He lived years as a pauper, when he could have lived as a rich man. Ignorance of the resources caused him to live in poverty. Ignorance of God's Word and failure to meet the conditions for the fulfillment of those promises results in spiritual poverty. There is nothing as tragic as living in spiritual poverty when you could live as a child of the King!

C. "WITHOUT HOPE"

Life outside of Christ is a life of hopelessness! Without hope there can be no life, at the best, only existence – and a miserable existence indeed! Christ gives life purpose, meaning, direction! Christ fulfills life's dreams!

Christ gives one a future which is bright! Christ changes circumstances or, if God chooses not to change one's circumstances, God can change the person amidst the circumstances. Either way, Christ fills the future with bright prospects! Day by day things become better with Christ. The one who is in Christ can say, "The best is yet to be." "The future is as bright as the promises of God." "Sweeter as the years go by!" "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before!"

Hope becomes wishful thinking if it is not grounded in the living God. Without a relationship to God through Christ, there is no hope!

When one looks at the outward world, he is tempted to throw away all hope! One careful observer of the world scene notes:

1. The world is facing an energy crisis. We are rapidly exhausting our oil reserves.

2. The world is facing a food and fiber crisis. We are running out of productive farmland, and our great forests are being cut down.

3. The world is facing an ecological crisis. We have polluted this planet to the point of no return. Our oceans are dying.

4. The World is facing a population crisis. The poorer nations are not restraining their birth rates, and millions are dying from starvation.

5. **The world is facing a political crisis. Ungodly ideologies are winning multitudes.**

6. **The World is facing a military crisis. Today the nations are rushing for weapons in an endless arms race.**

"Some of the makers of the atomic bombs called together the ministers around Chicago and in a two days' conference announced: 'Frankly, we're frightened. We can produce the means in atomic energy, but we can't produce the ends for which those means are to be used. Unless you ministers can produce the moral and spiritual ends for which atomic energy is to be used, then we're sunk.' Science turned to religion and cried 'Save us or we perish.'" Conversion; Jones' pg. 25, 26

We are living in an age of pessimism and cynicism. Interesting that pessimism characterizes our "Scientific Age". Scientific methods have given us unprecedented technological advances. We have more gadgets to do more things than any other age, and yet we are unhappy, fearful, and cynical! The 'Golden Calf' of Science, before which many Americans have naively worshipped for decades, has failed to give souls security and lasting peace. Men's hearts fail them for fear of what is coming upon the world!

Many of the writers – philosophers, poets, etc., – are outright pessimists and cynics! "Vachel Lindsay, our late American poet who snuffed out his own life with a bullet through his brain, 'Life is a loom, weaving illusion'; James Thomson, 'Life's a dream in death's eternal sleep'."

Philosopher Bertrand Russell, 'Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and his entire race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matters rolls on its relentless way.'

The ancient writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes looked at life without God, and declared: *"Vanity of vanities, Futility of futilities." "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."* (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

The world religions, like Buddhism, cannot give hope in a world of suffering. Buddhism is basically very pessimistic. Buddha's pessimism is seen in one brief startling statement: "Existence and suffering are one." In other words, get rid of personality and you get rid of suffering which is bound up with personality. To get rid of our headache, we must get rid of our head! What a futile philosophy of life! Existence and suffering are synonymous!

A man grows hopeless when he thinks that his actions make no difference in the outcome of his little life.

One of the saddest experiences of my life happened during my pastoral life, in the late 1970's. I was called to conduct the graveside service for a brilliant young man – a friend of mine who committed suicide by shooting himself. He had become so depressed that he felt there was no hope for a bright future. On several occasions previously, I had talked to him, prayed with him, and even conducted Bible studies in his home. During the Bible studies in his home, I pressed the claims of Christ upon him. I tried to show him that Christ was the answer to his intellectual quest and to his spiritual aspirations. At one time he had high goals for his life, but not knowing Christ's power in his life left him without the invisible supports that he so desperately needed when life caved in on him as a result of domestic troubles. He finally ended it all by putting a gun to his head! What a tragedy, when things could have been so different! Christ would have made all the difference in the world! He could have had a brilliant career in writing, music, and theatre! He was brilliant and influential. The graveside service was largely attended, with several intellectuals present from CSU to pay their respects to the family.

I am not the judge in the situation which I have recounted, but following the funeral service, the truth came home to me again, that life without God is hopeless!

D. "WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD"

Living 'without God' is living without any personal, subjective experience of God. It is possible to know about God without knowing God.

Let me illustrate it this way. Suppose a man is a scholar in a university, and suppose he is a bachelor. He is a literary scholar and is presently doing research on the English word 'Love". He is writing a lengthy paper on the subject of 'Love', noting the various shades of meaning of the word, outlining the history of the word in the English language, and even analyzing the various meanings of the word 'love' in the Greek language. He makes a study of the four Greek words for love and shows how these words apply to the various usages of the word 'love' in the English language.

Over a period of several months he gathers his research data for his exegetical study of the English word 'love', and when he gathers data, he hands it to his secretary to type. He has seen and talked to his secretary, scores of times, and even has discussed his intriguing subject with his single secretary. Then, in the very midst of his abstract study of love, this bachelor scholar finds that he has personally fallen in love with the very secretary who has been typing his lengthy manuscript on the topic of "Love in the English Language Seen from a Grammatical, Historical and Contemporary Perspective."

What has happened to this young bachelor scholar? His intellectual abstract study of love has now found emotional, personal, and concrete expression. He now knows not only about love scholastically, but he knows love experientially! He not only knows about love, but he now experiences love.

The single, attractive secretary was there all the time, but he knew her only as his secretary. Now he wants to know the secretary as his wife! Why? All because of love personally felt and experienced!

Before, love was an academic subject to be analyzed and to be studied. Now love is a relationship – concrete, powerful, personal, and wonderful!

So, friends, it is possible to know about God and yet to be 'without God'. It is possible to believe with your head that there is a God, and yet fail to believe in God with your heart! Even Nicodemus in John 3 knew about God and about religion, but Jesus said that he knew not God because he was not born again. He had never come into a personal transforming relationship with God.

There is a kind of belief in God that does not result in knowing God. Many people are heard to say, "I believe in God. I'm not an atheist!" But mere intellectual consent to God's existence is not the same as life commitment to God's person! James wrote, *"You believe that there is one God? Good! Even demons believe that – and shudder!"* The demons believe in God's existence, but such belief does not change them from being demons! Many there are who believe in God's existence but who are still godless heathens!

To know God is to surrender to God, to love God, to obey God, to produce fruits of righteousness and holiness in one's life! By their fruits you shall know them. *"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."* (Matthew 7:18) *"Anyone who claims to be in the light (i.e. 'claims to know God') but hates his brother is still in the darkness."* (I John 3:9)

So love and obedience are the evidence of true knowledge!

CONCLUSION

In Ephesians 2:11-22, you will notice an unusual contrast between what you were before knowing Christ and what you now are since knowing Christ!

Paul says that before you knew Christ you were (1) 'excluded from citizenship in Israel,' (2) 'foreigners to the covenants of promise', (3) 'without hope', (4) 'without God in the world'.

But Christ makes the difference! When you come to Christ, things happen! You have a new peace (v. 14). You have a new family (vs. 14, 19). You have a new attitude – no longer contempt but acceptance, no longer resentment but

compassion, no longer anger but love! You have a new confidence. *"For through Christ we both have access to the Father by one Spirit"* (v. 18). You have a new citizenship (v. 19). You are "fellow citizens with God's people" (v. 19). You have a new fellowship with the saints (v. 20). You have a new place and purpose in God's plan. (vs. 20-22)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 9

1. **Share from your own personal experience or from your observation of other persons, what you consider "a very terrible happening". As "terrible" (tragic) as this experience in your life (or in the life of someone you know), what would you consider, from God's viewpoint, to be the "worst experience of all"?**

2. **Tell to what degree you agree or disagree with the following statements: "The most terrible circumstances on earth are bearable if a person knows Christ, if he has a future hope and a blessed destiny. The most wonderful circumstances on earth – power, position, wealth, knowledge, health – are nothing if a man is 'without Christ', for the future of such a person is dark."**

3. **Why is a person, who is out of fellowship with God, so very 'miserable'?**

4. **Who are 'citizens of the New Israel', and what must one do to become such a citizen?**

5. **If it is a fact, according to the Bible, that God has made "covenants of promise", to whom has God given these promises?**

6. **As a believer put a check beside the following statements which you believe to be 'true':**

   _____ **(a) Day by day things become better because Christ is in my heart and life!**

   _____ **(b) "The best is yet to be" for me!**

   _____ **(c) "The future is just as bright as the promises of God!"**

   _____ **(d) Because I am a believer, I have been promised that "no evil shall befall me"!**

   _____ **(e) "Sweeter as the years go by" – for me!**

   _____ **(f) "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before!"**

7. **Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Hope becomes wishful thinking if it is not grounded in the living God. Without a relationship to God through Christ, there is no hope!"**

8. **With all the wonderful technological advances (and 'creature comforts' as a result of technology), is there, nevertheless, evidence that our modern "Scientific Age" can accurately be described as an age of "Pessimism" and "Cynicism"?**

9. **Is it possible for one to know about God without personally knowing God? If so, what is the difference? What 'steps' must be taken to advance from knowing about God intellectually to knowing God personally and experientially?**

10. **Share how and when you came into a personal relationship with God and share what changes came about as a result of your new found relationship with God. Have you found that your relationship with God has resulted in a genuine care and compassion and love for your fellowmen, and a new respect for 'holy things', and a greater desire to obey God's commandments?**

11. **Since you have come to Christ in genuine repentance and sincere faith (trust), share concretely what your new relationship with God has meant to you, in terms of:**

- **(a) New Peace (Ephesians 2:14).**
- **(b) New Family (Ephesians 2:14, 19).**
- **(c) New Attitude – no longer contempt but acceptance, no longer resentment but compassion, no longer anger but love.**
- **(d) New Confidence (Ephesians 2:18).**
- **(e) New Citizenship (Ephesians 2:19).**
- **(f) New Fellowship with the saints (Ephesians 2:20).**
- **(g) New Place and Purpose in God's plan (Ephesians 2:20-22).**

OUTLINE – CHAPTER 10

SUBJECT: BUILDING WALLS OR BRIDGES?

SCRIPTURE: ***[11]Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—[12]remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. [13]But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [14]For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, [15]by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, [16]and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [17]He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. [18]For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. [19]Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, [20]built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. [21]In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. [22]And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*** **(Ephesians 2: 11-22)**

TEXT: ***[14]For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,*** **(Ephesians 2:14)**

INTRODUCTION

Christ has come to break down the dividing walls of hostility, to bring peace between all contending groups, to abolish the enmity between groups, to bring unity amidst diversity.

PROPOSITION

Following the example of Jesus, we who are Christ's followers are also called to accept our God-created differences with humility and never proudly to turn our differences into walls of rejection. We are to respect our differences, never trying to destroy the differences, but, at the same time, not turning our differences in to barriers.

A. NATIONAL AND RACIAL DIFFERENCES

God created nations in order that those different nations should serve one another, not that those nations should fight one another. Like the Jews, before and during the time of Jesus, we have too often taken pride in our

particular race and color, and consequently have fallen into blinding prejudice in our evaluation of other races.

B. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

1. **Different temperaments**
2. **Different gifts**
3. **Different ages**
4. **Different classes**
5. **Difference in personalities**

C. ECCLESIASTICAL DIFFERENCES

1. **Avoid Religious 'Sectarianism'**
2. **Nurture Loving 'Inclusiveness'**

CONCLUSION

God created a world full of variety. That means that differences in the world are not to be despised. No attempt should be made to eliminate God-created differences, whether those differences are between nations, between individuals (temperament, gifts, ages, classes, personalities), between various churches.

However, while differences are not to be eliminated, differences are not meant to become barriers and walls.

The key is to accept your uniqueness in humility and to love others, through the power of Christ, who are different from you. Unity amidst diversity is the goal of Christ.

Build bridges of understanding and love, not walls of rejection and contempt! Be a bridge-builder!

CHAPTER 10

BUILDING WALLS OR BRIDGES?

INTRODUCTION

Jesus came into the world to tear down walls of hostility and rejection and to build bridges of love and acceptance. He came, not to destroy God-created differences, but to bring unity out of those differences.

Christ has come to break down the dividing walls of hostility, to bring peace between all contending groups, to abolish the enmity between groups, to bring unity amidst diversity. Christ has come to break down the walls and to build the bridges between mankind. Since Jesus has come, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

PROPOSITION

Following the example of Jesus, we who are Christ's followers are also called to accept our God-created differences with humility and never proudly to turn our differences into walls of rejection.

We are to respect our differences, never trying to destroy the differences, but, at the same time, not turning our differences in to barriers.

A. NATIONAL AND RACIAL DIFFERENCES

Our Scripture today describes the ancient barriers between Jews and Gentiles, which barriers Christ came to destroy. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

"Before Christ came, the walls which separated Jews and Gentiles were high. The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, said the Jews, were created by God to be fuel for the fires of Hell. God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations that He had made. The best of the serpents crush, they said, the best of the Gentiles kill. The best of the serpents crush, they said, the best of the Gentiles kill. It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile mother in her hour of sorest need, for that would simply be to bring another Gentile into the world. Until Christ came the Gentiles were an object of contempt to the Jews. The barrier between them was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of that Jewish boy or girl was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death. Even to go into a Gentile house rendered a Jew unclean. Before Christ the barriers were up; after Christ the barriers were down. Before Christ there was no hope of unity; in Christ the new unity had come." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 125)

Christ made all the difference to the Gentile world. He came to save, not only the exclusive race of the Jews, but He came to save the despised

race of the Gentiles. He died for all in order that all could enjoy forgiveness and reconciliation. He came to make of all races of mankind, one new race of mankind, all united in Christ. *"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broken down the barrier of the dividing wall."* (Ephesians 2:14)

Jesus did not come to destroy national differences and distinctions, but He did come to destroy walls and barriers between nations. What happens too often today between nations is what happens to the ancient Jews. Caught up in their nationalistic spirit, they learned to despise other nations. Considering themselves the chosen people of God, they believed that God only cared for them and consequently despised all other nations. Even the great prophets of Israel had difficulty in comprehending God's universal love for all people and all nations. Attitudes of Jewish exclusivism blinded them to God's love for all people. Think of Jonah who despised the pagan people of Nineveh and who initially refused to go to Nineveh to preach God's message of mercy and forgiveness. Even in Jesus' day, Jesus' disciples had difficulty seeing the universal application of Jesus' message of grace to all people and all nations.

Jesus is calling us today to accept nationalistic differences in humility rather than turning differences into barriers. "Nationality! That is purely of the flesh. It is a complete accident that a man should be born into one nation rather than another. It is a complete accident that a man should be born into one nation rather than another. It is a fact, certainly, that there are different nations and nationalities; but we tend to do exactly what the Jews did, we turn these things into barriers. Because I happen to be born of a certain nation, that is the nation. The other man says exactly the same thing about his nation. It is just taking something that is true in the flesh but exaggerating it until it becomes a tremendous thing. Nationality! People will fight for it, they will give up their lives for it, and they will kill others because of it. Nationality! Birth! Family! Blood! How we exaggerate these things and inflate them! How we despise others! How these things create barriers!" (God's Way of Reconciliation, Lloyd-Jones; pg. 160)

How many Americans take exaggerated pride in their nationalism? Many Americans, like the ancient Jews, believe that God favors America, that God fights America's wars, that God is someway unconditionally obligated to prosper America, that America is superior to all other nations! It is no wonder that this attitude of exaggerated nationalism, this attitude of contempt towards other nations has caused strife, resentment, hatred, and even outright war!

As America we must humbly accept our God-given blessings, but recognize that with added blessings there are added responsibilities. To whom much is given, much is required. We must not fall into the trap which the Jews fell into - the trap of turning differences into barriers. "God did not create the nation of the Jews in order to have nothing to do with the others; He created the nation of the Jews in order that through them He might speak

to the whole world. But the Jews had misunderstood. He had turned this difference into a barrier, and he held himself aloof and despised the others." ("The Circumcision – the Uncircumcision!", Lloyd-Jones; Ibid; 157, 158)

It is good for us Americans to be proud of our country, to be loyal to its cause of freedom, to stand up for its distinctives. But we must never allow our American distinctive to be turned into barriers, into attitudes of contempt toward other nations. God created nations in order that those different nations should serve one another, not that those nations should fight one another.

Turning differences into barriers is the result of egotism. Egotism is that attitude of considering oneself better than anyone else! The Jews were filled with pride. God chose them for a special purpose – that the Jews might be God's special instrument to bring salvation to all nations. Instead of accepting this unique call from God with humility, they turned special privilege into attitudes of exclusive pride which led to prejudice and contempt for non-Jews.

As Americans, we must see that special privilege always means special responsibility. We must never turn special privilege into pride. We must build bridges to other nations, not walls!

Differences between the races are too many times turned into barriers between the races. God created the different races. When one race focuses on its uniqueness it can develop a spirit of pride which leads to prejudice. "Under the influence of pride a man cannot think straightly, he becomes prejudice. He cannot see anything truly as it is. Prejudice is one of the greatest courses in life, and it is generally grounded and rooted in pride. It is an utterly blinding force." (Lloyd-Jones; pg. 158)

A conversation once took place between my wife and another woman. The other woman was speaking in a disrespectful (almost contemptuous) way regarding a racially mixed marriage which both my wife and the other woman were aware of. A white woman (Rosalyn) had married a black man (Preston). The woman said to my wife: "Rosalyn is such a nice person. I don't understand why she married a black man." My wife, who had acquaintance with both Rosalyn and Preston (her black husband) spoke up: "I have found Rosalyn and her husband fine people to deal with. They are Christians and are truly outstanding people."

Why have we constructed racial barriers? Because, like the Jews, we have taken pride in our particular race and color and consequently have fallen into blinding prejudice in our evaluation of other races.

Not only does prejudice give one a false view of others (that others are inferior), but prejudice gives one a false view of himself (that he is superior to others).

B. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

1. Different Temperaments.

God created the various temperaments in persons, not to create conflict, but to create community. Who would want to live in a world where everyone was the same? No one of us is complete in isolation; we are only complete in community. We all need each other! The entire Book of Ephesians emphasizes the theme of unity amidst diversity. Amidst diversity in temperaments, there is to be unity in community.

We must learn to accept and to appreciate the various God-created temperaments. We all have different temperaments, but these differences in temperament must never become the cause of constructing barriers between us. For instance, the Sanguine temperament "is the warm, buoyant, lively and 'enjoying' temperament. He is receptive by nature, and external impressions easily find their way to his heart, where they readily cause an outburst of response." (Spirit-Controlled Temperament; Tim LaHaye; pg. 13)

The Choleric temperament "is the hot, quick, active, practical, and strong-willed temperament. He is often self-sufficient, and very independent. He tends to be decisive and opinionated, finding it easy to make decisions for himself as well as for other people." (Ibid: 15)

Melancholy temperament, sometimes called the 'dark temperament' is "an analytical, self-sacrificing, gifted, perfectionist type, with a very sensitive emotional nature. No one gets more enjoyment from the fine arts than the melancholy." (Ibid: 18)

Phlegmatic temperament is the calm, cool, slow, easy-going temperament. "Life for him is a happy, unexcited, pleasant experience in which he avoids as much involvement as possible...He seldom explodes in anger or laughter, but keeps his emotions in control." (Ibid: 21)

Probably all of us have a combination of these temperament traits in us, but each of us is predominately one of these temperament types.

God created temperament differences, but people of various temperaments must bear and forebear with one another, learning to love and appreciate the differences. Build a bridge to the person who is so different from you; don't build a wall! Work for unity amidst diversity of temperaments! Don't try to change the person who is different from you. Accept, appreciate, and love him!

2. Different Gifts.

Take another example, that of differences in gifts. All of us have different gifts, but we are not to allow our differences in gifts to become a barrier to communication.

Take a person who is unusually gifted. Those who are specially gifted are tempted contemptuously to look down upon those with meager gifts or meager education. But when one is tempted to boast in his gifts, let him remember what the Scriptures says: *"What do you have that you did not receive? If therefore you received special gifts and privileges from God, why do you boast as if you did not receive it"? Possession of special gifts should not lead to a proud and contemptuous attitude, but rather to a humble and reasonable attitude!* Just as the Jews were specially chosen to bring a special blessing to the world as a whole, so you who are specially gifted are chosen to bring a special blessing to your world. Don't abuse your special call as the Jews did by becoming proud, contemptuous, and self-righteous. The Jews failed to be their "brother's keeper". Don't make the same mistake!

Your God-given gifts must never be turned into an occasion to cause competition, conflict, or jealousy. The gifted Corinthian Christians gloried in their gifts. Instead of using their gifts for the edification of the entire Church, they pitted their gifts in competition with one another, seeking the glory of men! Love did not control the use of their gifts. Competition motivated them instead!

There were those carnal Christian preachers who were jealous of Paul's success in the New Testament times. From his prison cell in Rome, Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians about this problem. *"Some (preachers), of course, are preaching the Good News because they are jealous of the way God has used me. They want reputations as fearless preachers! But others have purer motives, preaching because they love me, for they know that the Lord has brought me here to use me to defend the Truth. And some preach to make me jealous, thinking that their success will add to my sorrows here in jail! But whatever their motive for doing it, the fact remains that the Good News about Christ is being preached and I am glad."* (Philippians 1:15-18, Living Bible)

Comparing your gifts with the gifts of another person leads to competition and jealousy – building walls – but using your gifts to serve and love others leads to unity and community - building bridges!

Writes one perceptive author to pastors, "Be realistic as you assess your work. Avoid comparisons like the plague. I read enough religious publications and hear enough conversations to know that such comparisons are the chief indoor sport of preachers, but I try

not to take them too seriously! 'When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.'" (II Corinthians 10:12) "Whoever introduced the idea of competition into the ministry certainly assisted the enemy in his attack against the church. Although we are in conflict against those who preach a false gospel, we are not in competition with any who preach the true gospel. We are only in competition with ourselves. By the grace of God, we ought to be better preachers and pastors today than we were a year ago." (Leadership Magazine; Summer 1981; pg. 36)

Wrote Paul to the Galatian Church: "If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings." (Galatians 5:25, 26; Living Bible)

3. Different Ages.

We talk sometimes about the 'Generation Gap', suggesting that the various age groups don't accept or understand one another. We are to build bridges, not build walls between persons of various ages. I remember all too well how as a young pastor (22 years old at the time), I was guilty of building walls rather than building bridges between the various age groups within the local Church. I decided that the Sunday school classes should be organized by 'age divisions', namely, young adults, middle adults, older adults. And to make things worse, I decided that anyone over 30 years old was a middle-aged adult! You can imagine how my arbitrary decision regarding age divisions resulted in building walls of misunderstanding instead of building bridges of love and understanding between people of various ages in the Church!

4. Different Classes.

A visiting scholar from India was questioned about the caste system in his country. He replied that it was not only in India where a caste system existed but a caste system also existed in America

There is class consciousness in America as well as in other countries. People in America who proclaim democratic equality often practice class discrimination.

Once when my nephew, as a teenager, was the lawn boy for a member of the wealthy Hallmark family (of the famed Hallmark Card Company) in Kansas City, on the first day of work he went to the front door of the rich man's home. In a spirit of indignation, the owner of the mansion told him that henceforth he was to make his appearance, not at the front door but at the back door! A keen

sense of class distinction! My nephew was rebuked because he was not sensitive to class etiquette!

The amazing thing about the Early Church is that it was a great leveler of class distinction. The great majority of the people in the ancient world were slaves – individuals who had few rights and many responsibilities to their masters. However, it was not uncommon for the master to sit in the pew and the slave to stand as the teacher in the early New Testament Churches. Jesus removed the long-erected barriers and brought unity between the classes.

There is no place for favoritism, based on class and wealth, in the Church. Remember what James wrote, "If a man comes into your Church dressed in expensive clothes and with valuable gold rings on his fingers, and at the same moment another man comes in who is poor and dressed in threadbare clothes, and you make a lot of fuss over the rich man and find him the best seat in the house and say to the poor man, 'You can stand over there if you like, or else sit on the floor' – well, judging a man by his wealth shows that you are guided by wrong motives." (James 2: 2-4, Living Bible)

The New Testament teaches that Jesus came to tear down the barriers between the rich and the poor. Jesus is the great leveler! All people stand on level ground before the Cross of Christ. Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses. Writes James, "*A Christian who doesn't amount to much in this world should be glad, for he is great in the Lord's sight. But a rich man should be glad that his riches mean nothing to the Lord, for he will soon be gone, like a flower that has lost its beauty and fades away....*" (James 1: 9-10, Living Bible)

Jesus came to tear down the walls of discrimination and to build the bridges of acceptance and love. Those whom the world overlooks – the poor, the afflicted, the maimed, the lonely, the widows, the fatherless – it is these for whom Christ has a special concern! Christ cared for all persons – the high and low the rich and poor the young and old the moral and immoral, the educated and illiterate. He excludes none! He loves all! He destroys walls and builds bridges! So must we! Wrote Paul to the Romans: *"When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow. Work happily together. Don't try to act big. Don't try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks."* (Romans 12: 15, 16, Living Bible)

5. Difference in Personalities.

To judge people by their outward appearance or outward circumstances is to build walls of hostility rather than bridges of understanding! Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.

To judge a person on the basis of externals is to build walls of hostility. It is to have a wrong sense of values. The same as the Jews had. Outward circumcision was all important to the Jew and was to the Jew a mark of God's special favor. However, circumcision was meant merely to be an external sign of a spiritual, inward state. It was a covenant sign, not only of privilege, but of special responsibility.

Circumcision is in the flesh and is unimportant. Yet the Jews assessed their importance by their special mark in the flesh!

The Jews attached too much importance to the outward and external circumstances of a man's life – whether or not he was a Jew and whether or not he was circumcised. Notes Lloyd-Jones: "People attach more significance to the mere pedigree of man than to their spirits, to their souls, to their characters, to their understanding. These are literal barriers in life; people are ostracized for these reasons: The color of one's skin, which is merely the assessment purely in terms of the flesh: Ability, money, school and training, position in life – these are the things which are causing division and dispute and misery and wretchedness in the world today, and they all belong to the flesh." (Ibid; 160)

C. ECCLESIASTICAL DIFFERENCES

I believe God has willed the various branches of the Church. Various denominations can serve various needs of people. But we must always guard against turning differences between churches into barriers. Let's accept differences in churches (differences in forms of worship, differences in church doctrines and discipline and polity) but never allow ourselves to construct barriers between Churches. Churches should respect one another's differences and learn to accept one another. Churches are to build bridges of love, not to build walls of rejection. It is still possible for a church to take a stance of proud sectarianism instead of a humble stance of love and cooperation.

1. Avoid Religious 'Sectarianism'.

One form of 'prejudice' among Christians is "religious prejudice". There are too many Christians who believe that they have a special 'edge on God's truth', that they are the most enlightened and spiritually informed, that their church (or denomination) is 'more favored' by God than any other church. Such a 'sectarian' attitude is evidence of spiritual pride – the kind of pride which dishonors an all-loving God - and engenders divisions and misunderstandings among Christians. Even though I personally cherish my Anglican Heritage (as a 'fifth generation' Free Methodist), I have always found it hurtful to listen to some of my fellow evangelical (conservative) Protestant ministers speak disrespectfully (and sarcastically) regarding Roman Catholics or Pentecostals or some other 'Branch' of the Christian

Church (Body of Christ). Christ alone is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life', but I believe that there are many 'ways' to God (but only 'through' Christ) and that there are many honorable ways to worship the Living God! Certainly God is too 'big' to be 'boxed' into any one denomination or church.

Personally, I appreciate the large variety of ways in which my several relatives (and friends) love and adore the Precious Savior. One of my grandmothers was a devout Roman Catholic, and the other grandmother was a devout Free Methodist (as well as my mother and my wife and I). My two sisters (and some of their family) are Presbyterians. My brother belongs to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. My oldest daughter spent about 6 years worshipping in the Greek Orthodox Church (a very spiritual Church). My youngest daughter is actively involved in a Christ-centered Episcopal Church. I have one niece who married a Jewish man who has accepted Jesus as his Messiah. She and her husband, who joyously worship in a Messianic Jewish synagogue (church) each Saturday, have helped me to appreciate the "Jewish roots" of the Christian Faith. Both my aunt and her daughter (my cousin) were ordained Pentecostal preachers. Several of my friends (including fellow pastors) are Calvinist-oriented Baptists. One of the faithful 'donors' to my inter-denominational organization (called "Christian Living Ministries") is a long-time devout Lutheran. For the last several years, my wife and I have attended a large evangelical (Protestant) church – the Evangelical Free Church. I have a rather large number of friends and some relatives who attend the Assemblies of God Church.

A person who follows the loving and accepting and tolerant Christ has no just reason to be intolerant, close-minded, narrow, exclusive, sectarian, bigoted, prejudiced against a fellow Christian who chooses to worship differently and to think differently than he does. Notes William Barclay: "The convictions that our beliefs and our methods alone are correct have been the cause of more tragedy and distress in the Church than almost any other thing. There are many ways to God; God has His own secret stairway into every heart. God fulfills Himself in many ways, no man, and no church has a monopoly of the truth of God." (Daily Study Bible; Luke: pg. 131-132)

Barclay notes that of all the greatest religious leaders none was such a pattern of tolerance as John Wesley (1703-1791). Said Wesley, "I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair: but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my face, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible. The thing which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing was a narrowness of spirit, a party zeal - that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among them. 'We think and

we let think'. When his nephew, Samuel, the son of his brother Charles, entered the Roman Catholic Church, John Wesley wrote to him, 'Whether in this Church or that I care not. One may be saved in either or damned in either, but I fear you are not born again.'" (pg. 131)

God is much 'bigger' than any system of theology, or any one 'type' of religious experience, or any one 'branch' of God's Church (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant), or any one 'way' of worship. Notes William Barclay: "There is room in the Empire of the Kingdom for a wide variety of beliefs. No man and no church have a monopoly of all truth. To think ourselves right and everyone else wrong can lead to nothing but trouble and bitterness and strife. So long as all of these beliefs are stemmed in Christ they are all facets of God's truth. There is room in the Empire of the Kingdom for a wide variety of experiences. We do infinite harm when we try to standardize Christian experience, and when we insist that all men must come to Christ in the same way. One man may have a sudden shattering experience and may be able to point to the day and the hour, and the very minute, when God invaded his life. Another man's heart may open to Christ normally and naturally, and without crisis, as the petal of the lint-bell opens to the sun. Both experiences come from God and both men belong to God. There is room in the Empire of the Kingdom for a wide variety of ways of worship. One man finds touch with God in an elaborate ritual and in a splendid liturgy; and another finds God in the bare simplicities. There is no right or wrong here. It is the glory of the church that within its fellowship somewhere a man will find the worship that brings him to God. Let him find it, but let him not think this way is the only way and let him not criticize another's way." (Daily Study Bible; William Barclay; Luke; pages 184, 185)

2. Nurture Loving 'Inclusiveness'.

One of the temptations which believers often face is the temptation to be 'exclusive' in their attitudes and actions toward other persons (persons who are 'professing Christians') who greatly differ in their religious beliefs and practices from themselves. Followers of Jesus Christ must never forget that love (given to humble believers as a gift by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5) not only covers a multitude of sins (James 5:20 and I Peter 4:8), but that love also seeks to include in ones circle of fellowship the greatest number of believers that one can possibly include. Love is 'inclusive', not 'exclusive'! There are certain negative words which accurately describe what love is NOT. Love is not narrow, sectarian, judgmental, rigid, critical, and proud. Rather, love is broad, open-minded, and charitable in judgment-making, accepting, positive, humble, teachable, flexible, and tolerant. Notes the great Christian theologian and philosopher, Francis A. Schaeffer: "One must realize that there are great

differences between believing in absolutes and having an absolutist mentality about everything." (The Church at the End of the 20th Century; pg. 151)

In his excellent book 'Love Covers', Paul Billheimer notes: "The only power that will bring unity in the Body of Christ is the power of agape love. Adequate love for Jesus enables one to accept and love those whom He accepts and loves, regardless of the opinions in non-essentials. We shall never be united by conceptual truth, church polity, liturgy, or any canon or confession of faith – only by agape love. With a sufficient flow of love in the Body, all divisive factors will shrink and diminish in significance. No breach in the Body of Christ is caused primarily by superior knowledge, differing convictions, or divergent views of truth; but by one thing and only one – lack of agape love. Therefore, the only remedy will be found in growth in love, that is, authentic love for God. God knows that finite minds will never reach absolutely inerrant conclusions. He knows that many controversies will never be settled this side of heaven. If infallibility in doctrine or conceptual truth in nonessentials is all important in God's sight, why did He leave room for doubts and differences of opinion? May it not be that He permits uncertainty in nonessentials to give opportunity for practice and growth in love? Which is more important, to be right in opinion and wrong in spirit or to be wrong in opinion and right in spirit? What happens when one is wrong in spirit: is not the Holy Spirit within him consciously grieved and does He not witness to offense by an inward sense of disapproval? God may, and does, bless those with opposite views on nonessentials. God may and does bless those with contradictory views but He never blesses lovelessness." (Paul Billheimer: 'Love Covers': pg. 106, 107, 112)

"Loving Heavenly Father, I confess that I too often have sinned by excluding your children from my personal fellowship, simply because they think and act and react and worship differently than I do. Please forgive me for my sectarianism, and now open my heart to embrace all true believers in my affections. I ask in Jesus' charitable name, Amen."

"Concentration on forms, beautiful services, liturgies, ceremonial dress, and things of this kind in connection with the worship of God are dividing people. It is simply the old practice of the Jews repeated in modern form; that which is of the flesh taken hold of and exaggerated until it becomes a barrier." (Lloyd-Jones: pg. 160)

All who have bowed their knees and who have declared with their lips that 'Jesus Is Lord' are my brothers and sisters in God's Big Family!

CONCLUSION

God created a world full of variety. That means that differences in the world are not to be despised. No attempt should be made to eliminate God-created differences, whether those differences are between nations, between individuals (temperament, gifts, ages, classes, personalities), between various churches.

However, while differences are not to be eliminated, differences are not meant to become barriers and walls.

The key is to accept your uniqueness in humility and to love others, through the power of Christ, who are different from you. Unity amidst diversity is the goal of Christ.

Build bridges of understanding and love, not walls of rejection and contempt! Be a bridge-builder!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 10

1. What attitude did the Jews have toward the Gentiles before and during Jesus' earthly life and ministry, and is this "Jewish attitude" sometimes manifested in our modern day world?

2. According to Ephesians 2:14, what significance did the coming of Christ to earth have in terms of dealing with existing national and racial differences?

3. What should be the attitude and response of Christians today, as they confront nationalistic and racial differences in our contemporary world?

4. How can one (especially an American) be appropriately "Nationalist' without turning "Nationalism' into a type of idolatry? Is it possible for a loyal citizen of one nation to be, at the same time, loving and 'open' and accepting of citizens of other countries? What can you do, as a follower of Christ, to 'break down the barriers' between loyal citizens of various countries? As one who strongly believes in the democratic way of life (and as one who believes that the United States Constitution is the greatest political and God-honoring document ever written), what attitude should you have towards persons who live in non-democratic countries? How can you promote the 'principles of a democratic society' (as exemplified in the United States) without, at the same time, manifesting 'unbecoming pride' and inciting jealousy and resentment in the minds of persons who are not fortunate enough to live in a democratic country?

5. Do you believe that, because God created all persons, God loves all persons equally and that God has 'no favorites'? If God loves all persons equally, does this mean that God thought it a 'good idea' to bring 'great variety' into the world of mankind?

6. Name and describe four basic types of 'temperament', and share which of the four 'temperaments' best describes you. Why is it many times rather difficult for persons with different temperaments to 'accept one another'?

7. How will I Corinthians 4:6-7 help you to avoid an attitude of either 'carnal pride' or of 'growing inferiority', as you view your own 'spiritual gifts and talents' in comparison to the gifts and talents of others?

8. Why do you think there is so much 'comparison' and 'competition' between religious leaders (like preachers), and between various churches? Does this widespread 'comparison' and 'competition' between churches (and the focus on their respective numerical growth) engender jealousy and resentment and carnal pride in the heart of 'Christians' (instead of bringing honor and glory to Christ)?

9. Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Whoever introduced the idea of competition into the ministry certainly

assisted the enemy in his attack against the Church. We are not in competition with any who preach the true gospel. We are only in competition with ourselves. By the grace of God, we ought to be better preachers and pastors than we were a year ago."

10. Tell what your 'inner response' is to the following exhortation which the apostle Paul gave to the Galatian Christians: "If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings."

11. As an earnest follower of Christ who wishes to 'reach out in love' to all age groups, what do you think you specifically could do to help close the "Generation Gap" (especially in your local church, but also among the general population in the community where you live).

12. Share your experience which you have had in 'human relationships' when you believed 'class consciousness and class discrimination' were being manifested and expressed. What do you think you could do to help break down the 'walls of discrimination' (based on race, color, and creed, and class, economic and educational status)? Do you think discrimination (based on class and education, etc.) ever exist within a local (Christian) church? (Note James 2:2-4)

13. Tell what is meant by the statement: "Jesus is the great leveler!"

14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Those whom the world overlooks – the poor, the afflicted, the maimed, the lonely, the widows, the fatherless – it is these for whom Christ has a special concern!"

15. Do you think it is 'right' for you, as a Christian, to try to "get into the graces of important people"? (Note Romans 12:15-16) Do you find it enjoyable to associate with 'ordinary people'? Or do you (because of an unconscious need which you have for 'recognition') seek out the company of 'important people' (whose wealth and education and position are greater than yours)?

16. If it is true (according to the Bible) that "man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart", then why do you tend to put so much emphasis and 'focus' on the external and incidental aspects of man's life such as one's position, parentage, nationality, environment and etc., rather than on his 'inner personality' and 'character'?

17. Do you believe that God has 'willed' the various branches of the worldwide Church, because various denominations can serve various needs of people?

18. Is it possible for a believer to be strongly loyal to his own local church (and his denomination), and, at the same time, be accepting and charitable in his attitudes towards believers who worship in other churches (and

denominations) which have different forms of worship and different doctrines and disciplines and ecclesiastical policy than he has?

19. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The conviction that our beliefs and our methods alone are correct has been the cause of more tragedy and distress in the Church than almost any other thing."**

20. **Do you believe the following statements accurately reflect the Bible's revelation of a God who is 'flexible' and 'merciful' and 'understanding' and 'personal' and 'accommodating'? - "There are many ways to God. God has His own secret stairway into every heart. God fulfills Himself in many ways, and no man and no Church have a monopoly of the truth of God."**

21. **Is it possible for a committed ('thinking') Christian to appropriately discuss and debate theological ideas with fellow Christians and, at the same time, to remain in 'warm' and 'close' and 'loving' relationship with those Christians with whom be differs in viewpoints?**

22. **What is the 'central commitment' which all 'professing Christians' must have, in order for them to maintain a 'foundation' for genuine fellowship and understanding?**

23. **Do you, as a follower of Christ, think it is possible for a person to be 'saved' without that person being able to recall the specific date and place of his 'conversion to Christ'?**

24. **Give your interpretation and application of the following statement (especially as it relates to the attitude which Christians ought to have toward each other): "One must realize that there is a great difference between believing in absolutes and having an absolutist mentality about everything." (When is it 'right' and when is 'wrong' to be 'dogmatic', in terms of 'Christian beliefs'?)**

25. **What is the only remedy for the many 'breaches' that are very evident in the Church ('Body of Christ') today?**

26. **In light of the fact of the considerable disagreement among believers regarding 'secondary beliefs' (such as 'modes in baptism', 'ordination of women', 'speaking in tongues', 'divine healing', 'Eschatology', and etc.), tell how you would answer the following question: "Which is more important, to be right in opinion and wrong in spirit, or to be wrong in opinion and right in spirit?"**

27. **Give your response (reaction) to the following statement: "God may and does bless those with contradictory views but He never blesses lovelessness."**

28. Do you believe that the following statement accurately and Biblically describes the 'ecumenical spirit' which should identify all true Christians, regardless of their different religious affiliations? – "All who have bowed their knees and who have declared with their lips that 'Jesus Is Lord' are my brothers and sisters in God's Big Family!"

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: THE PROFILE OF PEACE

SCRIPTURE: ***[14]For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, [15]by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, [16]and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [17]He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. [18]For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."*** **Ephesians 2:14-18**

TEXT: ***[16]and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [17]He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near."***

INTRODUCTION

The world, as we see it without Christ, is a divided, disunited, fragmented world. Worst of all there is disharmony, disunity, separation between God and man. Man, who was meant to be in fellowship with God, is estranged from God.

PROPOSITION

Christ is our peace (v. 14). Through Christ, man is reconciled to both God and to his fellow man. Love opens the door of access to God and to man, making unity possible amidst the many God-created differences among humankind.

- **A. SOURCE OF PEACE – CHRIST**
- **B. INSTRUMENT OF PEACE – BLOOD OF THE CROSS**
- **C. PURPOSE OF PEACE - RECONCILIATION**
  - **1. Reconciliation Between Man And Man**
  - **2. Reconciliation Between God And Man**
- **D. FOUNDATION OF PEACE - LOVE**
- **E. MEANING OF PEACE – UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY**

CONCLUSION

Christ alone is our <u>Source</u> of peace! The Blood of the Cross is our <u>Instrument</u> of peace! Reconciliation with both God and our fellow human beings is the <u>Purpose</u> of our peace! Love for God and love for our fellowmen is the <u>Foundation</u> of our peace! Unity amidst diversity (i.e., cherishing and using our God-created differences to serve one another) is the <u>Meaning</u> (and concrete expression) of our peace!

May the God of peace be with you!

CHAPTER 11

THE PROFILE OF PEACE!

INTRODUCTION

The cry of man's heart is for Peace! When we look around, we sometimes see anything but peace. "There is battle in nature: nature is 'red in tooth and claw"...Man is divided from man; class from class; nation from nation; ideology from ideology', Gentile from Jew. The world, as we see it without Christ, is a divided, disunited, fragmented world...Worst of all there is disharmony, disunity, separation between God and man. Man, who was meant to be in fellowship with God, is estranged from God."

Have you ever wished that everyone could get along with one another? Why can't whites and blacks get along with each other? Why can't the older generation and the younger generation in our world today get along with one another, overlooking the differences in styles, tastes, and outlooks?

Why can't the various classes – rich and poor – accept each other instead of contemptuously and suspiciously looking down on each other? Why can't people whose temperaments and personalities are so different get along, accepting differences without allowing differences to become barriers of misunderstanding?

These are the concerns, which Paul dealt with in the Book of Ephesians. "The key thought of Ephesians is the gathering together of all things in Jesus Christ. Christ is the centre in which all things unite and the bond that unites all things." (William Barclay

What are the key words of Ephesians? Unity, Reconciliation, Peace!

In Ephesians 2:14-18, we have a Profile of Peace. The profile of peace is shown to us in five ways: (1) Source of Peace (Christ), (2) Instrument of Peace (Blood of the Cross), (3) Purpose of Peace (Reconciliation), (4) Foundation of Peace (Love), (5) Meaning of Peace (Unity amidst Diversity).

PROPOSITION

Christ is our peace (v. 14). Through Christ, man is reconciled to both God and to his fellow man. Love opens the door of access to God and to man, making unity possible amidst the many God-created differences among humankind.

A. SOURCE OF PEACE – CHRIST

When we think of peace, we immediately ask a question: "Peace by Whom?" Ephesians 2:14 says that Christ is our peace. In Ephesians, chapters one and two, we see that Christ is the source of many things. We find many things 'in Christ' in the following chapters.

Ephesians: 1:3 "Every spiritual blessing in Christ".
1:4 "He (God) chose us in him (Christ)."
1:5 "...adopted as sons through Jesus Christ."
1:7 "...redemption and forgiveness in Christ."
1:11 "...in him we were also chosen".
1:13 "...marked and sealed in him."
2:6 "...seated in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

By whom do we have peace? By Christ. Christ is our peace. Christ who is the Author of Peace makes peace possible.

B. INSTRUMENT OF PEACE – BLOOD OF THE CROSS

If Christ is the source of peace, it is the blood of the Cross, which is the instrument of peace.

There is no cheap peace, either between God and man or between man and man. Sin has destroyed the peaceful relationships between God and man and between man and man. It is through "the blood of Christ" (v. 13), by the 'flesh' of Christ (v. 14) that the dividing walls of hostility can be destroyed and that peace can be established! There is no easy peace. Christ is the author of peace, but not even Christ could bring peace without the suffering and the blood of the Cross! It is "through the Cross" (v. 16) that God is able to reconcile man to Himself and to reconcile man to his fellowman.

What a message to our world! Many there are who talk about peace today! But, they do not know either the source of peace (Christ), or the costly instrument of peace (the blood of Christ's cross). They do not discern the seriousness of man's problem of estrangement! They are like the false prophets of Israel: *"They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace', they say, when there is no peace."* (Jeremiah 8:11)

C. PURPOSE OF PEACE - RECONCILIATION

1. Reconciliation between Man and Man.

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace." Ephesians 2:14, 15.

The fact is this: By His Cross, Christ has destroyed the walls of hostility and has built the bridges of peace between all different peoples and persons. That includes all races, nationalities, cultures, ages, and people.

We have already noted that it is the cross of Christ, which is God's Instrument to bring peace between persons and between peoples. What is there in the Cross of Christ that breaks down walls and builds bridges of understanding, peace, and love? Christ destroys the barriers between races, nations, and individuals because Christ has demonstrated His love on the Cross! The Cross shows God's love for all, and God's love for each. "The sight of that Cross awakens in the hearts of men of all nations love for Christ, and only when they all love Christ will they love each other." [1] Said Christ, *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on a Cross), will draw all men to myself."* (John 12:32) What then is the means by which people are reconciled to one another? It is the Cross, for the Cross demonstrates to all that God loves all equally. God loves not only those who are near (the Jews) but God loves those who are far away (the Gentiles). The Cross shows all men that God is the friend of all, and because God is the friend of all, all persons and peoples must be the friends of one another. The Cross is God's outstretched hands, drawing all people to one another in peaceful and loving reconciliation. God is saying through the Cross to hostile humanity, *"Because I love you all equally, all of you who are so different culturally, racially, and religiously must love each other deeply!"*

2. Reconciliation between God and Man.

The purpose of peace is "*we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*" (v. 18)

The Cross demonstrates God's love for all mankind, which is God's magnet to reconcile man with man, "*thus making peace*" (v. 15).
In addition, the Cross satisfies God's justice – Christ receiving the death penalty of sin in his own body in the place of sinners – which provides the basis for God's reconciliation with sinners.

Thus, the Cross is the basis of all reconciliation. Because the Cross satisfies God's justice, the Cross is Christ's appeal to God to forgive mankind. Sin has been punished with Christ and God is just enough not to punish twice for one crime! The innocent one (Christ) has died for the guilty ones (sinners), therefore the alienated ones can become the reconciled ones. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of Christ's death on the cross, providing atonement for *sin*, Christ is our door of access to the presence of God!

Further, because the cross demonstrates God's love, the Cross is Christ's appeal to man to reconcile himself with his fellowman. "The work of Jesus is to show all men that God is their friend, and because God is their friend, that they must be friends with each other."

D. FOUNDATION OF PEACE - LOVE

Love, not law is the Foundation for Peace. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations." Ephesians 2: 14, 15a)

Law divides because it is exclusive. Love unites because it is inclusive. The 'law' (v. 15) which Christ abolished in his flesh, refers to man-made ceremonial laws. Man-made laws and regulations divide mankind, but God's love unites mankind. "The Jews believed that only by keeping the Jewish law was a man good, and only by so doing could he attain to the friendship and the fellowship of God. Now that law had been worked out into thousands and thousands of rules and regulations and commandments and decrees...A religion which is based on all kinds of rules and regulations, about sacred rituals and customs and practices and sacrifices and days can never be a universal religion...Jesus ended legalism as a principle of religion. And what did He put in its place? He put love to God and love to men. Jesus came to tell men that they cannot earn God's approbation by a keeping of the ceremonial law; that they must accept the love and forgiveness and fellowship which God in mercy freely offers them."

E. MEANING OF PEACE – UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY

What does peace really mean? Does it mean that all individual differences between mankind are abolished? If persons are reconciled to one another, does this mean that all personal identity is lost and that all individual distinctives are sacrificed?

Ephesians 2:15 says, "His purpose was to create in himself <u>one new man</u> out of the two, thus making peace."

Christ came into the world "to create a new quality of thing which did not exist before...Jesus brings together Jew and Gentile and from them both produces one new kind of person...It is not that Jesus makes all Jews into Gentiles, or all Gentiles into Jews; He produces a new kind of person out of both, although they remain Gentiles and Jews...The unity which Jesus achieves is not achieved by blotting out all the racial and national characteristics; it is achieved by making all men of all nations into Christians. It may well be that we have something to learn here. The tendency has always been that when we send missionaries abroad we tend to produce people who wear English clothes, speak the English language, and have an English education. There are indeed some missionary Churches who would have all their congregations worship with the one liturgy, which is used in the Churches at home. However, it is not Jesus' purpose that we should turn all man into one nation, but there should be Christian Indians and Christian Africans, whose unity lives in their

Christianity. The oneness in Christ is in Christ, and not in any external change."

Unity, not unison, is the meaning of peace. For instance, a symphony is great because there is unity (harmony) amidst differences in musical instruments. Another example: The Body is one, not because the body parts are the same, but because the body parts, though very different, work together to bring a harmonious functioning to the entire body.

Unity amidst diversity is the meaning of peace. The Church is composed of many Christians, all of whom are different, but all of whom are to cooperate for the over-all harmonious functioning of the entire Church.

What does peace mean? It means unity in the Body of Christ. (Note, Ephesians 4: 1-13)

Difference between persons in the Church is what makes unity possible! If all persons were the same, there could at best only be unison! But unity amidst diversity is the meaning of peace. Never turning differences into barriers to communication! "The oneness in Christ is in Christ, and not in any external change."

Therefore, to be one in Christ is to appreciate one another's national, racial, cultural, religious, temperamental, age differences to allow those differences to be used by God to benefit the entire body of Christ. Christ has come not to destroy the God-created differences, but to destroy the sin-caused differences – the barriers caused by sin. Indeed, Christ comes to use the God-created differences to build up the entire body of believers.

Therefore, peace means that we use our differences, not to compete or to compare or to contend, but to complete, to edify one another!

CONCLUSION

What is the Source of peace? Christ alone! What is the Instrument of Peace? The Blood of the Cross! What is the Purpose of Peace? To reconcile God with man and man with man! What is the Foundation of Peace? Love for God and man, not the laws of men. What is the Meaning of Peace? Unity amidst Diversity.

May the God of peace be with you!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 11

1. Cite evidence from the Bible and from your own personal experience that validate the truth of the following statement: "Christ is the centre in which all things unite, and the bond that unites all things." (Note Ephesians 1:3-5; 1:7; 1:11; 1:13; 2:6)

2. If Christ is the Source of our peace, what is the Instrument by which peace is obtained? (Ephesians 1:16)

3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christ is the author of peace, but not even Christ could bring peace without the suffering and the blood of the Cross!"

4. In spite of the sincere and earnest efforts of modern-day ambassadors and world leaders to establish peace among the nations, why will such efforts, at best, bring about only limited and short–lived peace in our world? (Jeremiah 8:11)

5. What is there in the Cross of Christ that breaks down walls and builds bridges of understanding, peace and love? (Note John 12:32)

6. According to Ephesians 2: 15-16, what is the twofold purpose of peace?

7. Tell what is meant by the statement: "The Cross satisfies God's justice."

8. What is God's 'giant magnet' by which He seeks to draw all sinners to Himself? Why was Christ's death on the Cross God's way of demonstrating to humanity that God is a friend, not an enemy, of the human race?

9. If Jesus came to earth to tell men that they cannot earn God's approbation (approval) by a keeping of the ceremonial law, then what is the basis by which sinful mankind can be accepted and approved by the all-holy God? (Note Ephesians 2: 8-12; 14-15)

10. When persons are reconciled to one another, through the Cross of Christ, does this mean that all personal identity is lost and that all individual distinctive are sacrificed?

11. Tell what is meant by the statement: "Unity, not unison, is the meaning of peace." Why should missionaries (who are sent to evangelize people groups whose culture is so vastly different from the culture in the countries from which missionaries were sent) never forget the difference between 'unity' and 'unison'?

12. If the Scriptures make it clear that Christ did not come to earth to destroy the God-created differences in human beings (such as racial and temperamental and national and cultural differences), then what, according to Scripture, did Christ come to earth to destroy?

13. **Why are competition, comparison, and contention between members of a local church so destructive of God's purpose for His creation of the Church?**

14. **Do you look upon the many differences in the lives of members within a typical local Church, as a positive asset or a negative and disintegrating force? Tell to what extent you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "Differences between persons in the Church is what makes unity possible. Peace means that we use our differences, not to compete or to compare or to contend, but to complement, to edify one another!"**

OUTLINE - Chapter 12

SUBJECT: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN FELLOWSHIP!

SCRIPTURE: "[19]Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, [20]built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. [21]In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. [22]And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22

Text: "You are...fellow citizens with people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:19-20)

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian life is lived, not in isolation, but always in fellowship, in fellowship with God and with other Christians.

PROPOSITION

A Christian is always to live and to grow within a fellowship, described in various ways - a citizen with fellow citizens in a Kingdom, a family member with other family members in a Home, a building block with other 'lively' stones in a 'growing' temple.

A. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE CITIZENSHIP IN A KINGDOM

1. As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens acknowledge common boundaries and separations between their cherished kingdom and other alien kingdoms. (Note James 4:4; I John 2:15-17)

2. As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens acknowledge a common allegiance and loyalty to the King and in turn a common allegiance to one another as fellow citizens.

3. As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens share wonderful privileges together.

B. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE HOME LIFE IN A GOOD HOME

1. Opportunities in the Household of God

a. In a Good Home the children each have direct access to the father.

b. A Good Home Is A Place Where The Children Feel Love And Security.

C. A Good Home Is A Place Where The Children Receive Nourishing Food.

d. A Good Home Is A Place Of Protection And Shelter.

e. A Good Household Provides An Atmosphere For Expression.
f. A Good Household Provides An Atmosphere For Creative Growth.
g. A Good Household Is A Center for Training And Instruction.
h. A Good Household Must Provide Proper Discipline And Correction.

2. Responsibilities in the Household of God.
a. Love and acceptance of all other family members, regardless of how different they are in temperament, sex, age or interests.
b. Forgiveness of fellow members in the Family of God.
c. Cooperation and unselfishness in the Family of God.

C. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE THE RELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING STONES IN A MIGHTY TEMPLE.
1. Closeness among Fellow Christians
2. Dependence upon Christ As the Cornerstone
3. Interdependence among Christians
4. Vital Growth of the Temple.

CONCLUSION

Are you living in vital fellowship with your fellow Christians? The Christian life is like the life of citizens in a kingdom, like life in a happy home, like the relationship of building stones in a living growing temple.

Realize what the Christian life is like, then daily practice that vital fellowship which best describes the essence of the Christian life. The Church is a place "where all men who love Christ can meet in the Spirit."

Chapter 12

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN FELLOWSHIP!

INTRODUCTION

What is the Biblical idea of the Christian life? The Christian life is lived, not in isolation, but always in fellowship, in fellowship with God and in fellowship with other Christians. Sin means losing our at-one-ness with God and our at-one-ness with our fellowman. Susanne De Dietrich states, "Having lost our at-one-ness with God, we become like self-centered tops, turning round and round upon ourselves. We do this as individuals; we do it collectively on a world scale." (The Witnessing Community, pg. 23)

Paul uses three pictures to describe the Christian life and each picture shows the Christian life lived in fellowship.

PROPOSITION

How can the Christian life be described? In our scripture reading today, Paul uses three pictures to describe the Christian life. In all three pictures the Christian life is described in terms of fellowship (1) Fellowship of a citizen with fellow citizens in a Kingdom, (2) Fellowship of a family member with other family members in a Good Home, (3) Fellowship of a building block with other "lively' stones in a 'growing' temple.

A. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE CITIZENSHIP IN A KINGDOM

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." **(Ephesians 2:19)**

1. As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens acknowledge boundaries and separations, between their cherished kingdom and other alien kingdoms.

"You cannot think of a state or a city or a kingdom without boundaries...We (Christians) are a people who are separated from, and made distinct from, all others...You cannot be a Christian without being a separated person. You cannot be in the kingdom of God and in the kingdom of 'the world' at the same time." (God's Way of Reconciliation: Lloyd-Jones; pg. 306)

Colossians 1:13 reminds us that God *"hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."*

A member of one kingdom is separated from members of another kingdom. So it is in the Christian life. As Christians, we are separated from non-Christians. As Christians, we are to be "in" the world, but not "of" the world.

'Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy.' **Holiness means separation, not only from outward practices of sin, but also separation from the attitudes of worldliness.** ***"Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, and then I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters," saith the Lord Almighty. "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*** **(James 4:4) (Note I John 2:15-17)**

2. **As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens acknowledge a common allegiance and loyalty to the King and in turn a common allegiance to one another as fellow citizens.**

Christianity is not only negative separation from sin and worldly practices, but it is also positive separation to the King and the King's subjects. You are to leave the world and to cleave to fellow Christians. ***"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another."***

Loyalty to the King regardless of the cost is what reveals a true follower. On one occasion, when many fair-weather followers of Christ faced Christ's demands of discipleship, they left Him. Jesus turned to His disciples and asked, ***"Will you also leave?"*** **They replied,** ***"To whom else can we go, thou hast the words of eternal life!"***

The Bible speaks of those faithful followers who "loved not their lives unto death." Says the Lord: ***"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*** **(Revelation 2:10)**

As fellow citizens of the Kingdom, we are not only to love the King, supremely, but we are to love each other sincerely. ***"Don't grumble about each other, brothers. Are you yourselves above criticism? For See! The great Judge is coming. He is almost here. (Let him do whatever criticizing must be done)."*** **(James 5:9, Living Bible)**

Faithfulness to one another is a characteristic of kingdom citizenship. Think of what Paul said about Timothy: "But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel." (Philippians 2:22)

Said Paul about the Philippian Christians, ***"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you; thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."*** **(Philippians 1:3, 5)**

In contrast to the faithfulness of the Philippians and of Timothy, there was Demas, of whom Paul wrote, ***"Demas, in love with this present world, hath forsaken me."***

Loyalty to the King and loyalty to the king's followers is the double loyalty required of all citizens of the Kingdom.

As members of a Kingdom, fellow citizens share wonderful privileges together.

The greatest privilege of all is the privilege of access to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. As fellow citizens, we may "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

Another great privilege of fellow citizens is the privilege of fellowship with one another. The citizens of this kingdom are scattered throughout the whole earth. It includes men and women out of 'all nations and kingdoms, and people, and tongues.' As Isaac Watts puts it- "People and realms of every tongue...Dwell on His love with sweetest song."

The day will come when the Kingdom will be ushered in, in its full Kingdom glory! An innumerable company of saints whom no man can number! "Count the stars in the heaven if you can, said God to Abraham; so great, and greater, will be your posterity. Count the grains of sand on the sea-shore; so innumerable will be the citizens of my kingdom which shall be formed of you and your seed." (L-Jones; pg. 310)

B. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE HOME LIFE IN A GOOD HOME

1. Opportunities in the Household of God.

It is Jesus who makes it possible to be a member of God's family, who makes it possible to call God 'Father'. Those who don't come to God through Jesus have no right to call God 'Father.'

Think of the thrill of calling God 'Father'! Not a servant-Master relationship only, but a Father-son relationship! This is a positive and intimate description of the Christian life! It would be great enough to be saved from hell, but we are not merely saved from something terrible and negative, but we are saved for something wonderful and positive! We are saved from hell to become members of God's very family! *"To all who received him (Christ), to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12, NIV)

a. <u>In a Good Home the children each have direct access to the father.</u> There is a loving and trusting relationship. Communion is deep and warm, and communication is open and free. So it is with the Christian's relationship to the Heavenly Father. "The God who made everything out of nothing, and to whom all the stars and the constellations are but as marbles to a child, the God who controls all things that are, and who is from eternity to eternity, to whom the very nations are but

'as the small dust of the balance' - He is your Father and my Father, and there is nothing howsoever small and trivial in your life and in mine but He is interested in it, and, as it were, is prepared to allow the whole universe to go on by its own momentum for the moment while He is listening to you and giving you His undivided attention." (Lloyd-Jones; 331)

So it is in the family of God. The family of God – the Church – is a place where every Christian should feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, security, love! Every person has a need to love and to be loved. What better place can these needs be met than in the Christian fellowship?

b. **<u>A good home is a place where the children receive nourishing food.</u>** **So it is in the family of God – the Church. The church is a place where the Word of God – spiritual food – is served.**

c. **<u>A good home is a place of protection and shelter.</u>** **The Church of God is also a place of protection against falsehood, error, and heresies. Wrote Paul to Timothy, *"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth."* (I Timothy 3:14, 15) It is in the household of God where truth is proclaimed and heresy is exposed. Just as good parents help their children to evaluate ideas and discover truth in the home, so spiritual leaders have responsibility to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Wrote Paul to Timothy, *"Till I come, attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching...Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."* (I Timothy 4:13, 16)**

Just as a household preserves certain standards, traditions, and convictions, so the household of God is to guard the truths of God's Word. In a world full of error and falsehood, the Church must be a place where ancient truth is guarded and declared. As in the case of Paul, the Church leaders may even have to suffer in order to maintain the truth. Wrote Paul to Timothy, *"For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do...Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus;*

guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us." **(I Timothy 1:11, 13, 14)**

d. **A good household provides an atmosphere for expression. The Church too, as the household of God, must provide an atmosphere for expression, a place to share inner feelings and thought. It is in the fellowship of the spiritual family where we should discover our personal identity. It is only as we express ourselves openly and lovingly that we discover ourselves and discover others truly. As we learn to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), we grow up in every way in Christ. So, freedom to express ourselves truthfully and lovingly should always be provided within the fellowship of the church.**

e. **A good household provides an atmosphere for Creative Growth. The potential of every child should be uncovered and developed. Opportunity for growth through responsible involvement is what makes a home a good home! So it is within the household of God. Each member of God's family should be encouraged to discover his spiritual gifts and use those gifts in the service of the church. We grow through responsible involvement. To be uninvolved in service is to become critical of the other members in the family of God. To the extent that one becomes involved, to that same extent will he be interested, contributive, and happy. Unhappy children in a household are usually those who sit back, uninvolved, looking critically at their brothers and sisters who are carrying their weight of responsibility. Involvement in responsible service is what makes the church a center for personal creative growth!**

The public or private school, as important as they are, can never take the place of the home as a place of learning. The kind and quality of training that a child receives in his home, determines the future attitudes of the child when he reaches adulthood. So, in like manner, the household of faith should likewise provide spiritual training and instruction. The church must teach Christians the 'Basic How To's.' 'How to Study the Bible', 'How to Have a Christian Home', 'How to Deal With Suffering, Death, Grief', 'How To Live the Spirit-Filled Life", 'How to Exercise Faith', 'How to Love', and many more areas in the Christian life.

h. **A good household must provide proper discipline and correction.** Parents in a home who never correct or discipline their children are parents who will be grief-stricken when their children someday turn against them in defiance and rebellion! The Heavenly Father is the head of the spiritual household, and just as a human father corrects his children, so we can expect our Heavenly Father to correct us. Proverbs 3:11, 12 says, ***"Young man, do not resent it when God chastens and corrects you, for His punishment is proof of His love. Just as a father punishes a son he delights in to make him better, so the Lord corrects you."*** (Proverbs 3:11, 12, Living Bible) In most households, parents have a few either written or unwritten rules for behavior and conduct. So, in the household of God, our Heavenly Father has a Book of Instructions by which we are to live in His House. That Book of Instructions is the Bible! "The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right." (2 Timothy 3:16)

3. Responsibilities In The Household Of God

Just as there are certain privileges in the home, so there are also certain responsibilities.

a. **Love and acceptance of all other family members, regardless of how different they are in temperament or in size or age or interests.** Within the family of God, each one is different, but our differences are to be looked at as assets, not as liabilities. In the church, Christ brings unity, for all believers stand on level ground before the Cross.

b. **Forgiveness of fellow members in the Family of God.** ***"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."*** Ephesians 4:2. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:31, 32

Forgiveness is the oil in the machinery of all human relationships. We must forgive family members regardless of what happens.

I heard recently of a woman who no longer would shop at King's Soopers because on one occasion she

brought home two gallons of sour milk! The sour milk 'soured' her on the entire store! But no store should be rejected as a whole simply because a product once in a while is not perfect. What if a housewife should go to every store in town and find that each store has occasionally an imperfect product? Will the housewife then decide no longer to go to any store and instead decide to grow all her own food? No, the wise housewife will continue to shop at her favorite store, in spite of the fact that occasionally her favorite store will sell an imperfect product.

Loyalty and love to the Family of God will likewise enable us to have a forgiving spirit. A good family is a family who rejoices together and weeps together, a family composed of members whose loyalty and devotion to one another are never in question, who stay together in happy times and in sad times.

Can you image a child saying, "I like another family better? They are richer, live in a nicer house, have a swimming pool, have three cars, have more children to play with. I will leave my present family and go to another family to live with them!"

Love and loyalty to our fellow brothers and sisters in the local church is what keeps us together. Other families might be bigger, but we love our own family and are faithful to our own family in the local church.

c. **<u>Cooperation and Unselfishness in the Family of God</u>. A happy home is a home in which every family member is unselfish and cooperative. So it is in the Family of God. Every member doing his part. Every member accepting the schedule of the family, coming to the dinner table when the meal is served. It is only when a family member is ill that he takes his meals in bed. So it is in the family of God. He comes to the dinner table (the local church services) to eat with the family members. *"Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near."* (Hebrews 10:25)**

We teach our small children to be courteous and polite to other fellow members. So it is in the fellowship of God's family. Says Philippians 2:3 and 4 *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you*

should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others."

"The Church is not a steeple,
The Church is not a building,
The Church Is A People.
I am the Church, you are the Church,
We are the Church together.
All who follow Jesus, All around the world;
Yes, we are the Church together."

C. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE THE RELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING STONES IN A MIGHTY TEMPLE.

When you approach a tall brick building, do you ever find yourself standing before it, gazing at the thousands of rows of perfectly laid bricks, and asking yourself, "How did the brick layers ever lay so many perfectly placed bricks?" I have pondered that question many times as I walk on the sidewalks close to 'Poudre Valley Hospital'. I have a couple good friends who are brick layers, and their skill in brick lying never ceases to amaze me. Just the dangerous heights involved in laying bricks from high scaffolds are impressive enough, but added to the perils of their work is the precision and perfection of their work. I have often thought of what would happen to a large towering building if every third or fourth brick were removed from the wall. To say the least, the structure would be greatly weakened. Every small brick, which may seem so insignificant by itself, becomes very significant when it is skillfully laid by a bricklayer in the wall. It helps to form the overall structure and helps provide strength for the walls of the building.

Suppose one of the bricks could speak and could say something like this: "I am so small and insignificant. The wall will not miss me if I am no longer a part of the wall. I will remove myself from the wall!"

But the brick is important! The total strength and beauty of the wall is dependent upon each brick doing its part. We have a common saying: "A chain is only as strong as its links!' It is also true to say, 'A wall is only as strong as its individual brinks and the proper relationship of those bricks to each other."

The Church is likened unto a building. Each Christian can be likened unto a brick. The church, composed of individual Christians, like a building, composed of individual bricks, must have a foundation. The foundation is the apostles and prophets of Christ (Ephesians 2:20). They are the beginning of the church. Each of us follow after the first Christian apostles and prophets, and thus we compose the superstructure of the church. But the important thing to note is that Christ is the cornerstone. The structure will collapse in rubble without the cornerstone.

As an individual building block in the temple of God - the church – you have a close and interdependent relationship with other building blocks (other Christians) and a total dependence upon the Christ, the cornerstone. Through interdependence with fellow Christians and through total dependence upon Christ as the cornerstone, you receive strength to grow spiritually. Your personal growth results in the cooperate growth of the temple of God – the church.

1. <u>Closeness Among Fellow Christians.</u>

The relationship of people as members of a church is as close and as intimate as is that which obtains in the different parts and portions of a building." (Lloyd-Jones; 337)

I have often heard it said by believers: "I feel closer to fellow Christians than I do to even my kinsmen!"

I observed for years the caring love between the members of the Church where I served as pastor for 27 years, and it warmed my heart. I saw various ones reaching out in love when one was ill, fixing a broken pipe, repairing a mechanical problem and a thousand other significant acts of love!

Using your skills to help one another is one of the most practical acts of love imaginable.

But this love, while it begins at the household of God, must issue forth in practical acts of compassion to the hurting people outside of the church.

We are our brother's keeper. We are to bear one another's burdens and to share one another's joys. We are never to be possessive in our love, but we are to be tender, warm, and close in our love for one another. Wrote Paul to the Thessalonian Christians *"We proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."* (II Thessalonians 2:7, NASB)

2. <u>Dependence Upon Christ As The Cornerstone.</u>

"It is on the foundation of the prophets and apostles that you have been built up; and the corner stone is Christ Himself." (Barclay's Ephesians 2:20)

Christ holds everything together. He gives meaning to all of life. Christ is all things to all men. I like what one radio preacher (Myron F. Boyd) once shared:

Are you an Architect	**Then Christ is**	**The Chief Corner Stone**
Are you a Traveler	**Then Christ is**	**The way**
Are you a Biologist	**Then Christ is**	**Life**
Are you a Student	**Then Christ is**	**Truth**
Are you a Geologist	**Then Christ is**	**Rock of Ages**
Are you an Astronomer	**Then Christ is**	**Son of Righteousness and the Bright and Morning Star**
Are you a Florist	**Then Christ is**	**Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley**
Are you a Farmer	**Then Christ is**	**Seed Sower and Lord of Harvest**
Are you a Philanthropist	**Then Christ is**	**Unspeakable Gift**
Are you a Banker	**Then Christ is**	**Hid Treasure**
Are you a Carpenter	**Then Christ is**	**Door**
Are you a Doctor	**Then Christ is**	**Great Physician**
Are you a Lawyer	**Then Christ is**	**The Great Advocate**
Are you Thirsty	**Then Christ is**	**The Water of Life**
Are you Hungry	**Then Christ is**	**The Bread of Life**
Are you a Theologian	**Then Christ is**	**The Author and Finisher of your Faith**

Christ, as the corner stone, is of central importance in the building. So, Christ is of central importance in all of life – in the life of the church and the very center of Christian fellowship. He is the basis for all true fellowship.

Jesus said, "*Without Me you can do nothing!*" We are totally dependent upon Christ. In Him we live and move and have our being, physically and spiritually. Christ is the very cornerstone of the building!

3. <u>Interdependence Among Christians</u>

Not only are Christians totally dependent upon Christ, the cornerstone of the building, but each Christian is dependent upon one another. A building block is not functional unless it is placed in the proper place in relationship with the other building blocks in the building. A brick which is cast aside remains alone and is useless. The block was created to be interdependent, and so are you are created, not to live in isolation but to live in association and in community. As individual bricks, are dependent upon all the other bricks so individual Christians are dependent upon each other. Wesley learned that there is no such thing as 'solitary religion'. Said one to Wesley during Wesley's search for spiritual reality, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the bible knows nothing of solitary religion." We need each other, Christianity is a religion of community, as a building is a structure dependent upon the bricks 'living' in community.

4. <u>Vital Growth of the Temple</u>

"All the building that is going on is being fitted together in Him, and it will go on growing until it becomes a holy temple in the Lord, a temple into which you too are built as part, that you may become the dwelling-place of God, through the work of the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21, 22; Barclay)

The Scriptures teach that all individual Christians and all Christians together are the temple of God. "Do you not know that you body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19) "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them..." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Christians are like lively stones, that is, stones which have capacity for growth and vitality. As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are to grow personally and corporately.

The growth of the Christians, like the progress in the construction of a building, may not always seem apparent or obvious to the casual observer, but the Master Architect has his own timing and plan for growth in our lives. There may be times in our lives when there seems to be no increase, no extension, when the walls seem to be no higher than they were a month or six months ago. But think of a large skyscraper. Think of how long it takes to lay the foundation. Indeed, months are sometimes spent in construction below the surface of the ground, out of sight of the casual observer. But the work below the surface is vital in construction of a skyscraper, and so it is in the Christian life. There are times when the Master Architect is working in our lives, to build maturity in us, when we ourselves or others may think that our progress and growth is so slow.

The construction in Moses' life seemed slow during the 40 year period in his life where he daily and routinely herded sheep, but that period of growth was a preparation period.

Don't grow discouraged when growth seems so slow.

"Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." (Isaiah 40:31)

You may not always fly like eagles, and you may not always run and not get tired, but you can walk and not give up walking in the Christian journey!

Wrote Paul to the Galatian Church, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." (Galatians 6:9)

"God is at work in you to accomplish His holy purposes, so take courage! Keep the faith! Look up! You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house." (I Peter 2:5) Let God continue to build your house!

CONCLUSTION:

Are you living in vital fellowship with your fellow Christians? The Christian life is like the life of citizens in a kingdom. The Christian life is like life in a happy home. The Christian life is like the relationship of building stones in a lively, growing temple.

Realize what the Christian life is like. Then daily practice that vital fellowship, best describes the essence of the Christian life. The church is a place "where all men which love Christ can meet in the Spirit." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 139)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 12

1. **What, to you, does it mean for a Christian to be <u>In</u> the world, but not <u>Of</u> the world? (Note John 17:14-19; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; James 4:4; I John 2:15-17)**

2. **Share various ways in which you, as a loyal citizen of God's Kingdom, can express and demonstrate your loyalty to your fellow citizens within God's Kingdom. (Note James 5:9; Ephesians 4:32)**

3. **As a citizen of God's Kingdom, what are some of the privileges which you enjoy? (Hebrews 4:16; I John 1:7, 7)**

4. **Why is the fact that (as a Christian) you may call God 'Father' so very significant?**

5. **What characteristics about your own home remind you of the characteristics of the 'Household of God' of which you are a member?**

6. **When you think of the "Household of God", which one of the following eight characteristics means the most to you?**

   _____(a) The "Household of God" is a place where each child has direct and personal access to the father.

   _____(b) The "Household of God" is a place where all the children feel love and security.

   _____(c) The "Household of God" is a place where the children receive nourishing food.

   _____(d) The "Household of God" is a place of protection and shelter.

   _____(e) The "Household of God" provides an atmosphere for expression of each child's special gifts and abilities.

   _____(f) The "Household of God" provides an opportunity for creative growth through active and responsible involvement in work.

   _____(g) The "Household of God" is a center for training and instruction in right and holy living.

   _____(h) The "Household of God' provides proper discipline and correction, motivated by the father's love for the children.

7. **Tell how you (as a child in the "Household of God") have learned to get along harmoniously with the other children in the "Household", especially with those 'siblings' who are very different than you (in terms of temperament, personality, spiritual gifting, and maturity). How have you personally dealt with the temptations to bitterness, jealousy, rivalry, envy,**

competition, misunderstandings, offenses, anger, pride, etc.? (Note Galatians 5:13-26; Ephesians 4:20-32)

8. **In light of the fact that all believers in the 'Household of God' are different from each other, does it give you comfort to know that "all believers stand on level ground before the Cross." (i.e., all believers are equally cherished by the Loving and Sacrificial Christ)?**

9. **When misunderstandings or offenses arise between fellow believers within the "Household of God" (as expressed within a local church), what should be the 'proper response' between 'hurt' or 'alienated' believers? (Note Ephesians 4:2, 31, 32)**

10. **As it relates to loyalty to a local church, tell what significance the following statements have to members in the "household of God: "Forgiveness is the oil in the machinery of all human relationships. We must forgive. We don't leave our family simply because mistakes are made. We are faithful to our family regardless of what happens."**

11. **As it relates to cooperation, unselfishness, and responsibility of members of the "Household of God" (as expressed in the local church), tell what significance you think the following statement has: "It is only where a family member is ill that he takes his meals in bed." (Note Hebrews 10:25)**

12. **When one pictures the local church as a 'mighty temple', what significance does each 'brick' in the temple have?**

13. **According to Ephesians 2:20, who composes the 'foundation' and the 'cornerstone' of the 'temple'?**

14. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Martin Lloyd Jones: "The relationship of Christian people as members of a church is as close and as intimate as is that which obtains in the different parts and portions of a building." Is it true that the larger a local church (temple) becomes, the more difficult it is for individual members ('bricks') to feel close to all the other members ("bricks') in the local church ('temple')? If you are a member of a 'large church', what can you personally do to 'nurture closeness' among all the members ('bricks') in your local church ('temple')?**

15. **As you become increasingly aware of your own special abilities (i.e., talents and 'spiritual gifts'), what do you think you could do to help 'buildup' and 'encourage' and 'practically serve' the members of your local church (or the 'needy persons' in your community who do not attend your church)?**

16. **Is it a Biblically–accurate statement to declare that "every Christian is a minister"?**

17. **Give your interpretation and application of the following statement: "We are never to be possessive in our love, but we are to be tender, warm, and close in our love for one another." (Note I Thessalonians 2:7)**

18. **Why is Christ indispensible in the proper and healthy functioning of a local church? (Note Ephesians 2:20; John 15:5)**

19. **If Christ alone is the 'Cornerstone of the Temple', why do you think so many Christians today tend to 'elevate' (i.e., venerate and nearly 'worship') ecclesiastical leaders such as pastors and evangelists and (religious radio and television) personalities and speakers? Are too many Christians attached more to religious leaders with a lot of 'charisma', than they are attracted to the Living Christ who calls every member of the 'Body' to be a minister of God's love, to a lost and dying world? What 'factors' should be taken into consideration when you choose a particular 'local church' to attend? (Should you choose to participate in a particular local church only because of God's guidance, not because of the size and programs of the church, or because of the popularity of the pastor?)**

20. **In our independent-minded and individualistically-oriented society in which you live, tell to what extent you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "As individual bricks are dependent upon all the other bricks, so individual Christians are dependent upon each other."**

21. **Does your own personal experience validate the truth of the following statements (and can you find Biblical support for these statements)? "You cannot serve God alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."**

22. **From your own personal experience of living the "Christian life", tell if you 'identify' with the following statement: "There are times when the Master Architect is working in our lives, to build maturity in us, when we ourselves or others may think that our progress and growth is so slow."**

23. **How does the example of God's "dealings" with Moses give you encouragement when the rate of your own personal spiritual growth seems so very slow?**

24. **What promises from God's Word give you courage to "keep on keeping on" in your Christian life, even when you are tempted to become discouraged and to give up? (Note Isaiah 40:31; Galatians 6:9; I Peter 2:5; Philippians 1:3-6)**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: VICTOR OR VICTIM?

SCRIPTURE: ***"[1]For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— [2]Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3]that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. [4]In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5]which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [6]This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. [7]I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. [8]Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9]and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. [10]His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, [11]according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. [12]In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. [13]I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory."*** **Ephesians 3:1-13**

TEXT: ***"[1]For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles."***

INTRODUCTION

Circumstances can either make you or break you, can either provide a stumbling block or a stepping stone for you, can either make you a better person or a bitter person, can either perfect your life or destroy your life! It all depends on your attitude!

PROPOSITION

All Christians, at some time or another, will have their 'prison experiences', but every 'prison' experience can become a 'productive' experience. Christians cannot escape problems, but Christians can use their problems to serve the purposes of good. Christians need never be victims of circumstances, but they can be a victor in spite of circumstances!

A. CHRISTIANS OF GREAT FAITH WILL HAVE 'PRISON EXPERIENCES'

B. THE 'PRISON' EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIANS CAN BE 'PRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCES'

CONCLUSION

Paul was a Victor, not a Victim! He was not mastered by his circumstances; instead, he mastered his circumstances! Any problem is endurable if the problem is endured for Jesus' sake – if we are a 'prisoner for Jesus Christ', not a 'prisoner of Nero'. Endurable? Yes, but more than endurable! Productive! For problems borne for Jesus' sake become problems that unlock new possibilities and opportunities!

What is your suffering right now: A deep disappointment, a financial problem, a marriage problem, or an illness? Whatever it is, surrender it to Jesus! Let your 'prison' experiences produce something very positive in your life! Your problems can serve to advance the cause of Christ! You can be a Victor – Not a Victim!

CHAPTER 13

VICTOR OR VICTIM?

INTRODUCTION

Circumstances can either make you or break you. Circumstances can either provide a stumbling block or a stepping stone for you. Difficulties in your life can either make you a bitter person or a better person. Sun can either harden clay into rocks or it can melt ice into water! Trials and problems can either perfect your life or destroy your life.

It all depends on your attitude. As someone said, "There are three steps to success – attitude, attitude, and attitude!"

"When Paul wrote this letter he was in prison in Rome awaiting trial before Nero...In these circumstances Paul calls himself 'the prisoner of Christ'...Any ordinary person looking at Paul in prison, would have said that Paul was the prisoner of the Roman government: and so in one sense he was; but Paul never thought of himself as the prisoner of Rome; he always thought of himself as the prisoner of Christ. He did not think of himself as arrested by the Roman authorities; he thought of himself as suffering for the sake of Christ. A point of view makes all the difference in the world. There is a famous story of the days when Sir Christopher Wren was building St. Paul's Cathedral. On one occasion Sir Christopher Wren was making a tour of the work in progress. He came upon a man at work and asked him: 'What are you doing?' The man said: 'I am cutting this stone to a certain size and shape.' He came to a second man and asked him what he was doing. The man said: 'I am earning so much money at my work.' He came to a third man at work and asked him what he was doing. The man paused for a moment in his work, and straightened himself and answered: 'I am helping Sir Christopher Wren to build St. Paul's Cathedral.'"(Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 142)

Paul's view of his imprisonment made all the difference in the world! Paul could have felt sorry for himself when he was in prison. He could have become sour, but instead he grew sweeter in his love for God and in his love for others. Paul was Victor, not Victim, during his imprisonment!

Someone said, "When life hands you a lemon, turn your lemon into lemonade!" As someone else said, "Bloom where you are planted!" In other words, don't try to remove yourself from your present set of circumstances, but instead, allow your circumstances to serve you! "A gracious Christian lady said to another: 'I know you dislike being ill. But I find the only thing to do is to get something out of every experience that comes to me. So make your illness give you something.'" (Abundant Living, p.338)

All of us have both mountaintop experiences and valley experiences in life. But remember, your low valley experiences serve a purpose in your life as well as your 'mountaintop' experiences. The richest soil is not on the mountain tops. The richest soil is in the valleys! So when you are in your valleys, plow your

valleys! You can reap a fruitful harvest while you are in the valleys! Make your valley experiences serve some good purpose in your life!

Paul was a man of great faith. But nevertheless, Paul went to prison in Rome! His faith did not keep him out of trouble. In fact, His faith got him into trouble! Because Paul was a man of great faith, he ended up becoming a man who suffered greatly! But Paul did not simply bear his sufferings; rather, he used his sufferings to benefit both himself and his fellow Christians.

PROPOSITION

Christians of great faith will have their 'prison' experiences, but every 'prison' experience can become a productive experience. Christians cannot escape problems, but Christians can use their problems to serve the purposes of good. Christians need never be a victim of circumstances, but they can be a victor in spite of circumstances!

Paul states two facts about himself in Ephesians 3: 1. Paul first states the obvious fact of reality – that he is a prisoner in Rome. Secondly, he gives a spiritual interpretation to this fact – 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ'.

So, there are two realities which we must look at today. First, the reality that Christians of great faith do not avoid life's problems, perplexities, and 'prison' experiences. Secondly, the great reality, that all of life's 'prison' experiences can serve a productive purpose, that, from God's perspective, Christians need never feel that they are prisoners of Nero but that they are prisoners of Jesus Christ. In other words, even though we as Christians will suffer at the hands of men, we can offer up our sufferings as a sacrifice of praise to Christ. Christians can get the best out of the worst experiences of life!

A. CHRISTIANS OF GREAT FAITH WILL HAVE 'PRISON' EXPERIENCES

Paul was a man of great faith. He worked harder than any of the other apostles. The list of his credentials is impressive, and the volume of his spiritual accomplishments is great. Concerning those who challenged his apostleship, he wrote, *"I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles."* (II Corinthians 11:5)

But Paul's great faith did not keep him out of prison. In fact, it put him in prison!

There are those who declare that if you exercise great faith, you will no longer have problems. True, exercising faith does resolve many of our problems. Hebrews 11 – the great faith chapter – teaches us that by faith we can conquer kingdoms, administer justice, gain what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, quench the fury of the flames, escape the edge of the sword, turn weakness into strength, exercise power in battle to rout the enemies around us! (Hebrews 11: 33-34)

However, faith does not always result in making one, in an earthly sense, prosperous and powerful. "Others (who were men of great faith) were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised." (Hebrews 11: 35b-39)

Throughout history, many godly men – men of great faith - have not been delivered from persecution and death. Whoever said that when you become a Christian all of your problems will be over? Paul declared, "All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution!" Said Jesus, *"Because of this, God in His wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary."* (Luke 11: 49-51)

As a realist, Paul did not hide the fact that he was in prison in Rome. You and I, like Paul, must be realistic. We must not try to explain away reality. If you are sick, it does no good to say that, because you are a Christian, you are not sick or that you should not be sick. Denial of reality is not the Christian way! To deny suffering or to explain away suffering is the way of Christian Science! It teaches that suffering is not real, but only an illusion of reality.

And there are those Christians who believe that if you, as a believer, are suffering because of some problem – physical, financial, or otherwise – your suffering is a result of a lack of faith, or because of the presence of sin in your life! True, a lack of faith or presence of unconfessed sin in your life can be the cause of much needless suffering. But it is not true or Biblical to say that the presence of problems in your life is always an evidence of a lack of faith or an evidence of sin in your life. Job had many problems and yet it was not because of a lack of faith or because of the presence of sin in his life.

It is true that 'by Christ's stripes we are healed' of many problems – physical as well as spiritual – but it is also true that because we believe in Christ, we must bear some of the sufferings of Christ in our lives. Wrote Paul, *"Part of my work is to suffer for you; and I am glad, for I am helping to finish up the remainder of Christ's sufferings for his body, the Church."* (Colossians 1: 24, Living Bible) Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians who were suffering, *"For to you has been given the privilege not only of trusting Him but also of suffering for Him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for Him in the past; and I am still in the midst of a great and*

terrible struggle now, as you know so well" **(Philippians 1: 29, 30; Living Bible)**

Faith in Christ may deliver you from many problems, but, on the other hand, faith in Christ may lead you into many problems! In this life, Christians are oftentimes 'up against it' simply because they are Christians! (Note: 2 Corinthians 11: 21b-28; 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11; 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10)

Becoming a Christian does not resolve all problems. In some cases it may cause problems. Jesus is not only the great Uniter of people, giving peace where there had been disharmony. But Jesus is also the great Divider. Said Jesus, *"Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth. No, rather, a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and daughter against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's worst enemies will be right in his own home."* (Matthew 10: 35-36, Living Bible)

Paul declares that there are many things which press in upon the Christian - troubles, trials, problems. But Paul triumphantly declares, in the face of all problems, that the challenge of Christian growth is meant to be a joyous experience. Joy amidst suffering – that is the great Christian paradox. "We also rejoice in our sufferings." (Romans 5: 3) Why? Because the stumbling blocks are meant to be used as stepping stones to further growth and to produce greater maturity in the life of the believer! Every problem is meant to become a project of divine grace!

B. THE 'PRISON' EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIANS CAN BE 'PRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCES'

Paul did not see his prison experience as a galling experience, but as a glorious experience! He did not see himself as a prisoner of Nero but he saw himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

It is all in your attitude! It is all in your perspective! Paul said, "The suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall come hereafter!"

Paul did not deny the reality of life's problems, but Paul saw in every problem a possibility! He allowed God to transform his problems into projects of divine grace, knowing that man's extremities become God's opportunities!

Wrote Paul *"That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day. These problems and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever! So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever."* (II Corinthians 4: 16-18, Living Bible)

Someone once said to a gallant soul who was undergoing a great sorrow: 'Sorrow fairly colors life, doesn't it?' Back came the reply: 'Yes, and I propose to choose the colour.'

As a Christian you may not be able to choose what happens to you, but you can choose how you will react to what happens to you!

When William Booth, the great founder of the Salvation Army was told by his son that he would lose his eye sight, William Booth was first sober and quiet, and then said to his son, "Are you telling me that I shall soon be blind and will never see your face again?" "That is what the doctors are saying," replied his son. Replied William Booth: "I have served God for many years with my eyesight; I shall now serve God without my eyesight."

Paul chose to react positively, not negatively, to what happened to him. He was a Victor, not a victim of his circumstances! Paul used his experience of imprisonment! He chose, not to see himself as a helpless prisoner of Nero, but instead he chose to see himself as a triumphant prisoner for Jesus Christ!

Few things could be worse for Paul than imprisoning him – Paul the Frontiersman for the Gospel – Paul the great Missionary Traveler! One might think that imprisonment would mean the end to Paul's missionary endeavors. Not so for Paul.

Instead, his imprisonment gave him a new opportunity, a new sphere of activity. *"I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel."* (Philippians 1:12)

***"For everyone around here, including all the soldiers over at the barracks, knows that I am in chains simply because I am a Christian. And because of my imprisonment many of the Christians here seem to have lost their fear of chains! Somehow my patience has encouraged them and they have become more and bolder in telling others about Christ."* (Philippians 1: 13-14)**

Paul's prison became his pulpit. Paul used his prison experience in Rome for his own good and for God's glory. Paul's imprisonment became Paul's opportunity for unprecedented witnessing to unlikely persons – Roman guards! His captive audience was Roman soldiers – the 'cream of the crop' – who were chained to Paul's wrists all day long! Also, Paul's preaching in prison resulted in giving new courage and boldness to timid believers to witness. (Philippians 1: 13, 14)

If Paul's prison experience resulted in Roman pagans being converted, in timid Christians being encouraged, and in the Gospel message being spread, what do you suppose your 'prison' experience could result in?

Said one man, "I do not like crisis, but I do like the opportunities they provide."

Paul saw his prison experience, not as an accident of life, or as an incident of human cruelty, but as a providential event of God.

Can you say that whatever happens to you – good or bad - really serves a redemptive purpose in your life? It all depends on your attitude towards problems! What made Paul's prison experience a blessing rather than a curse? It was his attitude towards the experience. He refused to be a victim! He chose to be a victor. 'Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles' – a most positive attitude – not 'Paul, the prisoner of Nero whose cruelty to me is most unjust and unbearable' – a statement of negative reaction and self-pity.

We too, when problems come to us, can choose our attitude in reacting to those problems. We can say bitterly, "I don't deserve these problems. It isn't fair. I resent my persecutors and I blame God for my problem." Or we can say, "I don't understand all the reasons for the problem, but with God's help I will creatively use my problems for my good and for God's glory. I will transform my problems into projects. I will learn from my problems. They will become my stepping stones, not my stumbling blocks!"

Paul did not deny his problem – that he was in prison – but neither did Paul focus negatively upon his problem. He declared loud and clear that he was a prisoner, not of Nero, but of Jesus Christ! Because he was suffering for Jesus, he was able even to glory in his sufferings! He was proud to be a prisoner for Jesus!

Are you suffering today? Can you allow Jesus to use your suffering? The challenge of Christian growth means using all of life's experiences as the raw material from which to create Christlike character. Remember, heat applied to cold, raw cake ingredients produces a tasty, favorable cake. Life's trials can produce a Christian life with flavor and texture!

The Christian answer to suffering is not to explain it or to explain it away, but to allow God redemptively to use suffering. It is possible to take broken pieces of colored glass and to shape a beautiful colored cathedral window. It is possible for God to take the broken pieces of a man's life – his broken dreams, disappointments, tragedies, losses – and from these to produce a beautiful life!

Paul never saw God as the author of suffering, but he knew God allowed suffering for redemptive purposes. Out of every mess, Paul salvaged a message. Out of every tragedy, Paul salvaged a triumph.

When facing problems, the believer must train himself to ask, "What good does God intend for me to salvage out of this problem and trouble? How is this problem to be used for the development of my character?"

One man, "Clifford, got to his feet, curled his thick fingers over the back of an easy chair, and announced to the group looking up at him, 'I used to say

the devil is tempting me; now I say the Lord is testing me."" Positive attitude![2]

So the attitude makes the difference. You can say that temptation is your undoing, or you can say that temptation is your opportunity! Opportunity? Yes, opportunity to say 'No' to sin and 'Yes' to God! Opportunity to grow! *"Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow."* (James 1: 2, Living Bible)

***"We can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. These very things will give us patient endurance."* (Romans 5: 3)**

Paul faced his prison experience positively! He declared that he was a prisoner for Jesus Christ, which made him a Victor in life; Paul refused to be considered a prisoner of Nero, which would make him a victim of evil.

You can feel like Paul just now – that you are 'in prison'. But you can face your prison experiences positively. Your 'prison experiences' can be productive!

You can face your experience of illness positively! Your illness experience can give you an appreciation of good health, an appreciation for those who help you during your illness, and sympathy for those who endure a similar illness.

You can accept your experiences of sorrow with a positive attitude. Your sorrow can draw you closer to God and let you experience, as never before, the comforting presence of God which shall in turn enable you to be a better comforter of other sorrowing people. ""Appreciate my grief?' you say. 'How can I do that?' Let's be clear: You are not to appreciate what has happened. Rather, you are to appreciate that you can come through the circumstance and the grief, a stronger, better person. Remember, God did not cause this to happen so that you'd be a stronger person; He made it possible for you to be a stronger person even though it did happen." (Robert Crandall: A Faith to Grow By; pg. 84)

You can even accept a financial loss with a positive attitude! Such a loss can give you a better realization of the perishability and unreliability of material things and make you value the permanent and eternal possessions of life more!

Can loneliness give you anything positively? Loneliness can give you time to pray and to learn to cultivate a sense of God's constant abiding presence, and it can give you opportunity to meditate without the distractions which being in a group brings.

CONCLUSION

Paul was a Victor, not a Victim! He was not mastered by his circumstances; instead, he mastered his circumstances! His positive attitude made the difference. 'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.' Not, 'Paul, a prisoner of Nero'.

Any problem is endurable if the problem is endured for Jesus' sake – if we are a 'prisoner for Jesus Christ', not a 'prisoner of Nero'. Endurable? Yes, but more than endurable! Productive! For problems borne for Jesus' sake become problems that unlock new possibilities and opportunities! Considering his imprisonment, Paul could write, *"I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel."* (Philippians 1:12)

What is your suffering right now? A deep disappointment, a financial problem, a marriage problem, or an illness? Whatever it is, surrender it to Jesus! Don't face it negatively! Don't say, "I am a victim. I am a prisoner of Nero!" Rather say, "I am a Victor. I am a prisoner for Jesus Christ". Your prison experiences produce something very positive in your life! Your problems can serve to advance the cause of Christ!

Are you a victim or a Victor? Be a victor for Jesus' sake!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 13

1. **Tell what is meant by the following statements: "Circumstances can either make you or break you, can either provide a stumbling block or a steppingstone for you, can either make you a bitter person or a better person, can either perfect your life or destroy your life." Can you think of a person whom you have known who, when he/she faced a difficult trial of life, that person chose to react positively and wisely and in a God-honoring manner? Tell how the courageous person turned his 'lemons' into 'lemonade'.**

2. **Tell what you think is meant by the exhortation: "Bloom where you are planted!"**

3. **Tell why the following advice is so helpful and wise (when a person is experiencing some great difficulty in his/her life): "I find the only thing to do is to get something out of every experience that comes to me."**

4. **Have you found it to be a reality that, when you are going through a 'valley experience' in your life, it is then that you learn some of life's greatest lessons and you gain some of life's greatest wisdom?**

5. **If it is true that the 'richest soil' is in the 'valley' – not on the 'mountaintops' – tell how you have learned to 'plow your valleys', resulting in a 'rich spiritual harvest' of wisdom and greater maturity.**

6. **Is it realistic (and Biblically-accurate) to say that faith in God will not always keep you out of 'troubles', but that, in fact, because of your faith in God you may experience 'troubles'? (Note Hebrews 11: 35b-39; 2 Corinthians 11: 21b-28; 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11; 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10)**

7. **Tell how you react to the following statement: "Jesus is not only the great Uniter of people, giving peace where there had been disharmony, but Jesus is also the great Divider." (Note Matthew 10: 35-36)**

8. **Why is it possible for a Christian to experience genuine joy amidst his sufferings? (Note Romans 5: 3)**

9. **Do you think that Paul's positive attitude of seeing his prison experience in Rome as a 'glorious' experience rather than a 'galling' experience, as a 'prisoner of Jesus Christ' rather than a 'prisoner of Nero', the 'secret' to his victorious Christian life? Do you believe, along with Paul, that "the sufferings of this present time on earth are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall come hereafter in heaven"? If so, than how does this 'positive attitude' help you to cope with the multitude of life's trials and tests and troubles and temptations? (Note 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18)**

10. **If you, as a Christian, are not able to choose what happens to you, is it possible for you to choose how you will react to what happens to you?**

What kind of choice will allow you to be a Victor rather than a Victim in life?

11. **According to Philippians 1: 12-14, what were the positive benefits as a result of Paul's imprisonment in Rome?**

12. **Tell to what extent you personally identify with the 'wisdom' of the following statement: "I do not like crisis, but I do like the opportunities they provide."**

13. **If Paul did not see his imprisonment in Rome as an 'accident of life' or as an 'incident of human cruelty', then how did Paul view his imprisonment?**

14. **Can you say that whatever happens to you – good or bad – really serves a redemptive purpose in your life? When experiencing 'unexpected' and 'undeserved' trouble in your life, what do you do to avoid falling into the trap of 'bitterness and self-pity'?**

15. **If it is 'foolish' for you to deny your problems and to become bitter and cynical when experiencing your troubles, then what is the 'wise response' when you are going through great losses, grief and disappointments?**

16. **Give a concrete example from your own life (or from the life of a friend whom you know well) that illustrates the truth of the following statement: "The challenge of Christian growth means using all of life's experiences as the 'raw material' from which to create Christlike character." (How does the making of a cake illustrate this spiritual truth?)**

17. **If the Christian answer to the 'problem of suffering' is NOT to explain it, and NOT to explain it away, then what is the 'Christian answer' to suffering?**

18. **Can you think of any example, either from the Bible or from past or recent Church History that illustrates the truth of the following statement? "It is possible for God to take the broken pieces of a man's life - his broken dreams, disappointments, tragedies, losses – and from these to produce a beautiful life".**

19. **In light of all the widespread suffering in our world today (including the great suffering which Christian believers experience) do you believe that God is the 'author' of suffering? If not, then why is there so much suffering in our world today? How does the fact that 'Black Friday' was turned into 'Good Friday' because of 'Bright Sunday Easter Morning', help you to understand how tragedy can be transformed into triumph, how losses can be turned into gains, how sorrow can be turned into joy, how 'death' can be turned into 'life'?**

20. **When you (as a believer) are facing difficulties in your life, tell why it is important for you to ask yourself the following questions: "What good does God intend for me to salvage out of this problem and trouble? How is this**

problem to be used for the development of my character?" (Note James 1:23; Romans 5:3)

21. **Tell concretely how you could (creatively) face and 'conquer' the following problems in your life (and learn important 'lessons' from these problems): (a) illness, (b) sorrow, (c) financial loss, (d) loneliness.**

22. **In seeking to better understanding the source and significance of sorrow and suffering, tell why the following statement is so important to understand: "Remember, God did not cause this sorrow to happen so that you would be a stronger person; God made it possible for you to be a stronger person even though it did happen."**

23. **If God is not the 'author' of suffering, and if it is true that 'all things' which happen to you are not, in and of themselves, 'good', then how can Romans 8: 28 be accurately and Biblically interpreted, the result of which brings great comfort to your sorrowing heart?**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: SUPER-ABUNDANT INDWELLING POWER!

SCRIPTURE: ***14For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*** **(Ephesians 3: 14-21)**

TEXT: ***"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being."*** **(Ephesians 3: 16, N.I.V.)**

INTRODUCTION

Consider the onslaughts of Satan, the natural weakness of human nature, the vastness of the task of evangelism, the explosion of the world's population, the shortness in the number of Christian workers, the 'fields that are white unto harvest', the influences of secularism and materialism that tend to deceive Christians, the shortness for the time until Jesus comes, the brevity of man's life on earth, and the awesome accountability of man at the Final Judgment of God. Consider all of these facts about reality, and, as an honest believer, you will acknowledge how much in need you are of supernatural strength!

PROPOSITION

God has infinite strength available, but believers must learn how to appropriate such strength. God's imparted strength gives stability to the Christian, amidst all the threats, amidst all the changes and the chances of life.

A. APPROPRIATION OF STRENGTH
- **1. God's Grace and Riches (vs. 14, 15, 16a)**
- **2. God's Might and Man's Response (v. 16a.)**
- **3. God's Gift to Responsive Believers (v. 17a)**

B. CONSEQUENT ESTABLISHMENT IN FAITH
- **1. God's Experiential Love (vs. 17b-18)**
- **2. God's Surpassing Love (v. 19)**

C. RE-AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S POWER AND GLORY
- **1. God's Super Abundant Power (v. 20)**
- **2. God's Supreme Glory (v. 21)**

CONCLUSION

Today, by faith, simply accept the Holy Spirit's total control of your life. When you let the Spirit have total control, He will make you increasingly more and more Christlike (in order that Christ may really feel at home in your heart), and the Holy Spirit will establish you strongly in the Christian Faith, and He will increasingly enable you to experience the infinite love of Christ. Accept wholeheartedly God's free gift of power today!

CHAPTER 14

SUPER-ABUNDANT INDWELLING POWER!

INTRODUCTION

Once while I was reading, I read something that aroused my attention and has since profoundly influenced my thinking, acting, and reacting. I was reading a message on the event of the panic-stricken disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, where waves and billows almost upset the boat, and when the disciples cried out to their sleeping Master to save them. These were the words that so influenced me: "This is the way in which faith reasons. It says: 'All right, I see the waves and the billows but' – it always puts up this 'but'. That is faith, it holds on to truth and reasons from what it knows to be fact. That is the way to apply faith...Whatever the circumstances, therefore, stand, and wait for a moment. Say: 'I admit it all, but....' But what! But God! But the Lord Jesus Christ! But what! The whole of my salvation! That is what faith does." (Lloyd-Jones; Spiritual Depression; pg. 144)

As soon as I read this, I immediately got out a blank piece of paper and sought to apply what I had just read. I first admitted that certain things were true – or appeared to be true – of the Christian and the Christian Church: (1) Onslaughts of Devil, (2) Weakness of mankind including most Christians, (3) Man-made programs and procedures in church sometimes fallible; (4) Weakness and humanity of preachers, (5) Backsliding of Christians, (6) Members who leave to attend other churches (lack of loyalty during difficult times), (7) High standard of Christ and supernatural life of Spirit, making Christian life humanly impossible; (8) Natural blindness of 'old man' (dullness to spiritual reality by most people), (9) Multiplication of the world in the use of money and inflation of the money in economy, combined with higher costs in running a Church; (12) Mobility of society (producing unpredictability and sporadicness in people and in their response to God's Church and involvement in it).

After making this list, I then wrote in large print below the list the word 'BUT'. But what? But God! But the Lord Jesus Christ! But the promises of God! I then exercised my faith by listing the promises of God which always counter the 'waves and billows' of the storm. I listed the following promises: (1) God is in world to give victory through Jesus Christ; (2) Christian given armament to fight good fight of faith, (3) Spirit dwells within to give power to live supernatural life, (4) God promises fruitfulness to abiding Christian, (5) God draws backslidden Christian to Himself with cords of life (and cares infinitely more than we), (6) God not only gives the desire to live holy life, but the power, (7) Spirit is in world to convict of sin, righteousness, judgment, (8) The fields are white unto harvest – because man is made by God and remains restless until he finds rest in God, (9) God has promised to send forth laborers into His vineyard if we pray (in His own Sovereign time and way), (10) God has promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, and Christ will not let His work suffer, (11) God has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, (12) It is the task of the Spirit of God to not only convict and convert, but

also to cleanse and to establish new Christians (and old) in the faith, and to carry out the good work which He has begun, (13) The Holy Spirit is very involved in the establishing of Christians (as shown by this predominant theme in the Epistles).

Consider the onslaughts of Satan, the natural weakness of human nature, the vastness of the task of evangelism, the explosion of the world's population, the shortness in the number of Christian workers, the 'fields that are white unto harvest', the influences of secularism and materialism that tend to deceive Christians, the shortness for the time until Jesus comes, the brevity of man's life on earth, and the awesome accountability of man at the Final Judgment of God. Consider all of these facts about reality, and, as an honest believer, you will acknowledge how much in need you are of supernatural strength!

PROPOSITION

This is what our Scripture passage is about today – the superabundant indwelling power. God has infinite strength available, but believers must learn how to appropriate such strength. God's imparted strength gives stability to the Christian, amidst all the threats, amidst all the changes and chances of life. Let us look carefully at the superabundant power which God has available for each one of us. (Ephesians 3: 14-21)

I. APPROPRIATION OF STRENGTH

A. GOD'S GRACE AND RICHES (vs. 14, 15, 16a)

In verse 14 Paul acknowledges the <u>pre-eminence</u> and <u>Sovereignty</u> of God and bows in adoration before such a mighty and self-revealed God. God is both Father – that is, God is imminent, loveable – and God is also transcendent – far above all else and the One to whom everything else is related by virtue of Creation (not by Redemption, for only the redeemed are in God's family in the stricter sense of the term.)

It is this God who <u>gives</u> to the children of men (v. 16) Mankind is the recipient of God's gifts of physical and spiritual life and energy. God is the one who gives, not on the basis of human merit, but solely on the basis of unmerited love and kindness.

God "gives according to the <u>riches of his glory</u>." God's riches are <u>unlimited in quantity</u> and <u>incomparable in quality.</u> Once a Christian magazine (Moody Monthly: June 1972) featured an article on June Hunt, the 27 year old daughter of H.L. Hunt, a billionaire and one of the very richest men in the world. June Hunt grew up according to the riches of her billionaire father, and when asked what this was like, she answered, "Growing up it was an experience of being able to do many things. Now it is the opportunity to do the things for which I'm best suited." However, all the earthly riches of her life could not satisfy the inner hunger of her spirit, and when someone

explained Revelations 3:20 to her, she said, "I am a very analytical person so I weighed the pros and cons of becoming a Christian: what I would gain and what I would lose. I decided it was worth every risk if He could give me the quality of life I was seeking, so at the age of fifteen I invited Christ into my life...I consider myself most fortunate not because of the material things in my life but the wealth of knowledge from my parents."

The gifts which Christ gives are "according to the riches of his glory" – not according to the riches of this world. God's riches are qualitatively different than the world's riches. God's riches satisfy the needs of the human heart and God's riches are exhaustless!

B. GOD'S MIGHT AND MAN'S RESPONSE (v. 16a.)

It is according to God's riches that God grants the believer to be "strengthen with might through His Spirit."

The word "might" is a word that speaks of God's inherent Power. God is the limitless and uncreated Source of all Energy – both physical and spiritual. God is called the 'Mighty God'. Basic to God's very nature and character is Might.

The word 'strengthened' means 'to be made strong, to increase in strength, to grow strong'. It is the word that is applied to man, and is the result of the appropriation of God's Might. God's Might (Inherent Power) is the source from which man derives strength, and, while the Might of God is infinite and fixed and complete, man's strength increasingly grows and is always relative according to the degree of man's appropriation of God's Might. 'To be strengthened' shows the progression and assumes a prior period of weakness.

Have you ever seen a weight-lifting advertisement? There is one picture of a flabby man who is out of shape. Then there is a second adjacent picture of the same man who, after months of weight-lifting and exercise, is bulging not with fat but now with muscles. He is in shape and is the picture of health. What is the reason for his muscular body? Lifting weights. Looking at the weights could not do the job, but consistently exercising, using the weights, consistently exercising, using the weights, did the job.

Now, no Christian becomes strong unconditionally, but if a Christian will consistently cooperate with the Spirit in obedience, prayer, praise, work, and worship, then the weak Christian (out-of-shape) can become a strong Christian.

What is the source of the Christian's strength? It is the Might of God, which is given to the Christian through the Spirit. Just as the

flabby man was made strong through lifting the weights, so the weak Christian is made strong through responding to God's Spirit.
By the way of illustration, let's take the weight-lifter again. It is important not only to have strong surface muscles, but if one is to be truly in good health, it is important to have a strong heart and strong lungs. That is, it is important to have inner strength as well as outer strength. The Air Force scientifically developed an exercise program, based on a point system which determines the degree to which a person is in good physical condition. The basis for determining the degree to which a man is in good physical condition is based on the degree to which the heart and lungs and blood pressure are in good shape. In other words, it is possible to have outer bulging muscles and not have a strong heart and strong lungs. Inner strength is the determinant of good health.

Now apply this analogy to a Christian. A Christian is only in good shape if he has strength in his inner self.

It is important to live a balanced life. To live such a life, one needs to be strengthened by God's Spirit in mind, in heart, and in will. The Spirit enables a Christian to be strong in mind. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of God." "Set your minds on things above, not on things on earth." The Spirit enables a Christian to be strong in heart (affections and emotions centered upon God). "Guard your heart, for out of it are the issues of life." "Set your heart on heavenly treasures, for where your heart is there will your treasures be also." The Holy Spirit enables a Christian to be strong in will. Just as Jesus could say to God, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God", so the Christian, through the Spirit, learns to say, "Not my will, but thine be done."

C. GOD'S GIFT TO RESPONSIVE BELIEVERS (v. 17a)

God, through His Might, strengthens the Christian in the 'inner man' by means of the Spirit, and this is done in order "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." This phrase means literally, "to settle down and be at home in your hearts". (Aorist – showing finality) It is Christ's desire to be at home in the heart of every believer permanently for time and eternity. Christ cannot truly settle down and be at home in the heart if the believer is unsurrendered at certain points. Christ may dwell within a partially surrendered heart, but He will not feel at home in such a heart.

Dr. Max Reich once said, "If we make room for the Holy Spirit, He will make room for the Lord Jesus. That is, if the saint lives in conscious dependence upon and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will make room for the Lord Jesus in the heart and life of the saint by eliminating from his life things that are sinful and of the

world, and thus enable the saint to make the Lord Jesus feel completely at home in his heart." (Kenneth Quest)

"Through Faith" – "This trust here is not a trust in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, but, having believed on Him as Saviour, the saint is now to believe on Him as the One who fills with the Spirit, or grants the fullness of the Spirit, as Paul puts it in his prayer here." (Kenneth Quest)

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" (John 4:14) Jesus said that if a man comes to him he will never thirst, and yet he implies that moment by moment a Christian's thirst will be satisfied by the water that is continually springing up within him. It is like a rich man who adopts a poor, starving boy from off the street and says to him, "After you come to my house you will never be hungry again." The rich man obviously does not mean that the boy will never get hungry. What he means is that the boy will never be destitute again. The boy will periodically get hungry, but he will be regularly satisfied with food. When Jesus tells us that we will never hunger or thirst when we come to Him, He means that we will never be destitute or in a perpetual state of hunger. We will hunger and our hunger will always be satisfied, and in that sense we will never hunger or thirst. We come to Christ once and for all for fulfillment and yet we experience daily fulfillment. As long as a believer remains in the care and keeping of the Spirit, the believer remains nourished on God's riches and increasingly becomes more like the Master.

II. CONSEQUENT ESTABLISHMENT IN FAITH

The consequent result of appropriating God's strength and might is establishment in Faith.

A. GOD'S EXPERIENTIAL LOVE (vs. 17b-18)

If one has accepted the free gift of God's Spirit of strength into the inner man, Christ will increasingly feel at home in the heart of such a person, and as a continuing result that Christ-controlled, Spirit-filled Christian will be "rooted and grounded in love". Being rooted and grounded in love is the continuing result (perfect tense in Greek language), intended by God to be the permanent result, "of the strengthening by the Spirit and the consequent at-home-ness of the Lord Jesus in the believer's heart and His fellowship with him." (Wuest)

It is "in love" that the Christian is "rooted and grounded", that is, God's love which the Holy Spirit produces and with which he floods the heart of the yielded saint.

"May we have power to comprehend with all the saints what are the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ."

"To comprehend" – refers to a mental grasp of the full implications of God's love for us (which is so vast - as shown by height, breadth, length, depth). Suppose one had never seen the ocean before and that he stood on the shore and looked out over the ocean. Such a person would have a mental grasp of the vastness of the ocean. But suppose that same person joined the U.S. Navy, and spent twenty years out in the Ocean. Then that person would have not only a mental grasp of the immensity of the ocean, but would have an experiential understanding of the ocean. So it is with God's love. The term 'to know' refers not to a mere mental, intellectual grasp of God's personal love for man. "The conceptual knowledge passes into experiential knowledge as the saint experiences in his life that comprehension of the love of Christ for him in the sphere of his earthly life." (Kenneth Wuest)

B. GOD'S SURPASSING LOVE (v. 19)

The love of Christ can be experimentally known by the saint in whose heart Christ has made His home. However, the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge." "No matter how much the saint experiences of the love of Christ, yet there are oceans of love in the great heart of God that has not been touched by his experience." (Wuest)

"That you may be filled with all the fullness of God". "Fullness of God" is the fullness which God imparts through the dwelling of Christ in the heart." (Vincent)

III. RE-AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S POWER AND GLORY

A. GOD'S SUPER ABUNDANT POWER (v. 20)

"Able to do far more abundantly" (υπέρέκπέριδδου) – "than all we ask for ourselves (middle voice) or even think." This phrase is the translation of one Greek word (a compound word) that "speaks of the ability of God to do something, that ability having more than enough potential power, this power exhaustless, and then some on top of that. Thus, Paul says that God is able to do super-abundantly above and beyond what we ask or think, and then some on top of that." (Wuest)

(Illustration) Of small child who asks for ice cream and sets its heart upon ice cream, to the extent that this is all that the small child can think of – ice cream. Think: The parent is able to supply to that small child far above what the child can even think or ask for, such as college education, love, friendship, cultural advantages, trips, etc., Human parents are limited however; but God is unlimited, and can in the highest sense "do superabundantly above and beyond what we ask or think, and then some on top of that."

(Illustration) "God created the sun to give light and heat to the earth upon which we live. But only a very small fraction of that light and heat ever reaches our globe. The rest is lost in space. We need never be concerned and keep saved for time and eternity, every sinner that ever has or ever will live, and then enough left over to save a million more planets full of sinners, were there such, and then some more. There is enough grace available to give every saint constant victory over sin, and then some more. There is enough grace to meet and cope with all the sorrows, heartaches, difficulties, temptations, testing, and trials of human existence, and more added to that." (Quest's Golden Nuggets; pg. 81, 82)

However, while the sun's energy, let's say, is more than sufficient to give a sun-tan to every human being on earth, all on earth are not willing to appropriate the sun's rays for sun-tan. God's power is more than sufficient to enable every person on earth to enjoy abundant living, but only those who appropriate the infinitely exhaustless source of God's power and love will enjoy abundant living. "Thus, the saint determines what God is able to do for him. In His inherent ability, there is no limit to what God can do in and through the saint. But the saint limits the working of God in and through him by the degree of his yieldedness to the Spirit." (Wuest)

"Power at work within us - the power (δύναμις – inherit power of God) that is putting forth energy in us (energeō), is the operation of the Holy Spirit in His work of sanctification." (Wuest)

B. GOD'S SUPREME GLORY (v. 21)

"To him is glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

The 'glory of God' is a major theme of the Holy Bible. Rick Warren asks the important question, 'What is the glory of God?' He perceptively answers this all-important question, and then he shares ways in which mere humans can 'live for God's glory'. He writes: "The glory of God is who God is. It is the essence of his nature, the weight of his importance, the radiance of his splendor, the demonstration of his power, and the atmosphere of his presence. God's glory is the expression of his goodness and all his other intrinsic, eternal qualities...God's glory is best seen in Jesus Christ. He, the Light of the world, illuminates God's nature. Because of Jesus, we are no longer in the dark about what God is really like...God's inherent glory is what he possesses because he is God. It is his nature. We cannot add anything to this glory, just as it would be impossible for us to make the sun shine brighter. But we are commanded to recognize his glory, honor his glory, declare his glory, praise his glory, reflect his glory, and live for his glory. Why? Because God deserves it! We owe him every honor we can possibly give. Since God made all things, he deserves all the glory. The Bible says, 'You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power: For you created everything.'" (The Purpose-Driven Life; Rick Warren; pgs. 53, 54)

To God be the glory – great things He hath done.
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life atonement for sin,
And opened the Life-gate that all may go in.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood.
To every believer the promise of God!
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus, the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Chorus:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus, the Son,
And give Him the glory - great things He hath done.
(To God Be the Glory; hymn written by Fanny Crosby)

Even though you, as a responsive and earnest believer, are to be 'commended' that you have had the 'good sense' to 'give your life to the Almighty Creator and Savior', you are never to 'glory' in your own personal accomplishments – regardless of what those 'accomplishments' are intellectually, physically, professionally, economically, or ecclesiastically. You are to 'ascribe' the rightful 'praise and honor and glory to your Lord and Master' who alone is the 'source of good things'. As the recipient of all of God's generous gifts, you are to serve Him wholeheartedly and to praise Him joyfully and to walk before Him humbly. When others engage in applauding you with their accolades (because of your 'accomplishments'), you are to 'pass on all praise and credit' to your God! When the well-known and saintly woman Corrie ten Boon (who lost all her relatives in Nazi prison camps during World War II) received great praise from those to whom she spoke during her many travels (after her release from a Nazi prison camp, as the only survivor of her family), she would take the 'flowers of praise' given to her, and she would (in her words) 'lay them at the feet of Jesus Christ' to whom all 'praise and honor belonged'.

Recently, after the soccer game in which my six year old grandson (Lucas) was the 'star player' (for he made 3 of the 4 winning points in the game), several of us – his relatives – were 'praising him', and even a parent of one of his fellow players went out of his way to find and to exuberantly 'congratulate' Lucas for his outstanding athletic 'performance'. What

thrilled me (as his grandfather) the 'most' however, was not his great athletic performance, but Lucas' silence in the midst of all the praise he was receiving. The only response that Lucas made (immediately following all the praise he received) was this "Thank God!" That is all he said, as he walked joyfully to his parent's car, following his 'victorious soccer game'. I responded: "Lucas, you are right to give God all the 'glory' for your accomplishment today, for it is God who gave you your ability to 'play well' today."

When the 'saints' of earth gather together in heaven, we can be sure that God (according to the promise of His Word) will 'reward all his faithful ones' with the 'crown of life', but we can also be sure that no saint in heaven (regardless of how great will be his God-given reward) will spend any time 'gloating' over his heavenly rewards, and no saint in heaven will be 'flaunting' or 'comparing' with other heavenly inhabitants. No! all the saints of all the ages (regardless of the degree or the greatness of their 'heavenly rewards') will be spending all their time and energy ascribing praise and honor and 'glory' to the One who sits on the Throne - namely, the Lord Jesus Christ by whom alone all who are in heaven got there!

CONCLUSION

Have you appropriated the super-abundant indwelling power of God? If not, then today by faith, simply accept the Holy Spirit's total control of your life. When you let the Spirit have total control, He will make you increasingly more and more Christlike (in order that Christ may really feel at home in your heart), and the Spirit will establish you strongly in the faith, and He will increasingly enable you to experience the infinite love of Christ. What an offer! Accept wholeheartedly God's free gift of power today!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 14

1. **In seeking to understand and apply 'Biblical Faith' in your personal life, what can you learn from a study of the panic-stricken disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee?**

2. **From your own personal experience and observation, what are some of the 'waves and billows' (storms) that attack the 'boat' of the Christian or the Christian Church?**

3. **List some of the promises of God (from His Holy Word) which 'counter' (confront and battle against) the 'waves and billows' of life's spiritual storms which seek to destroy the individual Christian and the corporate Church.**

4. **Put a check mark beside the following statements which most 'magnify' your sense of need for supernatural strength which will enable you to do your duty as a servant of God and as a witness for Christ, in the midst of a very 'needy world':**

   _____ **(a)** **The onslaughts of Satan against believers.**
   _____ **(b)** **The natural 'weakness' of human nature.**
   _____ **(c)** **The vastness of the task of evangelism.**
   _____ **(d)** **The explosion of the world's population.**
   _____ **(e)** **The shortness in the number of Christian workers.**
   _____ **(f)** **The 'fields' that are 'white unto harvest'.**
   _____ **(g)** **The influence of secularism and materialism that tend to deceive Christians.**
   _____ **(h)** **The shortness of time until Jesus comes.**
   _____ **(i)** **The brevity of my own life span.**
   _____ **(j)** **The awesome accountability of man at the Final Judgment of God.**

5. **When God is addressed as 'Father' (in Ephesians 3: 14), does this title for God speak both of God's immanence and His transcendence?**

6. **On what basis does God give His gifts to human beings? (Note Ephesians 2: 8-9; 3: 16)**

7. **In contrast to the world's riches which are incapable of satisfying man's deepest needs ('hungers'), how can God's riches be described? (Note Ephesians 3:16)**

8. **How would you describe the 'Might' or 'Power' of God? (Ephesians 3:16)**

9. **If becoming a 'strong Christian' is not unconditional and automatic, what are some of the conditions which a believer must recognize (and practice) if he is to increasingly become a stronger Christian?**

10. **What is the 'role' of the Holy Spirit in the process of a Christian becoming spiritually strong?**

11. **In terms of one's mind, heart, and will, describe what it means for a Christian to be strengthened in the 'inner man' (i.e., the 'inner being')?**

12. **In terms of your personal 'cooperation' with the Holy Spirit, what can you do to ensure Christ to better 'feel at home' in your heart and mind and spirit and body?**

13. **In terms of satisfying one's spiritual thirst, give your interpretation (and application) of John 4: 14.**

14. **Describe the divine initiative and the human response which are involved in the process by which a believer becomes "rooted and grounded" in holy love. (Note Ephesians 3: 16-17) In what ways are all three of the 'holy persons' of the Divine Trinity involved in this 'process'?**

15. **To what extent is it possible for a sincere and yielded believer to mentally grasp the implications of God's love for him/her? (Ephesians 3: 17-18)**

16. **Because the word 'Know' in Ephesians 3: 19 does not mean merely intellectual or theological or analytical knowledge of God's love, but rather 'experiential' and 'personal' knowledge of God's love, please share some of your personal life experiences which have taught you to better 'know' the exhaustless and wonderful love of God.**

17. **As a result of your personal 'walk with God', and as a result of your personal knowledge of the Biblical revelation of God's Nature and Character, tell to what degree you agree with the following statement: "No matter how much the saint (Christian) experiences the love of Christ, yet there are oceans of love in the great heart of God that have not been touched by his experience, because God's love 'surpasses knowledge.'" (Ephesians 3: 19)**

18. **What personally does it mean for you, as a believer, to experience the "fullness of God"? (Ephesians 3: 19) Should your personal capacity (in your mind and heart and will and spirit) to experience more of the presence and the power of God be constantly increasing? Practically - speaking, what can you as a believer daily do to increase your capacity to experience and to enjoy and to 'know' God better?**

19. **Tell how you personally react and respond to Paul's conviction (in Ephesians 3:20) that "God is able to do super—abundantly above and beyond what we ask or think (and then some on top of that.)" At this particular time (and age) in your life, what do you sincerely wish God would do for you (or give to you)? Do you believe that your desire is 'honorable' and that the fulfillment of this desire would bring 'glory' to God and 'good' to you and to the 'significant others' in your relationships?**

20. **If God has enough 'grace' to forgive every sinner, and to keep saved every believer, and to restore every backslider to God's fellowship, then why are not all sinners saved, and all believers victorious over sin, and all backsliders restored to spiritual fellowship? (If the energy from the sun's rays is sufficient to give every human being on the earth a 'sun tan', then why are not all human beings on earth receiving and enjoying a sun tan?)**

21. **In terms of one's mind and heart and will, how does a person limit the 'working of God' in and through his/her life?**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES!

SCRIPTURE: ***[1]As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.[2]Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. [3]Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [4]There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— [5]one Lord, one faith, one baptism;[6]one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*** **(Ephesians 4: 1-6)**

TEXT: ***As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*** **(Ephesians 4: 1)**

INTRODUCTION

"Jesus Christ supplies the one centre around whom and in whom all men can be gathered into one. But if ever that oneness is to be achieved and attained, the message of Christ, the fact of Christ, the love and the mercy and the seeking heart of God in Christ, must be taken out to the whole world. And it is the function of the Church to take that message and that love to men. The Church must be the body through which Christ acts and the voice through which He speaks. The Church must be Christ's instrument in bringing this divine unity into the world. But if the Church is to succeed in that great ask, the people within the Church must be a certain kind of people. And now Paul turns to the character of the Christian which is necessary if the Church is to fulfill her great task of being Christ's instrument of universal reconciliation between man and man, and man and God within the world." (Barclay, Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, pgs. 157-158)

PROPOSITION

A. HUMILITY

1. **First, humility comes when you realize that you were without Christ and what you have become through Christ.**
2. **Second, humility comes when you realize that any virtue in your life has its source alone in Christ.**
3. **Third, humility comes when you realize that daily you come short of the perfect standard of Christ.**

B. GENTLENESS

"The man who is gentle is the man who is kindled by indignation at the wrongs and the sufferings of others, but who is never moved to anger by the wrongs and the insults he himself has to bear." (Barclay)

C. PATIENCE

1. **First, Christian Patience is the spirit which will not give into despair with people.**

2. **Second, Christian Patience is the spirit which will never give way to vengeance; the spirit which will never retaliate.**

D. LOVE

1. **First, Christian Love is Unconditional, that is, regardless of how people respond to us, we will continue to love and to cherish them.**
2. **Second, Christian Love is compatible with correction of others.**
3. **Third, Christian Love is an exercise of the Will, not of the mere Emotions.**

E. PEACE

When self-centeredness dies, then humility and gentleness and patience and love are 'realized' and 'activated', and the 'peace of Christ' reigns in our heart. A competitive attitude towards others destroys peace in human relationships. A Christ-centered life is a life of inner and outward peace – that is, peace with one's own inner mind and heart and spirit, and peace in one's outward human relationships.

F. UNITY

When people are peace-loving, which means 'worshipping together at the feet of Christ', there is 'holy oneness' and 'deep unity' – 'unity of the Spirit'! The 'peace-loving' Christian (i.e., the person who is surrendered to the lordship of Christ) is the person who 'makes every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit' in his own personal relationships with fellow believers and also in his 'work within the local church'. The 'peace-lovers' are persons who are humble, gentle, patient, loving, and these persons are always seeking to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit' within the 'Body of Christ'.

CONCLUSION

Humility, gentleness, patience, love- these four virtues issue forth in peace and unity. Peace comes when you die to 'self-centeredness', and when you, through surrender, come alive to Christ and to others. When you experience the 'peace of Christ', you will henceforth seek to maintain the 'unity of the Spirit' – the mark of an 'authentic' person!

CHAPTER 15

THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES!

INTRODUCTION

"Jesus Christ supplies the one centre around whom and in whom all men can be gathered into one. But if ever that oneness is to be achieved and attained, the message of Christ, the fact of Christ, the love and the mercy and the seeking heart of God in Christ, must be taken out to the whole world. And it is the function of the Church to take that message and that love to men. The Church must be the body through which Christ acts and the voice through which He speaks. The Church must be Christ's instrument in bringing this divine unity into the world. But if the Church is to succeed in that great task, the people within the Church must be a certain kind of people. And now Paul turns to the character of the Christian which is necessary if the Church is to fulfill her great task of being Christ's instrument of universal reconciliation between man and man, and man and God within the world." (Daily Study Bible; Ephesians; William Barclay; pgs. 157, 158)

PROPOSITION

Christ's purpose of reconciliation of the world to Himself is accomplished through Christ-like Christians who compose a Christ-like Church. The Christ-like Church is a powerful Church – a Church that is capable of winning a lost world to Christ.

What kind of life must Christians live if they are to be effective in accomplishing God's great reconciling purpose in the world? Paul notes all-important characteristics of the effective Christian: (1) Humility, (2) Gentleness, (3) Patience (Long-suffering), (4) Love, (5) Peace, (6) Unity.

A. HUMILITY

If the chief of all sins is pride, then the opposite of pride is humility; thus humility is the greatest of all Christian virtues.

Where does humility originate?

1. **First, humility comes when you realize what you were without Christ and what you have become through Christ.**

How can you and I be proud when we think of what we were without Christ?

Paul had to remind the proud Corinthian believers what they were before Christ came into their lives. ***"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <u>And that is what some of you were.</u> But you were washed,***

you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." **(I Corinthians 6: 9-11, NIV)**

We can never repay Christ for what He has done for us. Without him we would amount to nothing. John Newton, author of 'Amazing Grace' could never be proud, for he remembered what he was without Christ.

> **'Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound**
> **That saved a wretch like me!**
> **I once was lost, but now am found,**
> **Was blind, but now I see."**

When Whitefield saw a man being taken to the gallows to be hanged, he was heard to say, "There go I, but for the grace of God!"

Said Jesus, *"When you have done everything you were told to do, you should say 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*

How can we ever repay God for saving our souls, we who have rejected Christ in the past? The sins that crucified Christ are the same sins which I have often sinned!

2. Second, humility comes when you realize that any virtue in your life has its source alone in Christ.

Without Christ, every person, whether he is nice or nasty, is basically selfish. Man is born in sin and has no inherent virtues. The only virtues man enjoys are 'borrowed virtues'. Christ alone is virtuous, and therefore only those who are in union with Christ manifest virtuous traits in their lives. Wrote Paul to the gift-conscious, boasting Corinthians: *"What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"* (I Corinthians 4: 7, Living Bible)

3. Third, humility comes when you realize that daily you come short of the perfect standard of Christ. People are heard to say, "I am as good as that hypocrite in the Church."

Perhaps so, but what does that prove? Any of us can feel good about ourselves if we compare ourselves with someone inferior to ourselves. But the Christian standard is Jesus Christ, and when we compare ourselves to Christ, we can only find ourselves on our knees pleading forgiveness and mercy.

Do we always exercise faith like Christ exercised faith? And yet the Bible declares that whatever is not of faith is sin!

Do we do all the good that we possibly could do? The Bible says, *"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."* (James 4: 17)

Do we always return good for evil? When Jesus was dying on the cross, he prayed for his enemies, *'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!'* Of Jesus it is written, *"He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted: when he suffered he did not threaten to get even, he left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly."* (I Peter 2: 22, 23, Living Bible)

When Peter saw his lack of faith in contrast to Jesus' mighty faith, on one occasion Peter fell at Jesus' feet and said, *'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'* (Luke 5: 8)

When Isaiah saw the Lord God in the temple, he cried out, "*Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."* (Isaiah 6: 5)

If we compare ourselves with others, we may feel good about ourselves. But when we compare ourselves with the standards of Christ, we find ourselves on our knees in humility, seeking cleansing and forgiveness.

"The vision of God begets humility in his soul as naturally as our eyes blink when we step into strong sunshine. Not only is humility a necessary consequence of seeing God. The saint learns that the more humility he has the more of God he will have also. The primal sin is the assertion of self against God. Pride therefore heads any well-drawn category of the deadly sins and humility is its opposite. This explains why, though love is the first fruit of the Spirit and the basis of all the rest, discerning souls have often pointed to humility as the first of the graces. They do so because pride is the deadliest of the deadly sins and humility is its plain contradiction. The more humility the less pride. The less pride, the more of God. The vision of God begets humility in the soul, and the more humility the clearer one's eyes become to see Him as He is." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 279)

"All progress is progress in humility", and Paul's progress may be measured by the fact that in his First Epistle to the Corinthians he says *'I am the least of the Apostles'* (I Corinthians 15:9) and writing later to the Ephesians he says that he is *'less than the least'* (Ephesians 3:8) – not now of the Apostles – 'but of all the saints' (with 'saints' used here as descriptive of all believers) and writing to Timothy later still, he says *'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief'* (I Timothy 1: 15)." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 262)

The wool of sheep looks white until you see it against the glistening white of the freshly-fallen snow! A person may appear pure until you compare him to the purity of the Son of God! Seen beside the Son of God, there is no place for us to go but to our knees in humility!

B. GENTLENESS

Gentleness is not weakness. Gentleness is not the word that should be used to describe the person who is soft, passive, or incapable of anger.

When I was first converted, I thought that there was no place for anger in the life of a devout Christian. Since becoming more mature in my faith, I have learned that it is possible for a Christian to be angry and yet not to sin.

Admittedly, most of our anger is carnal anger. Most anger results when we personally feel slighted or offended.

Jesus was a perfect gentleman. That is, Jesus was gentle. Jesus was angry at the right time and for the right purpose.

Aristotle once said, "Anyone can become angry; that is easy. But to be angry with the right person to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy!"

"The man who is praus (gentle) is the man who is kindled by indignation at the wrongs and the sufferings of others, but who is never moved to anger by the wrongs and the insults he himself has to bear." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 162)

Jesus was never angry because of personal insults heaped on him. He always forgave. He was never vindictive. He never sought vengeance. He always committed his case to the Father who judges righteously. He always loved His enemies. He returned good for evil. Every motion of His mind, heart, tongue, and desire was under His perfect control. He was a perfectly God-controlled, Spirit-filled person. Greater gentleness has never been demonstrated than that which Jesus demonstrated.

Jesus was never angry when people mistreated him. Like squeezing a rose bud, the more He was persecuted, the sweeter the scents of love and forgiveness that were emitted from his life!

But Jesus was angry when others were unjustly insulted and mistreated.

Jesus went into the synagogue again and noticed a man with a deformed hand. Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus' enemies watched him closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand "Come and stand in front of everyone." Then he turned to his critics and asked, "Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" But they wouldn't answer him. Jesus

looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! At once the Pharisees went away and met with the supporters of Herod to plot how to kill Jesus. **(Mark 3: 1-6)**

Lincoln was a man who was gentle and forgiving. He was not vindictive toward those who mistreated him. But Lincoln had the capacity to be angry. When Lincoln saw, "the slave market in New Orleans for the first time, he is reported to have said, 'Let's get out of this, boys. If I ever get any chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard.'"

Lincoln had his chance, and his anger against the cruel institution of slavery was so great that, as President, he issued the 'Emancipation Proclamation' which freed thousands of black slaves!

C. PATIENCE

"The Christian patience is the spirit which never admits defeat, which will not be defeated by any task, which will not be broken by any misfortune or suffering, which will not be deterred by any disappointment or discouragement, but which persists and endures to the end.

"It is the characteristic Greek word for 'patience with men'. Chrysostom defined it as the spirit which has the power to take revenge, but which never does so. Lightfoot defined it as the spirit which refuses to retaliate. It is the spirit which bears with everything which man can do to it...It is the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint. It is the spirit which bears the sheer foolishness of men without irritation. It is the spirit which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without complaint." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 163-164)

Christian patience is not only the spirit which will not give in to despair with people, but further, it is the spirit which will never give way to vengeance. Christian patience has been defined as 'the spirit which could take revenge if it liked, but utterly refuses to do so.'

This quality of Christian patience is described in Romans 12: 19-20. ***"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.'"***

Patience is that spirit which will never retaliate.

In Christian thought, the big man is not the man of vengeance, but the man of forgiveness. The violence of our Western culture is in direct violation to the Christian quality of patience. In secular culture, might is right. The prize goes to the strongest. The big man is defined as the man who goes

all out for vengeance. The mighty man – the man of importance – is the man who tolerates no insult or injury.

The Bible says that the truly great man is the man who is possessed of love. He returns good for evil. He refuses to reap vengeance upon his persecutors, even though he could.

To simply illustrate, have you ever seen a big dog harassed by a small dog? The big dog takes the harassment patiently, even though the big dog has within his power the ability to tear up the little dog.

"In our dealings with men, however refractory and however unkind and hurting they are, we must exercise the same patience as God exercises with us. Such patience is not the sign of strength; it is not defeatism but rather the only way to victory. Fosdick points out that no one treated Lincoln with more contempt than did Stanton. He called him "a low cunning clown"; he nicknamed him "the original gorilla" and said that DuChaillu was a fool to wander about Africa trying to capture a gorilla when he could have found one so easily at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln said nothing. He made Stanton his war minister because he was the best man for the job and he treated him with every courtesy. The years wore on. The night came when the assassin's bullet murdered Lincoln in the theatre. In the little room to which the President's body was taken stood that same Stanton, and, looking down on Lincoln's silent face, he said through his tears, 'There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen.' The patience of love had conquered in the end." (Barclay's 1 Corinthians; pg. 119, 120)

D. LOVE

"The real meaning of agape (love) is unconquerable benevolence. If we regard a person with agape, it means that nothing that that person can or will ever do will make us seek anything but his highest good. Though he injure us and hurt us and insult us, we will never feel anything but kindness towards him...Agape is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek nothing but the highest good of every man no matter what men do to him." (Barclay's Ephesians: pg. 165)

1. Love is Unconditional.

Regardless of how people respond to us, we will continue to love and to cherish them. Wrote Paul to the Corinthians, *"I am glad to give you myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me."* (II Corinthians 12: 15, LB)

To love with God's type of love is to love with no strings attached, to return good for evil. Jesus said, *"Don't resist violence! If you are slapped on one check, turn the other too."* (Matthew 5: 39, LB)

Said Jesus *"I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5: 44, NIV)

Paul wrote, *"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'"* (Romans 12: 19, 20)

Wrote Peter, *"Don't repay evil with evil. Don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. Instead, pray for God's help for them, for we are to be kind to others, and God will bless us for it."* (I Peter 3: 9, Living Bible)

"Jesus knew that Judas was in the process of betraying him (John 13: 21-30), yet he did not refrain from washing Judas's feet. This surely means that those who truly follow Jesus' example must not refrain from works of service because the recipients are unworthy. In fact, serving sinners is the kind of work to which they are called; they are not to concentrate on an 'in' group." (Morris; Testament of Love; pg. 215, 216 ;)

"Here is an example out of India: a drunkard became a Christian and settled down to honest work. At the season for reaping he was attacked by bullies, who reaped his fields, cut off his fingers with an axe, and left with the harvest. The Indian Y.M.C.A. secretary, who had been the means of his conversion, showed him the money that had been collected by an aroused public to help him prosecute; for the bullies were known. He looked at the bags of money and then at his fingerless hands and said: 'Sir, you have been a Christian all your life, and I accepted Jesus not long ago. But when I accepted Him, I promised to follow in his footsteps. You told me that when He was crucified, He didn't say, 'Father, punish them'; but He did say, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' So just as my Master forgave His enemies, I must forgive mine; for they have done this in the ignorance of their hearts. They did not know anything better." (Jones: Mastery; pg. 231)

2. Love is Compatible With Correction of Others.

"Jesus also teaches about love by using what seem to be contradictions of love. For instance, Jesus said, *'If your brother sins, rebuke him'.* (Luke 17: 3). We do not usually associate rebuke with love, but this is mere thoughtlessness. The indifferent would certainly not embark on such a difficult and thankless task; only the truly loving believer would try to help an erring brother." (Testament of Love; pg. 196)

Paul, needing to discipline the Corinthian Church because of sin, wrote what he called a 'severe letter' to the Church in order that *"you may know the love I have more abundantly towards you".* (II Corinthians 2: 4) "He could take the unpopular action because his loving concern for his friends' well-being overrode any possible desire for personal popularity." (Ibid; pg. 205)

3. Love Is An Exercise of the Will, Not of the Mere Emotions

"It is a conquest. It is the ability to retain this unconquerable good will to the unlovely and the unlovable, and towards those who do not love us. As someone has put it, Agape (love) is the power to love even the people whom we do not like." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 165)

Practically speaking, if you are having problems with ill feeling towards a person, then do not give counsel to your feelings. Begin doing something for the one you have difficulty loving. Pray for that one daily. Give the person a gift. Do some act of compassion for that one, regardless of your feelings.

"Don't fight (resentments). That brings them into the focus of attention and whatever is the focus of attention becomes power. 'Whatever gets your attention gets you.'" (Jones' 'Mastery' pg. 229)

Focus on Christ and love the person for Jesus' sake. Open your life to the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is able to shed God's love abroad in your heart (Romans 5:5) Faith means acting 'as if' you loved a person. To will to love will result in feeling love.

E. PEACE

"So then we have the four great virtues of the Christian life – humility, gentleness patience, love. And these four issue in a fifth, and that fifth is peace...Every one of the four great Christian virtues depends on one thing - on the obliteration of self. So long as self is at the centre of things, so long as our feelings, our prestige, are the only things that matter, this oneness can never fully exist. It can only exist when we cease to make self the centre of things and when we think more of others than we do of ourselves. Self kills peace...but when self dies and Christ springs to life within our hearts, then there comes the peace, the oneness, the togetherness, which is the great hallmark of the true Church." (Barclay's Ephesians; pg. 165)

George Muller of Bristol testified: 'There was a day when I died – died to George Muller, his opinions, preference, tastes, and will; died to the world, friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." (Rees: Prayer and Life's Highest; pg. 120)

Notes J.B. Phillips, "...the whole way of thinking and feeling which belongs to the self-centered man must be abrogated or denied before there can be

peace with God. What we call 'sins' are simply expressions of this self-pleasing, self-regarding, and self-indulgent inward attribute. The word which is translated in the New Testament as 'repentance' really means a thorough change of heart and mind. It means realizing that the real center of everything is not my little self, but God, and that in order to serve the King Himself, I must quit this throne of my own precious little kingdom...it is obvious that there can be no inward peace until the self-conscious inward kingdom willingly and wholeheartedly concedes its rights to the Creator, the real King." (The Newborn Christian; pg. 127, 128)

A competitive attitude towards others destroys peace in human relationships. Notes Billy Graham: "Each of us has his own unique, God-given set of abilities and talents – his own personal potential for accomplishment. Not all of us work at the same speed or reach the same heights. God does not want us to compete against each other. He wants us to compete against ourselves – to learn to work within our own individual capacities." (Till Armageddon; pg. 31)

Paul warned against a competitive attitude among Christians. *"When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."* (II Corinthians 10:12)

"Whoever introduced the idea of competition into the ministry certainly assisted the enemy in his attack against the Church. Although we are in conflict against those who preach a false gospel, we are not in competition with any who preach the true gospel. We are only in competition with ourselves." (Summer 1981: Leadership Magazine; pg. 36)

And even when we are competing with ourselves – not with others - we must have a sane estimate of ourselves. We must not have an exaggerated view of ourselves or of our abilities. Wrote Paul, *"As God's messenger I give each of you God's warnings: be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you."* (Romans 12: 3, Living Bible)

"Much of our tension and anxiety (lack of peace) can be traced directly to a fear of inadequacy. We must learn to accept ourselves. We probably are NOT adequate for all our ambitious schemes, and only at the cost of enormous nervous energy can we succeed in becoming momentarily what we really are not. This is a self-imposed tyranny which is very common. Suppose we accept ourselves good-humouredly, realizing our limitations and how much we have to learn, with cheerfulness and without envy of those who are, or appear to be, more adequate than ourselves. It is simply no use at all claiming the gift of God's peace if we are ridden by an overmastering desire to appear bigger or cleverer or more important than we really are. We must first learn to practice acceptance." (Phillips: The Newborn Christian: pg. 129)

Far from being competitive with others, we are to honor others even above ourselves. Wrote Paul, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,*

but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." **(Philippians 2: 3, 4, NIV)**

"Someone has put it this way – J-O-Y: Jesus first, others second, yourself third. When that combination is put together in that order, you're bound to have Joy." (Jones: Mastery; pg. 225)

F. UNITY

We have noted thus far in this message on the 'Christian Virtues' that the believer who seeks to live a 'Christlike life' – a life characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, and love – is the person who is learning to surrender his 'self-centered ego' to God to allow Christ, instead of one's 'self', to rule his little life. Such a 'Christ-centered life' is a life of inner and outward peace – that is, peace with one's own inner mind and heart and spirit, and peace in one's outward human relationships. A life which is surrendered to Christ is a life which is not striving to 'outdo' one's fellowmen. A life not of: competition, comparison, contention, or covetousness, but a life of cooperation, caring, compassion, complements, and service.

As long as Christ-centeredness (instead of self-centeredness) is maintained in one's attitude and actions and relationships, there is 'unity' in one's relationships with others. And when there is an entire congregation, composed of humble and peace-loving Christians, there is a wonderful 'bond of peace' and a glorious 'unity of the Spirit'. So what is the 'assigned work' of every Christian in every local Church? Paul makes it clear: *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."* (Ephesians 4:3) As long as the 'bond of peace' is maintained by believers in a congregation (through 'self-surrender of the human ego to the lordship of Christ who is the 'Head of the Church'), the 'unity of the Spirit' will always be maintained!

Those believers who are Christ-centered (i.e., those who have surrendered their ego to Christ) are the same ones who are peace-loving. And when people are peace-loving, which means 'worshipping together at the feet of Christ', there is 'holy oneness' and 'deep unity' – 'unity of the Spirit'!

It cannot be denied that many local churches are composed of many different classes and cultures and races and personality types and temperaments. Because all persons have been given by God a different 'cluster' of talents and 'spiritual gifts', there are bound to be many divergent viewpoints expressed within the typical local congregation.

Sometimes this great diversity within a congregation can lead to 'disunity' and 'competition' (as in the case of the 'carnal congregation' at Corinth – I Corinthians 3). Paul had to rebuke these 'carnal believers' in the Corinthian Church, He wrote: *"You are still only baby Christians, controlled by our own desires, not God's. When you are jealous of one another and divide up*

into quarrelling groups, doesn't that prove you are still babies wanting your own way? In fact, you are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord at all. There you are quarreling about whether I am greater than Apollos. and dividing the Church. Doesn't this show how little you have grown in the Lord?" **(I Corinthians 3: 3-4, Living Bible)**

Humorously (but, nevertheless, rather pointedly and quite sadly) the following 'little poem' notes the 'carnal disunity' that is a reality in some local churches:

> **"To dwell above with saints we love,**
> **O that will be glory,**
> **But to live below, with saints we know;**
> **Well, that's another story!"**

In some local churches, instead of there being 'unity amidst diversity', there is 'disunity because of diversity'. It is not a 'pretty scene' when 'Christians get at each other' because of their differences! This happened at the local church that the Apostle Paul loved and cherished so greatly – the Church at Philippi. Wrote Paul to his beloved 'parishioners': *"And now I want to plead with those two dear women, Euodias and Syntyche. Please, please, with the Lord's help, quarrel no more – be friends again."* (Philippians 4: 2, Living Bible) Paul wanted all believers at Philippi to 'get along' with each other, and even to love and to cherish each other. He wrote: *"Does it mean anything to you that we are brothers in the Lord, sharing the same Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all? Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose."* (Philippians 2: 1-2, Living Bible)

The 'peace-loving' Christian (i.e., the person who is surrendered to the lordship of Christ) is the person who 'makes every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit' in his own personal relationships with fellow believers and also in his 'work within the local Church'. The 'peace-lovers' are persons who are humble, gentle, patient, loving, and these persons are always seeking to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit' within the 'Body of Christ'.

Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Ephesians that Christians are 'organically united'. That is, all Christians are connected to Christ who is the 'Head of the Body'. Unity among all believers is based on this glorious reality! Wrote Paul: *"There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."* (Ephesians 4: 4-6)

The 'Body of Christ' (the Church) is a unified organism, with each part equally sharing in common life. Notes Ray Stedman: "A body is formed by the extension of one original cell which grows until it becomes a mature body in which every cell shares the original life. That is the secret of a body – all parts of it share life together. It is the sharing of life that makes

a body different from an organization. An organization derives power from the association of individuals, but a body derives it power from the sharing of life." (Ray Stedman; Body Life; pg. 25)

CONCLUSION

Humility, gentleness, patience, love – these four virtues issue forth in peace and unity. Peace comes when you die to 'self-centeredness', and when you, through surrender, come alive to Christ and to others. Have you died to your 'self-centered ego', and have you made a true surrender of yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, then present yourself as a 'living sacrifice' to Christ today! Then you will experience the 'peace of Christ', and you will henceforth seek to maintain the 'Unity of the Spirit'– the mark of an 'authentic' person and an effective Church!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 15

1. If it is the God-ordained purpose for the Church to take the message of love and reconciliation to a 'lost and dying world', is it possible for the Church to accomplish its purpose if its members are competitive, comparative, covetous, contentious, and loveless? What kind of life must Christians live if they are to be effective in accomplishing God's great reconciling purpose in the world?

2. If pride is the chiefest of all sins, then is it Biblically and logically true to say that the opposite of 'pride' – namely, humility – is the greatest of all Christian virtues?

3. Which one of the three following "incentives to humility' most motivates you personally to be humble in your self-evaluation and in your relationship to God?

   _____a. When I realize what I was in my attitudes and behavior before I accepted Christ as my Saviour, I am filled with humility and gratitude (note I Corinthians 6: 9-11), and I realize I can never repay Christ for what He has done for me!

   _____b. When I realize that I possess no 'inherent virtues' but that any good that I have in my life has been given to me by the altogether 'good God', I acknowledge that I have no basis whatever for boasting and pride!

   _____c. When I realize that it is Christ alone (and not other people) who is the standard by which I must 'judge' the accomplishments and virtues of my own life, I acknowledge that I will always need God's imparted strength and God's understanding and forgiving grace and mercy. (Note Luke 5:8; Isaiah 6: 5)

4. When one considers the three following Scriptures (i.e., I Corinthians 15: 9 and Ephesians 3: 8 and I Timothy 1:15) what can be said about the apostle Paul's growing sense of humility'? Do you believe that it is Biblically-accurate to say that "all spiritual progress is progress in humility"? (Note Micah 6: 8)

5. Tell to what degree you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "The person who is 'gentle' is the man who is kindled by indignation at the wrongs and the sufferings of others, but who is never moved to anger by the wrongs and insults he himself has to bear."

6. **Is it possible for a Christian to be angry and, at the same time, not to be vindictive, vengeful, spiteful, resentful, bitter, and hateful? (Note Ephesians 4: 26, 27, 31, 32; Mark 3: 1-6) Have you ever experienced a time in your personal life when your anger was whipped into action to champion a 'righteous and God honoring cause'?**

7. **How does the Christian person who is diligently cultivating the virtue of 'patience' respond or react to persons around him, including those persons who are 'abrasive' or 'irritating' or 'troublesome' or 'offensive' or 'angry' or foolish and immature'?**

8. **According to Romans 12: 19-20, how should a Christian react to those hateful persons who seek to do harm to him? (Note I Peter 2: 21-23) In contrast to the 'Big Man of the World', what kind of person is the 'Big Man of God'?**

9. **If 'agape love' (i.e., divine-like love) is "unconquerable benevolence", does this mean that you, as a sincere follower of Christ, will always 'like' everyone with whom you have contact? Why or why not? Is it possible for you genuinely to love sinners (and to wish nothing but the 'best for them') and, at the same time, to dislike certain characteristics in their personality and to hate their sinful behavior? What is the difference between 'liking a person' and 'loving a person'?**

10. **Is it possible for you, as a believer, to continue to love and to cherish another person, regardless of how that person favorably or unfavorably treats you and responds to you? (Note II Corinthians 12: 15; Matthew 5: 39, 44; Romans 12: 19-20; I Peter 3: 9)**

11. **Is it possible (and even commendable) for a love-possessed Christian to 'confront' and to 'correct' a fellow Christian who has 'sinned' or who has seriously failed morally or spiritually or ethically? (Note II Corinthians 2: 1-11)**

12. **Practically-speaking what are some things a Christian can do if they are having problems with ill feelings towards another person?**

13. **Why is the conquering of 'self-centeredness' (i.e., ceasing to make 'self' the center of things, and learning to think more of others than we do of ourselves) the basis for developing a Christlike character (i.e., a character that is characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, and love)? Tell how each of the four above listed virtues is dependent upon the 'death of self-centeredness.'**

14. **Tell how you inwardly react (or respond) to the following testimony of George Muller: "There was a day when I died – died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." Is it possible for a Christian**

to be 'highly opinionated' and 'full of strong convictions' regarding ethical and moral and doctrinal issues, and at the same time to be humble and accepting and charitable towards those with whom he disagrees?

15. Is it possible for you to experience inward peace and to enjoy external peace with your fellowmen, until you surrender your self-conscious inward kingdom willingly and wholeheartedly concede its rights to the Creator, the real King?

16. Why does a competitive attitude towards others destroy peace in human relationships? Why is the 'spirit of competition' (and consequently the 'spirit of jealousy') so widespread among Christians (and in local churches) in our modern society? (Note II Corinthians 10: 12)

17. Share what your personal response (or reaction) is to the following statements by Billy Graham: "Each of us has his own unique, God-given set of abilities and talents – his own personal potential for accomplishment. Not all of us work at the same speed or reach the same heights. <u>God does not want us to compete against each other.</u> He wants us to compete against ourselves – to learn to work within our own individual capacities."

18. Is it possible for you, as a sincere Christian who aspires to reach 'high goals' in your life, to also have a 'sane estimate' of your own abilities and your own personal limitations, and not to destroy your sense of inner peace by entertaining 'illusions of grandeur'? (Note Romans 12:3)

19. Do you believe that, far from being competitive with others, you are to honor others even above yourself? (Note Philippians 2: 3-4) In your desire to experience genuine Joy in your life, in what 'order of preference' should (a) Jesus, (b) others, (c) yourself, have in your attitudes and actions?

20. tell why it is difficult for people in our modern society to understand the following description of 'Christian Behavior': "A life which is surrendered to Christ is a life which is not striving to 'outdo' one's fellowmen. A life, not of: competition, comparison, contention, or covetousness, but a life of cooperation, caring, compassion, complementation, and service."

21. According to Ephesians 4:3, what is the 'assigned work' of every Christian in every local Church?

22. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "When people are peace-loving, which means 'worshipping together at the feet of Christ', there is 'holy oneness' and 'deep unity' – 'unity of the Spirit.'

23. If it is God's intention that there be "unity amidst diversity" within every local congregation, why is it sometimes true that "diversity leads to disunity" in too many local churches? (I Corinthians 3: 3-4. Philippians 4: 1-3)

24. As it relates to a local congregation, what is the difference between an 'organization' and an 'organism'?

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 16

SUBJECT: **BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP – TRUTHFULNESS!**

SCRIPTURE: ***"We will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. [15]Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. [16]From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. [17]So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. [18]They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. [19]Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. [20]You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. [21]Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. [22]You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; [23]to be made new in the attitude of your minds; [24]and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. [25]Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [26]"In your anger do not sin"[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27]and do not give the devil a foothold. [28]He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [29]Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30]And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31]Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [32]Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*** **(Ephesians 4: 14-32)**

TEXT: ***"We will lovingly follow the truth at all times – speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly, and so become more and more in every way like Christ."*** **(Ephesians 4: 15)**

INTRODUCTION

Every Christian – without exception, has at least one spiritual gift, and possibly even a 'cluster' of gifts. God gives different spiritual gifts to each Christian as God sovereignty decides (vs. 7-11). There are at least 17 different spiritual gifts actually listed in the New Testament. Each spiritual gift is to be discovered and exercised

by every Christian, for the benefit of others/ to proclaim the Good News of love and forgiveness to the world of lost men, and to build strength and encouragement among the fellowship of the Body (Church). Primary emphasis must be placed upon the Gift of the Holy Spirit Himself (meant universally for all Christians), and secondary emphasis must be placed upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit (differently bestowed by the sovereign Holy Spirit upon Christians as powerful 'instruments' of service). The result of the proper use of the spiritual gifts by the body of believers is harmony, maturity, truthfulness, and health. (vs. 12-16)

PROPOSITION

The healthy, growing, loving Church is the Church that is speaking truly, living truly, and dealing truly.

A. SPEAKING TRULY (Speech, vs. 25-27)
   1. Tongue Control Depends Upon Heart and Mind Control. (Matthew 12: 34)
   2. Tongue Control Means No Lying To Each Other, For Lying Results in Hurting the Whole Body of Believers, Including the One Who Lies.
   3. Tongue Control Means Quickly Getting Over Being Angry, Holding No Grudges.
      a. If you do get angry, don't stay angry for very long by nursing the resentment.
      b. Anger causes very great mental and physical anguish.
      c. Anger makes one vulnerable to Satan's attack.

B. LIVING TRULY (Attitudes and Responses, vs. 17-24)
   1. To Live Truly Is To Live With an Open Mind and an Open Heart To God's Light and God's Truth. (vs. 17-19)
   2. To Live Truly Is To Put Off The Old Nature (Old Self), and To Put On The New Nature Of Godliness, Righteousness, and Holiness. (vs. 20-24)
   3. To Live Truly Is To Constantly Be Changing One's Attitudes and Thoughts for the Better. (v. 23)

C. DEALING TRULY (Relationships with People, vs. 26-32)
   1. No Stealing (v. 28)
   2. Honest Work and Generosity in Helping Others. (v. 28)
   3. Give the Holy Spirit Joy, Not Grief. (v. 30)
   4. Being Willing To Become Quickly Reconciled to One's Fellowman. (v. 21)
   5. Be Loving In Relationships, Not Bad-Tempered or Carnally Angry. (v. 31)

6. **No Quarreling, Loud-Mouthed Talking, No Insulting Language. (v. 31)**
7. **Kindness, Tender-Heartedness, Sympathy, and Outgoing Care. (v. 31)**
8. **Forgiving Others In Same Way That God Has Forgiven Us. (v. 32)**
   a. **Leaning to Understand**
   b. **Learning to Forget**
   c. **Learning to Love**

CONCLUSION

A 'victorious life' in which one lives truly (verses 17-24) speaks truly (vs. 25-27), and deals truly (vs. 28-32), is only possible because a person makes a decision to surrender his 'self-centered' and 'sin-controlled' ego to Christ. When you decisively 'put off your old self ("which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires". v. 22), you allow God to transform you from within, resulting in making you a 'new person' with a renewed mind and a God-given 'righteousness and holiness!' (vs. 23-24) God has the power to change a corrupt self-centered person into a holy Christ-centered person, a person with changed speech, attitudes, responses, and relationships!

CHAPTER 16

BULDING BLOCKS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP – TRUTHFULNESS!

INTRODUCTION

1. **Every Christian, without exception, has at least one spiritual gift and possibly even a 'cluster' of gifts.**

2. **God gives different spiritual gifts to each Christian as God sovereignty decides (vs. 7-11).**

3. **Spiritual gifts which the scriptures speak of are as follows:**

    1. **Gift of Knowledge**
    2. **Gift of Wisdom**
    3. **Gift of Teaching**
    4. **Gift of Faith (Gift of Vision)**
    5. **Gift of Healing**
    6. **Gift of Miracles**
    7. **Gift of Discernment of Spirits**
    8. **Gift of Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues**
    9. **Gift of Helps**
    10. **Gift of Exhortation (Gift of Counseling)**
    11. **Gift of Contributing**
    12. **Gift of Administration**
    13. **Gift of Doing Acts of Mercy**
    14. **Gift of Apostle**
    15. **Gift of Prophet**
    16. **Gift of Evangelist**
    17. **Gift of Pastor – Teacher**

4. **Each spiritual gift is to be discovered and exercised by every Christian, for the benefit of others to proclaim strength and encouragement among the fellowship of the Body (Church).**

5. **Primary emphasis must be placed upon the Gift of the Holy Spirit Himself (meant universally for all Christians), and secondary emphasis must be placed upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit (differently bestowed by the sovereign Holy Spirit upon Christians as powerful 'instruments' of service).**

6. **The result of the proper use of the spiritual gifts by the body of believers is harmony, maturity, truthfulness, and health. (vs. 12-16)**

PROPOSITION

The healthy, growing, loving Church is the Church that is speaking truly, living truly, and dealing truly.

A. SPEAKING TRULY (Speech, vs. 25-27)

"There is a curious story of a nobleman of olden times who one day said to his butler" 'John, tonight I should like to have the best thing in the world.' The hours passed: dinnertime came. The butler set before his master a covered platter. He lifted the silver cover, and there, on the platter was a cooked tongue. 'Good,' said the nobleman, 'you have done well. But now go and find for me the worst thing in the world.' At dinner the next evening, the silver platter was again brought in, the cover lifted, and there was another cooked tongue. Yes, the tongue is both the worst, and if used for God, the best member of the human body." (Gabelein: 'The Practical Epistle of James; pgs. 79, 80)

What is the solution to the right use of the tongue? "Armand de Rance founded the order of Trappist monks with their vow of life-long silence. But asceticism is an escape from reality, not a victorious solution of a problem." (Ibid; pg. 80)

1. Tongue Control Depends Upon Heart and Mind Control. (Matthew 12: 34)

"When any Christian comes to the point of yielding to the Lord – in full sincerity, cost what it may - control of his thought life, the problem of managing his tongue will be solved, provided that such a surrender goes deeper than the intellect and reaches the emotions and the will." (Ibid; 8) Jesus said, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* (Matthew 12:34)

2. Tongue Control Means No Lying To Each Other, For Lying Results in Hurting the Whole Body of Believers, Including the One Who Lies.

"We can only live in safety because the sense and the nerves pass true messages to the brain. If in fact the senses and the nerves took to passing false messages to the brain, if, for instance, they told the brain that something was cool and touchable when in fact it was hot and burning, life would very soon come to an end. A body can only function accurately and healthily when each part of it passes true messages to the brain and to the other parts. If then we are all bound into one body, that body can only function when we speak the truth. All deception

impairs the working of the body of Christ." (William Barclay, Daily Bible, Ephesians; pg. 184)

3. Tongue Control Means Quickly Getting Over Being Angry, Holding No Grudges.

"If you are angry, don't sin by nursing your grudge. Don't let the sun go down with you still angry, get over it quickly; for when you are angry you give a mighty foothold to the Devil." **(Ephesians 4:26)**

a. If you do get angry, don't stay angry for very long by nursing the resentment.

Forgive and forget quickly by surrendering the problem to the cleansing blood of Jesus. (Note the difference between good and bad anger and short-lived and long-lived anger. 'Thumos is the kind of anger which is like the flame which comes from straw. It quickly blazes up and just as quickly subsides. On the other hand, orge is anger which has become habitual and inveterate, long-lived'.)

b. Anger causes very great mental and physical anguish.

"The doctors tell us that stomach ulcers are often caused by anger and resentments, and that they will return even after they are cut out by operation, the edges fo the wound becoming ulcerated again, if the resentments are not eliminated." (E. S. Jones, Abundant Living, pg. 52)

c. Anger makes one vulnerable to Satan's attack.

"The famous physiologist, John Hunter, knew what anger could do to his heart: 'The first scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me.' Sometime later, at a medical meeting, a speaker made assertions that incensed Hunter. As he stood up and attacked the speaker, his anger caused such a contraction of the blood vessels in his heart that he fell dead." (Dr. S. I. McMillen: None of These Diseases; pg. 69) "Running people, down does not keep us from a host of diseases of body and mind. The verbal expression of animosity toward others call forth certain hormones from the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid, and other glands, an excess of which can cause diseases in any part of the body. Many diseases can develop when we fatten our grudges by rehearsing them in the presence of others." (Ibid: 71, 72)

B. LIVING TRULY (Attitudes and Responses, vs. 17-24)

1. Verses 17-19. To Live Truly Is To live With an Open Mind and an Open Heart To God's Light and God's Truth.

"If we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus His Son, cleanses us from every sin." **(I John 1: 7) One who continues to resist the light of God's truth, finds eventually that his heart and conscience have become petrified: beyond feeling - sinning not even being aware that he is sinning. Sun can harden clay to become a hard brick and the same sun can melt ice. God's light and truth can petrify the heart or melt the heart!**

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **(Romans 1: 18, 19, 21)**

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." **(John 3: 19-21)**

Man can become so dominated by sin that shame is lost and decency forgotten. Men can become so much at the mercy of their desires that they don't care whose life they injure and whose innocence they destroy, so long as these desires are satisfied.

2. Verses. 20-24. To Live Truly Is To Put Off The Old Nature (Old Self) and To Put On The New Nature Of Godliness, Righteousness and Holiness.

Purified, cleansed, sanctified, and made unselfish, by surrendering the old garment of self-centeredness and accepting the new garment of Christ's righteousness. Decisive steps of total surrender to Christ. It is the 'Christ-life' in place of the 'self-life'/.

3. Verse 23. To Live Truly Is To Constantly Be Changing One's Attitudes and Thoughts for the Better.

Increasingly learning to think Christ's thoughts after him and daily surrender to Christ for mind and heart purging.

C. DEALING TRULY (Relationships with People, vs. 26-32)

1. **No Stealing (v. 28)**
2. **Honest Work and Generosity in Helping Others. (v. 28)**
3. **Give the Holy Spirit Joy, Not Grief. (v. 30)**
4. **Being Willing To Become Quickly Reconciled To One's Fellowman. (v. 21)**
5. **Be Loving In Relationships, Not Bad-Tempered or Carnally Angry. (v. 31)**
6. **No Quarreling, Loud-Mouthed Talking, No Insulting Language. (v. 31)**
7. **Kindness, Tender-Heartedness, Sympathy, and Outgoing Care. (v. 31)**
8. **Forgiving Others In Same Way That God Has Forgiven Us. (v. 32)**

Aids to Learning to Forgive. (Helpful 'Aids' by William Barclay's 'The King and The Kingdom; pgs. 134-138)

a. Leaning to Understand.

"If we are to forgive we must learn to understand. There is a proverb which says, 'To know all is to forgive all.' And often if we only understand why people do things we will be able to forgive them far more easily and readily."

b. Learning to Forget.

"Further, if we are to forgive we must learn to forget. Our memories are queer things, they have a bad habit of forgetting the things we ought to remember and remembering the things we ought to forget...We must never say that we will never forget what someone has done to us; we must never allow our minds to think and brood about anything that has been done to us. it is difficult – only Jesus can make us able to do it, but we must learn to forget."

c. Learning to Love. "If we are to forget, we must learn to love others.

That is what Jesus told us to do when he told us to love our enemies. (Matthew 5:44) The word Jesus uses, 'to love', is a very interesting word...It is a word which means that no matter what the other person does to us we will never seek anything but their good. We will never do to him as he did to us, we will do to him as we would like them to do to us.

Abraham Lincoln was blamed for being far too kind and courteous to those who were his opponents and his enemies. His friends told him that he was foolish to behave like that; that his duty was to destroy his enemies. His answer was, 'Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?'

When we learn to love others then we win the greatest of all victories, we forgive them, and by loving them, by seeking nothing but their good, we change our enemies into our friends.

CONCLUSION

A 'victorious life' in which one lives truly (verses 17-24) speaks truly (vs. 25-27), and deals truly (vs. 28-32), is only possible because a person makes a decision to surrender his 'self-centered' and 'sin-controlled' ego to Christ. When you decisively 'put off your old self, ("which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires". v. 22), you allow God to transform you from within, resulting in making you a 'new person' with a renewed mind and a God-given 'righteousness and holiness!' (vs. 23-24) God has the power to change a corrupt self-centered person into a holy Christ-centered person, a person with changed speech, attitudes, responses, and relationships!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 16

1. For what purposes are spiritual gifts given by God to all believers?

2. As a result of your own personal reflection, and your study of the Scriptures, and your input from wise personal friends, what do you believe is your spiritual gift?

3. Even though it is important for a believer to discover his 'spiritual gift', what is even more important?

4. When, in your congregation, you and other earnest believers are properly using spiritual gifts, what benefits are derived by the local church of which you are a member?

5. What is the primary 'solution' to gaining 'tongue control' in your personal life?

6. When one thinks in terms of the 'Body Life' (i.e., the corporate life of the Church of Jesus Christ), why is 'Tongue Control' so vitally important?

7. According to Ephesians 4:26 why is it so important for a believer to quickly get over being angry?

8. What evidence has been uncovered that reveals the physiological destructive consequences from resentment, rage, and bitter anger?

9. From your own personal experience (or from your observation of other persons) tell if you believe the following statement accurately describes 'reality': "One is more subject to temptation during anger, for one's mind cannot function objectively during moments of anger, thus, irrational suggestions and temptations are easily yielded to."

10. What terrible moral consequence comes to persons who refuse to 'walk in the light of God's truth'? (Note Ephesians 4: 17-19; Romans 1: 18, 19, 21; John 3: 19-21)

11. Describe the attitude and behavioral changes which you experienced when you decisively 'put off your old self'. (Ephesians 4: 22-24)

12. As a result of your teachable and 'child-like' (humble) receptivity to the unfolding truth of God (through prayer, Bible reading, godly instruction), tell what changes in your daily lifestyle have progressively been realized. (Note Ephesians 4: 23)

13. When a 'thief' is created anew by the transforming grace of God (Ephesians 4: 24), what attitude will he have regarding physical labor and material things (money)? (Note Ephesians 4: 28)

14. What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the person who has 'put on the new self'? (Ephesians 4: 24 and note Ephesians 4:30)

15. What attitude should an earnest Christian have towards the Holy Spirit, according to Ephesians 4:30?

16. What 'mental attitudes' and 'emotional reactions' bring 'grief' to the Holy Spirit and 'destruction' to human relationships? (Note Ephesians 4: 30-31)

17. Why is it so important for you, as a follower of Jesus Christ, to decisively rid yourself of bitterness and to quickly reconcile yourself with a person who has offended or wronged you? (Note Ephesians 4: 26-27, 31-32; Matthew 6: 14-15)

18. Tell what your personal response (or reaction) is to the following statements: "Quarrelling, loud-mouthed talking, harsh and insulting language is to have no place in the Christian's life. If the Christian has nothing good to say about another person, it is best that he say nothing at all." (Note Ephesians 4: 31)

19. How specifically is a 'Christlike person' described in Ephesians 4: 32?

20. When a person 'offends' you, does seeking to understand his motive and his intent (and your willingness to give him 'the benefit fo the doubt') help you more easily and quickly to forgive him of his 'offending action'?

21. What have you personally done to 'disallow' your mind to think and to 'brood' about things that have been wrongly and unjustly done to you?

22. From a Biblical viewpoint, what does it mean for a Christian to 'love his enemies'? (Matthew 5: 44)

23. From a 'Christian viewpoint' do you think that it is possible "to destroy one's enemies by making them his friends"? To 'prove' that you have truly forgiven your 'enemies', is it necessary for you to become a 'friend' to those who have deeply hurt you? Why or why not?

24. What is the 'secret' to finding the 'victorious life', according to Ephesians 4:23 and 24.

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 17

SUBJECT: GRIEVE NOT THE SPIRIT!

SCRIPTURE: ***"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. [26] "In your anger do not sin"[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] and do not give the devil a foothold. [28] He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [29] Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [32] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*** **Ephesians 4: 25-32**

TEXT: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed until the day of your redemption comes."(Ephesians 4:30)

INTRODUCTION

As a person, the Holy Spirit has sensitivity to man's responses.

The Holy Spirit demands and desires attention, respect, and allegiance, and must be addressed as the Divine Person. When Paul says that the Holy Spirit is the seal of the Christian, he is saying that the possession of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that a Christian will someday enter into the blessed presence of Christ.

Because the Holy Spirit is a divine person, and is the seal and guarantee that a person belongs to God, Paul exhorts Christians to not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

PROPOSITION

It is important to know in what ways the Holy Spirit can be grieved. The Holy Spirit can be grieved "by thwarting His purpose which is always ethical." How can a man thwart God's ethical purposes and thus grieve the Spirit of God? A man can grieve the Spirit by failing to let the Spirit control (1) his tongue, and (2) his emotions and desires.

A. MAN'S TONGUE

G. Campbell Morgan discusses various ways in which one may engage in falsehood. The following are some of those ways (all of which are wrongful uses of the human tongue).

1. Slander – "Lie distributed with malicious intention."
2. Tale-Bearing – "Repetition of Report without careful investigation."
3. False Impression – "Implying Another's Guilt."
4. Silence – "Failure to Defend Someone Against an Untruth."
5. Imputation of Motive – "Attributing An ulterior Motive to a Person."
6. Fault-Finding – "Focus on Fault to Overlook Strengths."

B. MAN'S EMOTIONS AND DESIRES

1. A man can grieve the Sspirit by failing to let the Spirit control his emotions, especially his emotion of Anger. Anger can be bitter, resentful, carnal, and contemptuous. Such anger has no place in the Christian's life. It is contrary to the life of love and kindness as described in Ephesians 4:32.

   To experience God's love for one's fellowmen, is to desire nothing but the highest good for all persons. This involves an exercise of one's will. Christ is able to make one love even those whom one does not like.

   There is a place for anger in the Christian life. A Christian must feel anger toward social injustice and disregard for human dignity. Jesus knew what it was to be angry and sin not. He hated sin but he loved the sinner intensely. Christians must follow His example.

2. A man can grieve the Spirit by failing to let the Spirit control his desires. Paul writes in particular about one's attitude toward material possessions (Ephesians 4:28) Paul exhorts the Christian to share with the man who is in need. The object of hard work is not to greedily accumulate wealth but rather to be able to help our fellowmen, by giving part of our money away. The hand of the Christian is an open and sharing hand; the heart of the Christian is compassionate; the home of a Christian is a caring home.

3. Verse 23. To live truly is to constantly be changing one's attitudes and thoughts for the better.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit-controlled life is the obedient life, and obedience to God involves surrender of one's faculties to God – including one's tongue, one's emotions, and one's desires.

CHAPTER 17

GRIEVE NOT THE SPIRIT!

INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote, *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed until the day of your redemption comes."*

The Holy Spirit to Paul, was a real and living person whom man must honor, adore, and obey. As a person the Holy Spirit has sensitivity to man's response. The Holy Spirit demands, and desires, attention, respect, allegiance, and must be addressed as the Divine Person. When Paul says that the Holy Spirit is the seal of the Christian, he is saying that the possession of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that a Christian will someday enter into the blessed presence of Christ.

Because the Holy Spirit is a divine person, and is the seal and guarantee that a person belongs to God, Paul exhorts Christians to not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul's advice and warning is worthy of the closest consideration by every Christian. In order that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit, it is important to know in what ways the Holy Spirit can be grieved.

As was pointed out by one great preacher (Donald Bastian), the Holy Spirit can be grieved "by thwarting His purpose which is always ethical."

As one man perceptibly said, "In the last analysis, the function of Christianity is to make bad men good." It is not Christ's purpose to titillate one's emotions and to fix one perpetually on the mountain peak of ecstasy. There is heart feeling in genuine and wholesome religion. There is ecstasy in genuine religion. Peace, joy, and satisfaction are all feelings produced by God's Spirit.

However, feeling is the result and not the main function of Christianity. The main function of Christianity is to produce men of upright character, whose conversation is pure, whose desires are noble, and whose motives are unselfish. The purpose of God is always ethical.

The Holy Spirit transforms man's life and bears witness to man that he is a child of God. Throughout life it is the believer's privilege to commune with God in sweet fellowship. Christianity is a relationship between two people – an individual man and the Spirit of God. A true friend cannot be treated casually or carelessly, but rather cherished and honored if the friendship is to be maintained. And so it is between man and God. Man never can ignore God and expect to maintain a vital fellowship. God desires: love, courtesy, and affection to be expressed to him.

PROPOSITION

In light of God's love, mercy, and tender compassion, Paul exhorts the believer to guard against grieving the Spirit. How can a man thwart God's ethical purposes and thus grieve the Spirit of God? A man can grieve the Spirit by failing to let the Spirit control (1) his tongue, and (2) his emotions and desires.

A. MAN'S TONGUE

Paul writes, *"So then strip yourselves of falsehood, and let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor, because we are all members of the same body."*

Perhaps the most frequent way that a Christian grieves the Spirit is by consciously or unconsciously engaging in spreading of falsehoods. Many Christians need to confess, as Isaiah confessed, that they are *"men of unclean lips."* (Isaiah 6) The misuse of the tongue is the biggest problem that many Christians have to deal with. The wrong use of the tongue can lead to devastating and deadly effects. Writes James, *"The human tongue is physically small, but what tremendous effects it can boast of: a whole forest can be set ablaze by a tiny spark of fire, and the tongue is as dangerous as any fire, with vast potentialities for evil. It can poison the whole body: it can make the whole of life a blazing hell."* (James 3: 5, 6)

G. Campbell Morgan discusses various ways in which one may engage in falsehood. The following are some of those ways (all of which are wrongful uses of the human tongue).

1. SLANDER – "Lie distributed with malicious intention."

No one can claim to have fellowship with God and intentionally lie. The classic example of slander is Queen Jezebel of the Old Testament. Jezebel hired two false witnesses to testify against the innocent Naboth so that Naboth might be slain and his vineyard seized for her greedy husband, Ahab.

2. TALE-BEARING – "Repetition of Report without careful investigation." Rumor - "Circulation of a story without certainty of facts."

The most valuable possession a man owns is his good name. The Scripture says, *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."* (Proverbs 22:1) Stolen possessions can be replaced, but a stolen reputation may never be restored.

Wrote Shakespeare:

"Who steals my purse steals trash
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed."

3. False Impression – "Implying another's Guilt."

One need not explicitly state that a person is guilty, but can merely imply that a person is guilty by asking a question or by changing the tone of one's voice. Such a question as "Have you heard about Mr. _____?" and then answering, "The less you know, the better off you will be," is implying guilt unjustly. To create a false impression, may change an honest character into a distorted reputation.

One's character is what one really is, but one's reputation is what others think one is. One's character ought to be faithfully manifested by one's reputation, but one's reputation can be crippled by creating false impressions.

Just as thistles are scattered into the atmosphere by the wind, so contentions words penetrate the atmosphere of peace, oftentimes never to be recalled.

A whisper broke the air,
A soft light tone, and low,
Yet barbed with shame and woe;
Now, might it only perish there,
Nor further go!

Ah me! A quick and eager ear
Caught up the little-meaning sounds;
Another voice has breathed it clear,
And so it wandered round,
From ear to lip, from lip to ear,
Until it reached a gentle heart,
And that – it broke.
(Moran's Ten Commandments, pg, 104)

4. SILENCE – "Failure to Defend Someone against an Untruth."

To remain silent in the company of those who are unjustly murdering the character of a person, is to be equally responsible for the crime of falsehood. To save the reputation of the innocent, a falsehood must be openly challenged and destroyed before it is allowed to spread. To remain silent when one should speak is a sin. Says Barclay: "A man

can stifle the truth by silence, just as much as he can twist it by words." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 184)

5. IMPUTATION OF MOTIVE – "Attributing An Ulterior Motive to a Person."

It is too easy to accuse a person of something for which he is not responsible or guilty. A catty remark is oftentimes evidence of a jealous heart. How many times we have heard youngsters say, "I know why he stayed after school to help the teacher. He needs some brownie points." The one who makes such a statement is really jealous that he himself is not as well liked as the one he is accusing. Adults are just as guilty as children. "He knows what side his bread is buttered on" or "Ah, yes he knows what he is doing", are statements that are used to put a person in the wrong light or to attribute an ulterior motive to him.

6. Fault-Finding – "Focus on Fault to Overlook Strengths."

From the sky a vulture focuses all its attention on its dead prey below, and fails to see the beautiful flowers, grass, and trees of the countryside. All men have faults which can be easily found if we are looking for them. However, we see in our fellowmen what we want to see. If we want to see his strong traits, and commendable virtues, we will see them. If we want to see his shortcomings and blunders, we will see them. To magnify faults at the expense of one's virtues is to give an unfaithful and untrue picture of a man's personality, and these results in falsehood. If one cannot say something good about another, he should not say anything. The perpetual fault-finder is almost always plagued with more faults than the one in whom he is seeking to find faults. Jesus bears this out when he says, *"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."* (Matthew 7: 3-5)

The heart commands the tongue, and the tongue commands words, which in turn can either build up or destroy a man's character. Paul's command is this: *"Do not allow any foul word to issue from your mouth; but let your words be good, designed for necessary edification, that they may bring benefit to those who hear them. Let all bitterness...all loud talking, all insulting language be removed from you with all evil."* (Barclay's Ephesians 4: 29)

Tragic to say, even Christians have been too often guilty of loud talking, and insulting language. Bishop Taylor adds a commentary to this sad picture: "Much fine preaching has been neutralized by those who failed to keep the mouth with a bridle when the wicked were before them. Many a first-class love feast has been dissipated soon after its close by a second-class gab-fest poisoned with gossip. Many a prayer meeting in which a man has blessed God has been nullified by the man's going out to curse a fellow man if only with 'faint praise.'" (Goodly Heritage; (pg. 111)

Job's friend, Eliphaz, greatly complimented Job when he said, *"Your words have kept men on their feet."* (Job 4: 4) That is the Christian's responsibility – to encourage and to build up others by the proper use of words.

B. MAN'S EMOTIONS AND DESIRES

1. A man can grieve the spirit by failing to let the Spirit control his emotions. Anger, love, and fear are all basic emotions, common to all men. As a Christian, each emotion must be disciplined and directed by God into channels of healthful living.

Paul focuses his attention upon one emotion – anger. Writes Paul: *"Be angry-but be angry in such a way that your anger is not a sin. Do not let the sun set on your wrath, and do not give the devil any opportunity."* (Ephesians 4:26, 27)

Anger can be bitter, resentful, carnal, and contemptuous. Such an anger has no place in a Christian's life. It is contrary to the life of love and kindness. Paul writes that Christians are to show themselves "kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." When one of God's children is hurt by another one of God's children, then God is hurt and grieved. God set the example of forgiveness at the cross, and expects all who profess his name likewise to forgive one another.

To experience God's love for one's fellowmen is to desire nothing but the highest good for all persons. This involves an exercise of one's will, especially when a conflicting and unlovely character crosses one's path and cuts against the grains of one's personality. Christ is able to make one love even those whom one does not like. Writes Barclay, "Agape (Christian love) is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek nothing but the highest good of every man no matter what men do to him." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 165)

There is a place for anger in the Christian life. A Christian must feel anger toward social injustice and disregard for human dignity. Barclay notes the manifested anger of F. W. Robertson, a great preacher and saint, who "bit his lips until they bled when he met on the street a certain man whom he knew to be luring a pure young girl to her destruction." John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I will shake the world."

Every great Christian in history has had the capacity to be angry and yet not sin. Because William Wilberforce had the capacity to become angry at social inequality and gross evil, the British Empire was freed of its slave-trade. Wilberforce introduced a reform in the British Empire that was to have its impact in America.

Because Lord Shaftesbury had the capacity to feel intense anger because of the low social and moral conditions that existed among the common people his day, England received several reforms which upgraded its social life, among the common people especially.

Barclay relates the story of how Shaftesbury received his vision for reform. "It all began very simply. When he was a boy at Harrow, he was going along the street one day, and he met a pauper's funeral. The coffin was a shoddy, ill-made box. It was on a hand-barrow. The barrow was being pushed by a quartette of men who were drunks and as they pushed the barrow along, they were singing ribald songs, and joking, and jesting among themselves. As they pushed the barrow up the hill the box, which was the coffin, fell off the barrow and burst open...The young Shaftesbury saw it and said to himself, 'When I grow up, I'm going to give my life to see that things like that don't happen.'" Barclay comments, "Lord Shaftesbury probably did more for ordinary working men and women and for little children than any social reformer ever did." (Barclay's Matthew, vol. 1, pg. 89)

Jesus knew what it was to be angry and sin not. He hated sin, but He loved the sinner intensely. Christians must follow His example.

2. A man can grieve the Spirit by failing to let the Spirit control his desires. Paul writes in particular about one's attitude toward material possessions, *"Let him who was a thief steal no more; rather let him take to hard work, and to producing good with his hands, in order that he may be able to share with the man who is in need."* (Barclay's Ephesians 4: 28) To show what a great sin covetousness is, Paul writes in the next chapter of his letter, *"As for...the itch to get your hands on what belongs to other people – don't even talk about such things; they*

are no fit subjects for Christians to talk about." **(Ephesians 5:3, Phillips)**

Stealing is the child of covetousness, just as murder is the child of hatred. If the Christian lets the Holy Spirit seal his heart with His presence, there is no danger of having wrong desire. Paul exhorts the Christian to share with the man who is in need. The object of hard work is not to greedily accumulate wealth but rather to be able to help our fellowmen, by giving part of our money away. The hand of the Christian is an open and sharing hand; the heart of the Christian is compassionate; the home of a Christian is a caring home.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit-controlled life is the obedient life, and obedience to God involves surrender of one's faculties to God – including one's tongue, one's emotions, and one's desires. The prayer of all of us should be:

"Take my lips, and let them be, Filled with messages for Thee;
Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my love, my God; I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 17

1. **Because the Holy Spirit is a Person (the third divine person of the Holy Trinity), how should we, as believers, treat the Spirit?**

2. **What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to be the 'seal' and the 'guarantee' of a Christian? (Note Ephesians 4: 30)**

3. **Give your interpretation and explanation of the following statement: "The Holy Spirit can be grieved by thwarting His purpose which is always ethical."**

4. **Tell what is meant by the following statement: "Feeling is the result, not the main function of Christianity." Ethically-speaking, what is the 'main function' (purpose) of Christianity?**

5. **When a person (including a professing Christian person) wrongly uses his 'tongue', what are some of the devastating consequences? (Note James 3: 5-6)**

6. **Match the following words with the proper definitions that describe them.**

_____(1) Fault-Finding	A. "Lie distributed with malicious intentions."
_____(2) Silence	B. "Repetition of Report without careful investigation."
_____(3) Tale-Bearing	C. "Implying another's Guilt."
_____(4) Slander	D. "Failure to Defend Someone against an Untruth."
_____(5) False Impression	E. "Attributing an Ulterior Motive to a person."
_____(6) Imputation of Motive	F. "Focus on Fault to overlook Strengths."

7. **Give your interpretation and application of the following statement: "A man can stifle the truth by silence, just as much as he can twist it by words."**

8. **Tell to what degree you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "To magnify faults at the expense of one's virtues, is to give an unfaithful and untrue picture of a man's personality and this results in falsehood."**

9. **Tell if you believe the following statement reflects 'reality', as taught by the Bible: "The perpetual fault-finder is almost always plagued with more faults than the one in whom he is seeking to find faults." (Note Matthew 7: 3-5)**

10. From your own personal experience, and from your observation of others, tell if you believe the following statement reflects 'reality': "The heart commands the tongue, and the tongue commands words, which in turn can either buildup or destroy a man's character." (Ephesians 4:29, 31; Job 4: 4)

11. Further 'amplify' and 'interpret' and 'apply' the following insight by Bishop Taylor: "Much fine preaching has been neutralized by those who failed to keep the mouth with a bridle when the wicked were before them. Many a first-class love feast has been dissipated soon after its close by a second-class gab-fest poisoned with gossip. Many a prayer meeting in which a man has blessed God has been nullified by the man's going out to curse a fellow man if only with 'faint praise.'"

12. In contrast to being bitterly angry with one who has offended (injured) you, what Christlike response are you to give to the offending person? (Note Ephesians 4: 26-27, 32)

13. Would the fact that the all-seeing and all-knowing and all-merciful God is 'hurt' and 'grieved' when you 'hurt' your fellowman, help you to be far more careful how you treat those around you?

14. In light of the 'Cross on Mount Calvary', why is it 'reasonable' that God should expect all who profess His name to forgive fellow human beings (including fellow believers)? (Note Ephesians 4: 32)

15. In light of the faults, failures, and sins of persons surrounding you, and with whom you are involved, what does it mean, practically-speaking, for you to experience and to express God's love for your fellowman?

16. Is it possible (and Biblically-permissible) for you, as a follower of Jesus Christ, to genuinely love a person and yet not like the person? Why or why not?"

17. At what times, and for what reasons, is it permissible (and even commendable and 'required') for a follower of Jesus to be 'angry'? (Ephesians 4: 26) Can you think of occasions in Jesus' life and ministry when He was 'righteously indignant' because of the unjust and ungodly actions of man?

18. Share 'concrete' ways in which Christians can 'flush out' the truths that are stated in the following statements: "The hand of the Christian is open and sharing hand, the heart of the Christian is compassion; the home of a Christian is a caring home." (Note Matthew 25: 31-40, James 2: 14-18, I John 3: 16-18)

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 18

SUBJECT: IMITATORS OF GOD

SCRIPTURE: ***"1Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[a] 6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7Therefore do not be partners with them. 8For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10and find out what pleases the Lord."*** **Ephesians 5:1-10**

TEXT: "Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father."

INTRODUCTION

When the Scriptures exhort us to follow God's example, we are not asked to follow the example of some abstract entity or force, but the example of Jesus Christ – God Incarnate who lived, acted, and reacted among the sons of men. Jesus is God with a face, God with feelings, God with concrete actions, God engaged in human relationships.

We all imitate someone or something. The question is: "Who do we imitate?"

PROPOSITION

The scripture text tells us that as Christians we are to imitate God in everything we do, "just as a much loved child imitates his father." According to our Scripture reading (Ephesians 5: 1-10), we are to imitate God in at least three ways: (1) Love; (2) Purity; (3) Generosity."

A. IMITATE THE LOVING CHARACTER OF GOD

The agape love (divine-like love) is essentially self-giving love; Eros is essentially self-centered love. Agape love was graphically demonstrated in the fact that *"Christ loves you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to rake away your sins."* (Ephesians 5: 2) This supreme self-giving love of Christ unveiled the very nature of God.

It is, of course, impossible for a Christian to imitate this love (that is, practice this love) unless he has first received this supernatural love from God whose very Essence is love. It is futile to attempt to imitate and to practice this love without first having God's love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. It is man's part to supply the willingness and the surrender; it is God's part to supply the power and the continuing example.

The redemptive love of Christ redeems man from sin; the imparted love of God in the life of the Christian results in redeeming relationships, and in saving personalities from destruction.

B. IMITATE THE PURE CHARACTER OF GOD

Imitating God means imitating His pure character. Speaking of God, the Old Testament Prophet Habakkuk wrote, *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."* (1:13)

The command of God in the Old Testament will applies to every true believer: *"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord you God."* (Leviticus 20:7) Because God is holy, Christians are to be holy – imitating God's holiness. 'Sanctify' means outward separation from the common and unclean, and inward purity of heart.

The Scripture does not condemn sex as such, but only the wrong use of sex (selfishly outside or within marriage) and at the wrong time (before or outside of marriage).

C. IMITATE THE GENEROUS CHARACTER OF GOD

A demonstration of agape love is the open hand, in contrast to the grasping and greedy hand of self-centered love. *"Greed which makes an idol of gain" is considered to be a serious and a damning sin.* (I Timothy 6:9-10) The sin of greed is serious because the greedy man sees temporal values as ends in themselves, and devotes his life to reaching those ends, with the consequent neglect of spiritual matters.

It is important to understand that the Bible does NOT condemn money or even wealth 'as such'. The bible only condemns the wrong attitudes toward money, and, of course the wrong use of money. In other words, you can be materially rich, and at the same time be a deeply committed follower of Christ. You can be wealthy, but you cannot be greedy, if you are to be a 'true Christian'!

Jesus said that we are NOT to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, but rather, we are to 'lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven'. How? By using our material wealth to benefit people and to glorify God! The way of Jesus is the 'way of generosity'. So, whether a person has 'little' or 'much' of this

'world's goods' (money), he must be a 'generous person' – if his 'claim to follow Jesus' has any validity at all!

CONCLUSION

Let us all be Spirit-controlled IMITATORS OF GOD - in LOVE (instead of self-centered 'pride'), in PURITY (instead of self–centered 'lust'), in GENEROSITY (instead of self-centered 'greed'). When we are loving, pure, and generous, we are 'reflecting the image of God Himself'!

CHAPTER 18

IMITATORS OF GOD!

INTRODOUCTION

A small child in a darkened room who was put to bed for the night, yelled for her mother. Coming quickly to the room, the mother asked the small girl what was wrong. Replied the child, "I'm afraid of the dark, mother." Said the mother, "You have nothing to be frightened about, daughter. Remember, God is right here in the room with you!" "But, mother," said the little girl, "God has no face."

In the darkness and dread of the world's night of sin and confusion, people's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming upon the world. People need a God who has a face and who is here. The greatest tragedy of all is that most people fail to realize that God has come to our darkened world and that God does have a face! As the Hymn says "look full into his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

When the Scriptures exhort us to follow God's example, we are not asked to follow the example of some abstract entity or force, but the example of Jesus Christ – God Incarnate who lived, acted, and reacted among the sons of men. Jesus is God with a face, God with feelings, God with concrete actions, God engaged in human relationships.

A woman was urged to surrender her life to God but she responded that she was frightened when she thought of God. Replied the minister, "Suppose God is like Jesus. Would you then make that surrender?" "Oh, that is a different matter. Yes I can surrender to that kind of God."

To surrender to and follow the example of God may not seem possible, but to surrender to imitate Jesus Christ is very possible.

Imitation is a universal experience of life. We all imitate someone or something. Gabriel Tarde, a social theorist, believed that most, if not all social life, could be reduced to the simple principle of Imitation. The two key words to explain all of social reality, according to Tarde, are imitation and invention. Tarde believed that social life comes into being the moment one individual imitates another individual.

Imitation begins at a very early age of childhood. This fact was humorously demonstrated when, several years ago, my wife was caring for several children in her 'daycare business'. One pre-school child (a 'bright' young girl named Becky Hunt) came one day to proudly present herself to my wife. Little Becky had apparently brought a tube of her mother's lipstick with her when she came from her home to our home, and, when no one was watching her, she speared her mother's lipstick all over

her face! Why? Well, the answer was rather obvious: Becky was trying to 'imitate' her mother's practice of applying lipstick to her lips!

A normally developing child begins soon to imitate his parents' manner of walking, talking, habits, and actions. Imitation continues all throughout adult life. A student imitates the scholarly actions and intellectual airs of his esteemed professor. A young aspiring athlete imitates the movements of the professional athlete. Older married couples, who have lived with and loved each other through the decades, almost manifest the same facial expressions. The main part in the training of oratory among the Greeks was the study and imitation of the Master orators who had gone before.

We all imitate someone or something. The question is "Who do we imitate?"

PROPOSITION

The scripture text tells us that as Christians we are to imitate God in everything we do, "just as much loved child imitates his father." According to our Scripture reading (Ephesians 5:1-10), we are to imitate God in at least three ways: (1) Love; (2) Purity; (3) Generosity."

A. IMITATE THE LOVING CHARACTER OF GOD

The Scripture text tells us that as Christians we are to imitate God in everything we do, "just as a much loved child imitates his father." According to our Scripture reading (Ephesians 5: 1-1)), we are to imitate God in at least three ways: (1) Love), (2) Purity, (3) Generosity.

The New Testament uses the word 'Agape' to describe Divine-like love and the word 'Eros' to describe self-centered love. Our Scripture portion tells us that we are to be full of divine-like love (agape), and that we are to be ordering our behavior within the sphere of this kind of supernatural love. This love is different from mere human love or sentiment.

The agape love is essentially self-giving love; Eros is essentially self-centered love.

Agape love was graphically demonstrated in the fact that *"Christ loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins."* () This supreme self-giving love of Christ unveiled the very nature of God. Such Calvary love was like sweet perfume to God.

It is, of course, impossible for a Christian to imitate this love (that is, practice this love) unless he has first received this supernatural love from God who's very Essence is love. Romans 5:5b tells us that 'we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with this love."

Have you received the fullness of love through total surrender of yourself to the Holy Spirit? It is futile to attempt to imitate and to practice this love without first having God's love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. It is man's part to supply the willingness and the surrender; it is God's part to supply the power and the continuing example.

Look at a contrast between Agape and Eros:

EROS	AGAPE
Eros is acquisitive desire and longing	Agape is sacrificial giving.
Eros is an upward movement.	Agape comes down.
Eros is man's way to God.	Agape is God's way to man.
Eros is man's effort: it assumes that man's salvation is his own work.	Agape is God's grace: salvation is the work of Divine love.
Eros is egocentric love, a form of its self-assertion of the highest, noblest, sublimest kind.	Agape is unselfish love, it 'seeketh not own', it gives itself away.
Eros seeks to gain its life, a life divine, immortalized.	Agape lives the life of God, therefore dares to 'lose it'.
Eros is the will to get and possess which depends on want and need.	Agape is freedom of giving, which depends on wealth and plenty.
Eros is primarily man's love; God is the object of Eros. Even when it is attributed to God, Eros is patterned on human love.	Agape is primarily God's love; God is Agape. Even when it is attributed to man Agape is patterned on Divine love.
Eros is determined by the quality, the beauty and worth, of its object; it is not spontaneous, but 'evoked', motivated.'	Agape is sovereign in relation to its object and is directed to both 'the evil and good; it is spontaneous, 'overflowing', and 'unmotivated'.
Eros recognizes value in its object, and loves it.	Agape loves – and creates value in its Object.

(By Nygren; quoted by E.S. Jones in Christian Maturity; pg. 129)

The redemptive love of Christ redeems man from sin; the imparted love of God in the life of the Christian results in redeeming relationships and in saving personalities from destruction.

Agape love is the love that imitates – that is, the love that goes out seeking the lost (like the shepherd who sought for the lost sheep). The shepherd brought the wandering sheep safely back into the fold. Agape love is compelling love – compelling the Christian to seek and to save the lost. *"Dear brothers, if anyone has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord, and someone helps him understand the Truth again, that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins."* (James 5:19-20)

The agape love (divine-like love) is essentially self-giving love; Eros is essentially self-centered love. Agape love was graphically demonstrated in the fact that *"Christ loves you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins."* (Ephesians 5:2) This supreme self-giving love of Christ unveiled the very nature of God.

B. IMITATE THE PURE CHARACTER OF GOD

The result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the initial impartation of God-like love (Agape), and the ability to imitate God-like love, which imitation finds its practical expression within the world of men. Agape love gives power to live a God-like life within a godless society.

To repeat what was stated before: "Social life comes into begin the moment one individual imitates another individual." A true Christian is one who has entered into a social life with God. The whole of man (body, mind, and spirit) has entered into a relationship with the whole of God (Father, Son, and Spirit). Spiritual fellowship is the term we give to this human-divine relationship. Fellowship (social life) with God continues as long as the believer continues to imitate the character of God – which is basically the character of love.

The imitation of God's character in Personal Experience always has social manifestations in the realm of human relationships. The imitation of God-like love in human society calls for self-giving, not self-getting. Self-getting love manifests itself in human relationships as lust and greed (Ephesians 5:3-9).

An example of self-centered love is seen in the boy who demands that his girl friend give her body to him for the pleasure of a moment, although he is not willing to prove his love to her, by waiting until marriage. What is casually called 'love' is nothing less than hellish, selfish lust!

A society that profanes something as sacred as sex is the society that is in the process of decay, and is under the judgment of God. That judgment may come swiftly (as in the case of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah), or that

judgment may come through the tragedy which the perversions of sex themselves render.

"So God let them go ahead into every sort of sex sin, and do whatever they wanted to – yes, vile and sinful things with each other's bodies...That is why God let go of them and let them do all these evil things, so that even their women turned against God's natural plan for them and indulged in sex sin with women, burned with lust for each other, men doing shameful things with other men and, as a result, getting paid within their own souls with the penalty they so richly deserved...They were fully aware of God's death penalty for these crimes, yet they went right ahead and did them anyway, and encouraged others to do them, too." (Romans 1:24, 26, 27, 32; Living Bible)

Imitating God means imitating his pure character. Speaking of God, the Old Testament Prophet Habakkuk wrote, *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."* (1:13)

The command of God in the Old Testament still applies to every true believer: *"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord you God."* (Leviticus 20:7) Because God is holy, Christians are to be holy – imitating God's holiness. 'Sanctify' means outward separation from the common and unclean, and inward purity of heart.

Christians are to separate themselves from the evil acts, associations, and habits of the world. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean things and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6:17, 18)

Look again at our Scripture lesson in Ephesians 5: 3-4. Paul wrote: "Let there be no sex sin, impurity or greed among you. Let no one be able to accuse you of any such thing. Dirty stories, foul talk and coarse jokes – these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God's goodness and be thankful." (Living Bible)

Let's make no mistake: The Scripture does not condemn sex as such, but only the wrong use of sex (selfishly outside or within marriage) and at the wrong time (before or outside of marriage). The proper use of sex within the holy bonds of marriage is sanctioned and even encouraged, by the Holy Scriptures. *"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* (Hebrews 13:4)

Sexual love within the 'confines' of marriage is not only 'permitted' but it is actually 'encouraged' in the New Testament, as noted in I Corinthians 7. Wrote Paul:

"The man should give his wife all that is her right as a married woman, and the wife should do the same for her husband; for a girl who marries no longer has full right to her own body, for her husband then has his rights to it, too; and in the same way the husband no longer has full right to his own body, for it belongs also to his wife. So do not refuse these rights to each other. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from the rights of marriage for a limited time, so that they can give themselves more completely to prayer. Afterwards, they should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt them because of their lack of self-control." (I Corinthians 7:3-5, Living Bible)

It is not 'sexual love' within the established and lifelong 'bonds' of marriage that the bible condemns; the bible affirms this kind of expression of love. It is rather sex before or outside of marriage that the bible strictly forbids. With the multitude of 'live-in situations' today (i.e., many men and women living together unmarried), the advice (and command) of the Holy Bible regarding the 'sanctity of sex' is very relevant! Paul, who affirmed the 'legitimacy' and who encouraged the 'practice' of sexual expression between a committed husband and wife, also gives serious warnings regarding the misuse of sex. He wrote:

> ***"Sexual sin is never right: our bodies were not made for that, but for the Lord, and the Lord wants to fill our bodies with himself. Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts and members of Christ?...That is why I say to run from sex sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body. Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it."*** **(I Corinthians 6:13b-15, 18-20)**

C. IMITATE THE GENEROUS CHARACTER OF GOD

God is love and he who would imitate God must "practice" God-like love. A demonstration of agape love is the open hand, in contrast to the grasping and greedy hand of self-centered love. Taking God as the example, Paul writes:

"Let there be no greed." (v. 3) "You can be sure of this: the kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshipper – he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them. Don't even associate with such people." **(vs. 5-7)**

"Greed which makes an idol of gain" is considered to be a serious and a damning sin. **(I Timothy 6: 9-10)**

Why is greed such a damning sin? Because, as Paul wrote to young Timothy:

"People who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows." **(I Timothy 6:9-10, Living Bible)**

The sin of greed is serious because the greedy man sees temporal values as ends in themselves, and devotes his life to reaching those ends, with the consequent neglect of spiritual matters. He spends life worshipping a false god, one that cannot save his eternal soul.

The greedy man believes that life consists in the abundance of things which a man possesseth. The greedy man is captivated by the outward show of things and fails to enquire into their real values. The greedy man is possessed with "the spirit which can see nothing without wishing to acquire it, and which, having acquired it, flaunts it in the face of men." He is possessed with "the spirit which believes that happiness is to be found in the things which money can buy and which the eye can see." (Barclay I John, pg. 68) Greediness is "prompted by the sense of sight and it grows in the imagination of the mind." (Lehman Strauss' comment on I John 2:15-17)

There are many sins (vices) which the bible warns Christians to avoid, but three of the dominate sins that seem especially to 'plague' many Christians in our modern-day world are (a) Greed, (b) Lust, (c) Pride. Once when I talked to Ralph Bell – a long time associate evangelist with Billy Graham – he told me that early in Graham's evangelistic association it was these three 'perils' which Graham warned his 'team' to carefully guard against (greed, lust, pride). Certainly, Dr. Graham would strongly identify with the apostle Paul who also often warned against these 'terrible sins'. Using different words to describe these 'dominate sins', the well-known Christian author Richard Foster once wrote a most helpful and instructive book entitled 'Money, Sex, and Power'.

The apostle John (in the New Testament) would agree with the apostle Paul (and the modern-day Christian leaders – Billy Graham and Richard Foster) that the person who improperly uses material things (money) and physical pleasure (sex) and authority (power) will find himself in opposition to Christ (i.e., such a person can only be called a type of 'antichrist'!). John issued strong warnings to believers to avoid falling into the 'trap of worldliness' – that is, the 'spirit' of worldliness' which places a wrong value upon money, sex, and power (i.e., pride in 'authority'). John wrote:

"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires – the craze for sex (lust), the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you (greed), and the pride that comes from wealth and importance (power) – these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever." **(I John 2:15-17, Living Bible)**

The essence of the greedy man is, as someone said, that "he knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." Says Barclay, "The world's motive is the profit motive: the Christian's dynamic is the desire to serve." (Barclay's Ephesians 115) The greedy man tends to appreciate gadgets more than ideas. The fervor with which greedy men worship their god of materialism is seen in the fact that men are breaking their health, and selling out their honor to make more money. In the secularistic culture which breeds greediness, the quantity of one's bank account is more important than the quality of one's life.

Says Mavis: "Secularism, in inverting life values, neglects the interests of the immortal spirit of man, assuming that this spirit can be satisfied with earthly things. It fails to see, with Hannah More, that, 'the soul on earth is an immortal guest, compelled to starve at an unreal feast; a pilgrim panting for the rest to come; an exile anxious for its native home.'" (Psychology of Christian Experience; pg. 114)

Mavis further says, "Modern man has a clear vision for secular goals, but dull vision for spiritual goals. It seems that some evil spirit, to use Kierkegaard's figure of speech, has put a pair of glasses on the nose of this generation. One of the lenses is a powerful magnifying glass; the other is an equally strong reducing glass. Our generation looks at secular things through the reducing one." (Ibid: 103)

To become preoccupied in the accumulation of material possessions, is like a wild duck who has become so fat on grain that it is unable to soar into the skies as it was meant to soar. Man was meant to soar into the realm of spiritual living which leads to eternal life, but many, just as the fatten duck, are living indulgent, earth-centered lives. Some have never known the joy of soaring the heights of spiritual ecstasy, and such will never know the joys and peace of eternal life unless they repent of their indulgent, Christless lives. How foolish is the man who toils for the Almighty Dollar. Why? Because material riches are limited only to this material world. The rich man cannot take his riches with him when he dies.

"As he came naked from his mother's womb so he shall return again as he came and nothing shall he take for his labor that he may carry away in his hand." **(Ecclesiastics 5:15)**

Lest there be misunderstanding when discussing the subject of the wrong use of material things' (i.e., greed), it is important to understand that the Bible does NOT condemn money or even wealth 'as such'. The Bible only condemns the wrong attitudes toward money, and, of course, the wrong use of money. In other words, you can be materially rich, and at the same time be a deeply committed follower of Christ. You can be wealthy, but you cannot be greedy, if you are to be a 'true Christian'!

One of the most brilliant persons, among the Christian philosophers and churchmen of the 20th century, was William Temple. It was he that wrote: "Christianity...is the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions." (Nature, Man, and God by William Temple; pg. 478) The fact that God created a 'material' world, and the fact that the Son of God became a 'real flesh-and-blood human being' (the Incarnation), and the fact that Jesus' resurrection was a 'resurrection of His physical body', and the fact that all believers are promised a 'new body' in their future resurrection – these facts firmly establish the reality that 'Christianity is the most materialist of all the great religions'. In other words, while God definitely prohibits the 'greedy use of material things like money', God does not despise 'material things' including money or material wealth. John Wesley wisely struck the 'Biblical balance' (regarding the proper attitude and the use of money) when he gave the following exhortation to the crowds of Christian converts in his own time (the 18th century): "Make all you can; Save all you can; Give all you can." Doubtless, the last of the three exhortations is the most important (i.e., 'give all you can'), for if a person makes all he can and if he saves all he can (by 'not needlessly wasting anything'), but fails to be generous in 'giving all he can', that person will become a 'greedy materialist'. Greed, along with pride and lust, is considered to be a most serious sin. Paul wrote (in our Scripture lesson for today): *"You can be sure of this: The Kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshipper – he loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all those who do them. Don't even associate with such people."* (Ephesians 5:5-7, Living Bible)

You can be a 'follower of the lowly Nazarene' and, at the same time, be one of the few Christians in our 'poverty-stricken world' who is materially wealthy. But if you are wealthy, you must realize what a 'dangerous road' you must travel, for Jesus said that it is 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven'! Jesus said that we are NOT to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, but rather, we are to 'lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven'. How? By using our material wealth to benefit people and to glorify God! The important 'point' is this: you cannot be a 'greedy Christian' which is a total 'contradiction in terms'. If you are a 'follower of Jesus', you must have an 'open hand' and a 'compassionate heart'. The way of Jesus is the 'way of generosity'. So, whether a person has 'little' or 'much' of

this 'world's goods' (money), he must be a 'generous person' – if his 'claim to follow Jesus' has any validity at all! To the wealthy Christians of his day (and to those of our 'contemporary world'), Paul wrote: ***"Those who are rich are not to be proud and are not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. The rich are to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in needs; always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven – it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well."*** **(I Timothy 6:17-19, Living Bible)**

In contrast to the spirit of this age which makes money a god, the Christian is to make loving service to God and man his delight. ***"It is more blessed to give than to receive." "God loveth a cheerful giver." "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."*** **These are the statements that describe the generous heart of the loving man. Said one cynic in reaction to the spirit of Christianity: "This Christianity is just one big give, give, give." True is his 'word definition' – but Christian giving is not done grudgingly but gladly.** ***"Freely ye have received, freely give"*****, said Jesus.**

CONCLUSION

"For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! Because of this light within you, you should do only what is good and right and true." **(Ephesians 5:8-9)**

Let us all be Spirit-controlled IMITATORS OF GOD - in LOVE (instead of self-centered 'pride'), in PURITY (instead of self –centered 'lust'), in GENEROSITY (instead of self-centered 'greed'). When we are loving, pure, and generous, we are 'reflecting the image of God Himself'!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 18

1. When the Scriptures exhort us to follow God's example, why are we NOT asked to follow the example of some abstract entity or force? (John 1:14)

2. Is it 'true to realty' that 'imitation' is a universal experience of life, that everyone imitates someone or something? Do you believe that most (if not all) social life could be reduced to the simple principle of 'Imitation'?

3. After carefully examining the list of contrasting characteristics between 'Eros' type of Love and 'Agape' type of Love, what to you is most 'revealing' or 'amazing' about 'Agape' Love?

4. According to Ephesians 5:2, what is the greatest demonstration of Agape Love which can be found in history?

5. Is it accurate to say that "what Christ was on earth (i.e., perfect love), God has always been eternally"?

6. Is it possible for a human being to experience and to express Agape Love (i.e., sacrificial love) without first receiving that Love as a direct gift from God? Why or why not? (Note Romans 5:5)

7. What is God's part and what is Man's part in knowing and expressing Agape Love?

8. Tell how you would interpret and apply the following statement: "The redemptive love of Christ redeems man from sin; the imparted love of God in the life of Christian results in redeeming relationships and in saving personalities from destruction."

9. In terms of your relationships with other persons (including unbelievers), how can you best demonstrate that you are sincerely attempting to 'imitate Jesus' love'? (Note Luke 15:3-10; James 5:19-20)

10. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "A true Christian is one who has entered into a social life with God."

11. What 'condition' must a Christian 'meet', if he is to continue to enjoy 'social life' (i.e., fellowship) with God?

12. Is it possible for a believer to experience a deep love for God (i.e., social life and fellowship with God) without, at the same time, experiencing and expressing concrete love for his/her fellow human beings (especially Christians)? Why or why not? (Note I John 3:23; 4:19-21)

13. How does 'self-getting' love (rather than self-giving love) manifest itself in human relationships, according to Ephesians 5:3-9?

14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "A society that profanes something so sacred as sex, is a society that is in the process of decay, and is under the judgment of God. That judgment may come swiftly (as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah), or that judgment may come through the tragedy which the perversions of sex themselves render." (Note Romans 1:24, 26, 27, 32)

15. What does it mean for a person (believer) to be 'sanctified', and does 'sanctification' involve both the activity of God and a Human Being? (Note Leviticus 20:7; James 4:8; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:3; Acts 15: 8-9; Titus 2:11-14; Ezekiel 36:25-27; II Corinthians 6: 17-18)

16. Since it is true that the Bible does not 'condemn' sex as such, what does the Bible say is the 'proper use' of sex? (Note Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 7:3-5; I Corinthians 6:13b-15, 18-20)

17. If it is true that a demonstration of 'agape love' is the 'open hand' (in contrast to the 'grasping and greedy hand' of the self-centered person), then what do you believe it means for a Christ-centered person to have an 'open hand'?

18. Why, according to Ephesians 5:5-7, is a greedy person called an 'idolater' and what consequences will a greedy person incur?

19. According to I Timothy 6:9-10, why is greed such a 'damning sin'?

20. If "life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses", is it therefore 'wrong' (i.e., sinful) for a Christian to possess and to enjoy 'abundant material possessions'? Why or why not?

21. In contrast to the way in which God wishes for humans to view and to value the physical world, with its material possessions, how does the 'greedy person' view and value the material world (and especially money)?

22. Tell how (a) Pride, (b) Lust, (c) Greed are "perversions of legitimate desires and needs" which God gave to human beings when He created them.

23. From your own experience, and from your careful observation of others, have you concluded that many Christian believers are especially 'vulnerable' to the three following sins: (a) Pride, (b) Lust, (c) Greed?

24. In contrast to those who allow their lives to be 'enslaved' by the temporary 'pleasures' which pride and lust and greed, give what is the God-promised reward for those persons who choose a 'godly lifestyle' instead of a 'godless lifestyle'? (Note I John 2:15-17)

25. If the world's motive is the 'profit motive', what are the motive and dynamic and 'driving force' of the true Christian believers?

26. According to the Bible (and, according to 'common sense') why is it so 'foolish' for a person to toil so hard for the 'almighty dollar'? (Note Ecclesiastes 5:15)

27. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "You can be wealthy, but you cannot be greedy, if you are to be a 'true Christian'."

28. Tell what William Temple meant when he wrote the following: "Christianity is the most avowedly materialist of all the great religions."

29. What did John Wesley say that reflects a "Biblical balance" regarding the proper attitude and the proper use of money?

30. What teaching did Jesus give that makes it clear that the materially-wealthy are travelling a legitimate but, nevertheless, a 'dangerous road'?

31. In terms of the use of your money, what do you think you must do if you are to "lay up treasures for yourself in heaven"?

32. Share your 'level of amazement' regarding the truth of the following statement: "When I am loving, pure, and generous, I am 'reflecting the image of God Himself'!"

33. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "Whether a person has 'little' or 'much' of this 'world's goods' (money), he must be a 'generous person' – if his 'claim' to follow Jesus has any validity at all."

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 19

SUBJECT: HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY HOME!

SCRIPTURE: ***14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*** **(Ephesians 3: 14-21)**

Text: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)

INTRODUCTION

"Whether your home is purgatory or paradise depends upon the attitudes of the people within that home." (Charles Blair)

PROPOSITION

Total commitment is essential for genuine happiness in the home. The 'tone' of the passage on marriage is 'mutual submission' of Husband and Wife.

A. COMMITMENT TO LIFE-TIME RELATIONSHIP

B. COMMITMENT TO ONE-FLESH CONCEPT

C. COMMITMENT TO THE DIVINE ORDER FOR THE FAMILY

1. **Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for the Church."**
2. **Paul wrote, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church...!"**
3. **Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents, as Christian children should. Honor your father and your mother – for this is the first commandment to which a promise is attached - that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth!"**
4. **Commitment to Self-Discipline.**
   a. **Money Matters**
   b. **Sex**

CONCLUSION

Here are "10 Commandments for the Home"!

1. **Don't major or minors.**
2. **Don't shout in the home.**
3. **Practice being considerate and good humored in the home.**
4. **Express appreciation for the thankless jobs that your companion does each day.**
5. **Keep a private date with each other (as husband and wife) once a week, and with each individual child at least once a month.**
6. **Compliment your children twice as much for the good they do, as you correct them for the errors they commit.**
7. **Freely and sincerely express physical affection before each other in the home.**
8. **Develop and express a wholesome sense of humor in the home. Learn to laugh at yourself.**
9. **Learn to forgive and to forget.**
10. **Allow Christ to be the Head of your home.**

CHAPTER 19

HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY HOME!

INTRODUCTION

"The story is told that during the administration of confirmation to a class about to enter the Church, a young girl was asked: What is matrimony? Making a face, she said, 'Oh, matrimony is a state of terrible torment which those who enter are compelled to undergo for a time to fit them for heaven.'

"'Oh, no,' said the young priest who was helping with the Confirmation class, 'you have given the definition of purgatory. It is matrimony we are talking about.'

"'Let her alone,' said the Archbishop. 'What do we know about it? Maybe she is right.'" (Story in 'How Can I Live Effectively?' by Charles Blair; pg. 21)

"Whether your home is purgatory or paradise depends upon the attitudes of the people within that home." (Charles Blair)

PROPOSITION

The Home is intended to be happy and fulfilling, and it will be if each of the family members is mutually submitting to each other, out of reverence to Christ. Submission to one another is manifest in several ways, but the fact remains: there can be no happy home without submission to each other.

Total commitment is essential for genuine happines in the home. The 'tone' of the passage on marriage is 'Mutual Submission' of Husband and Wife!

A. COMMITMENT TO LIFE-TIME RELATIONSHIP.

Illustration of Birkinbines love for each other, after 73 years of married life. They always determined to quickly 'make-up' their differences. ("Do not let the sun go down on your wrath!")

Have you been to a wedding lately, and have you renewed your vows of life – time loyalty to your partner, recently?

There is to be no thought of divorce, when two pledge themselves to lifetime faithfulness. "Elsie Robinson, the journalist, was asked about the possibilities of having a happy marriage. 'Practically nil,' she said, 'unless you want to work at it as the greatest job of your life and not one you will desert when you get your hair rumpled.'"

What is the secret to a life-time relationship in marriage? Says Blair, "I have often suggested to young couples about to exchange the vows of marriage at

the altar that they give birth immediately to a set of twins called 'Bear' and 'Forbear'...'To bear' means to be willing to support, to uphold, to sustain. To 'forbear' is to refrain and hold back. Both are needed to maintain harmony in the home."

"Benjamin Franklin gave some sound advice when he said, 'Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and then half shut afterwards.' Emerson cautioned, 'Never try to make another individual into a copy of yourself, for God knows, and you should too, that one person like you is all the world can stand.'" (Blair; Ibid; 24)

Said one wise person, "He (the husband) no more thinks of separating from her than he would think of tearing his own body apart." (William Barclay)

B. COMMITMENT TO ONE-FLESH CONCEPT

Some say marriage will be successful if there is a 50/50 give to each other. But biblical-type submission to each other means a 100% giving of oneself to the other. How can such a marriage fail when there is the attitude of total self-giving to each other?

Oneness – not togetherness – is what a marriage is meant to be. God gave his command in Genesis 2:24 – "*Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.*"

Says Jesus, in Mark 10:6-9 – *"From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.' So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."*

Mutual commitment to one another is what produced oneness in marriage. There can be no oneness in marriage without Christ being Lord in the life of each marriage partner. Say the Scriptures: *"Do not mismate with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?...What has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"* (II Corinthians 16:14, 15)

As believers, however, that openness must be maintained, by participation in mutual activities. Pray together. Go to Church together. Read the bible together. Engage in practical love projects together. Spend much time discussing each other's need at a heart–level. Learn to submit daily to each other.

Oneness must be maintained throughout an entire lifetime. Remember, love is not a mere emotional feeling, but a life-time commitment – for better or for worse. Such a commitment through thick and thin gives stability to the

relationship, gives a stable base for lasting decisions, and gives a security to children.

Said one person when my wife phoned a certain place: "This is the house for 'wayward adults'." The stranger who said that may have been jesting, but unfortunately, there are those adults who are living loosely and selfishly and licentiously in an uncommitted relationship with other adults. There can be no knowledge of the 'One-Flesh' concept outside of a dedicated Christian marriage.

C. COMMITMENT TO THE DIVINE ORDER FOR THE FAMILY.

Three statements reflect the Biblical order for the family: (1) Husband, love your wife, (2) Wife, live in submission to your husband, (3) Children, obey your parents.

A. Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for the Church." (Ephesians 5:25)

Man is to lead his household with the same kind of love (agape) with which Christ rules His Church. What a high standard. Man's love for his wife is to reflect the very love that Christ has for His Church. (William Barclay shares the following five points.

1. Man Must Possess A Sacrificial Love For His Wife. Just as Christ gave Himself for the Church, so a man must be willing to give himself for his wife. "When an argument flares up in a marriage, it is the husband's place first to humble himself and beg forgiveness for whatever was wrong in his behavior. This is death to the ego." (Christiansen: pg. 132, 134)

2. Man Must Possess A Purifying Love For His Wife. A wife should be ennobled – not degraded by her husband. Unselfishness, devotion, and faithfulness characterize love. A man who truly loves his wife, will have as much concern for her feelings, welfare, and achievement as for his own. "Real love is the great cleanser and purifier of life." (Barclay; A One-woman Man; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12)

3. Man Must Possess An Unbreakable Love. This we have already discussed.

4. Man Must Realize That God Is The Central Integrator Of A Successful Marriage. He must be first and foremost in the marriage relationship. A groom took his new bride into his arms the first night after they were married and said to her, "Mary, I love you very much but remember, God is still first in my life." Mary smiled and said to her new husband, "I am glad, John, for I

know if God has first place, I will always have second place in your life." There are three parties involved in the Christian marriage – husband, wife, and Christ.

How much better could a husband show his love for his wife than by implementing and enhancing his wife's relationship to Jesus? "The highest duty of the Christian husband is to care for the sanctification of his wife. His model is Christ, who has sacrificed Himself for His Church, in order to sanctify it." (Christiansen; 130)

How can a husband sanctify ('set apart for God') his wife? 1. By praying daily for his wife privately. 2. By talking to his wife about Christ, openly. (3) By demonstrating God's love to his wife, (Treating her as 'weaker vessel', I Peter 3:7). 4. By imparting Christian knowledge to his wife, (5) By establishing and maintaining a daily share time with his wife and children reading good books together.

5. By imparting Christian Discipline. An author comments on the harm done by permissiveness: "It is a great unkindness to treat our children so that they shall be strangers to hardship and restriction, so that they shall not know what real obedience means, and have no reverence for age, no habits of deference and self – denial. It is the way to breed monsters of selfishness, pampered creatures that will be useless and miserable in adult life." (Expositor's Bible, Vol. 40; pg. 385)

The husband is to be a Priest to his wife. "It is neither possible nor right that anyone else upon earth should have a more decisive influence upon the spiritual health of a wife than does her husband. Whether he thinks it or not, the consequences of his behavior toward her are immeasurable, for good or for evil. The effect will be produced upon the inmost part of her being." (Ibid; 130)

B. Paul wrote, ***"Wives, be subject to your husband as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, though there is this great difference, that Christ is the Saviour of the whole body.*** But even allowing for these difference, and even as the Church is subject to Christ, so wives must be subject to their husbands in everything."

"Though husbands and wives are spiritual equals, the submission of the woman makes good sense from the standpoint of order and practicality. Every nation needs a head of state. Every corporation needs a president.

Every team needs a manager. In the home, the position of leadership belongs to the husband." (How to Have a Happy Home, pg. 6)

Why is submission so beneficial to a woman? For several reasons. Larry Christenson shares the following insights on the submission of a wife.

1. **Submission - An honor and a privilege.**

2. **Submission - A means of protection.**

   a. **Protection because of female vulnerability at the physical, emotional, psychological levels.**

   b. **Protection from physical or emotional attacks from her children. "Should the father overhear the slightest hint of disrespect toward the mother, or the least lapse of obedience to her word, he should put a stop to it at once and firmly." (pg. 35)**

   c. **Protection from spiritual attacks (I Corinthians 11:10). A husband stands as a shield of protection against Satan's devices. (pgs. 36, 37)**

3. **Submission - A means of Spiritual Power.**

A Wife who puts Jesus first will be a joy to her 'lord' (earthly) and to her 'Lord' (Heavenly). " ***[1]Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husband's so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, [2]when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. [3]Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. [4]Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. [5]For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, [6]like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*** **(1 Peter 3: 1-6) God uses submission of a Christian wife to an unsaved husband as the channel through which he saves the husband.**

C. **Paul wrote,** ***"Children obey your parents, as Christian children should. Honour your father and your mother – for this is the first commandment to which a promise is attached – that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6: 1-3)***

The chief duty in the life of a child is to obey his parents. This means submission of the child's will to the will of the mature Christian parent, whose chief responsibility is to raise the child in the ways of the Lord. Susannah Wesley believed that the subjugation of the child's will was the first element in the child's training. This does not mean that the child's will is to be treated like plastic, arbitrarily to twist in any direction. It does mean, however, that the child early learns to respect his parents and submit himself to their guardianship. Obedience is a divine command. Its denial leads to social chaos and disintegration in the family. A child needs and wants authority. When a parent is excessively permissive, a child develops disrespect for authority, which may lead even to delinquency in later life.

The controlling factor in all of discipline of children must be love. Lack of love in discipline can lead either to excessive permissiveness or to over-strictness.

Discipline can also be harsh and overly-strict and overbearing. Paul wrote *"And, ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6:4) Overly-strict discipline leads to discouragement, resentment, and bitterness, characteristics which may lead to maladjustment in later life.

Because it is not permissible to teach religious doctrine within the public school, and because the child spends only a short time a week in Sunday school and Church services, the parents are mostly responsible for their child's religious instruction.

It is important to teach the Bible in the home. Spiritual and religious training of children is one of the main responsibilities of the parents. Each day the father should take special time with his children (along with the mother). What can be done at Family Devotions? Lots of activities. Variety and consistency are both important in family devotions. Here are a few suggestions:

Each member of the family be together daily and share an experience from the day with the family (This results in giving part of one's self to another).

Read something inspirational like the Daily Bread; or a portion from the living Bible or a Bible story book.

Some have learned much Scriptural truths through songs (buy a hymnal and chorus book or sing-a-long records).

Pray together (Holding hands or being snuggled close to each other). All can pray a short prayer aloud, with father leading or closing.

D. COMMITMENT TO SELF-DISCIPLINE.

There are two areas in marriage that have caused much trouble. These two areas are probably the two leading causes of conflicts in marriage, eventuating in many divorces. The Christian couple must master both of these areas.

1. Money Matters.

"Because of the easy credit available today, many families overextend themselves. Then the burden of payments over a long period of time and pressure of overdue bills place a strain upon everyone." (DeHaan, pg. 14)

2. Sex.

Sex was created for two purposes. (1) Procreation – *"And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it."* (Genesis 1:28) (2) Recreation – *"the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband."* (I Corinthians 7:3) Intended For Pleasure!

One time I answered the phone, and the first thing that I heard was this: "What is adultery?" I said, "According to the Bible, adultery is premarital or extramarital sexual relationship, both of which are forbidden in the Scriptures." Let us remember the seriousness of adultery. Says Hebrews 13:4 – *"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge."*

Says one author; "Let me encourage you to use self-discipline in sexual matters. Carefully guard your reading habits. Many of the magazines on the newsstands today (even some purporting to be serious sexual discussions by medical or psychological authorities) are hedonistic, humanistic, and pseudo-scholarly. Their sole purpose is to stimulate and feed the sexual appetites. No one, single or married, needs that kind of literature. Be careful of what you let your eyes see. It can start you on a downward path of unhappiness and bitter frustration." (DeHaan; pg. 14)

CONCLUSION

In summary, here are points to ponder in developing a happy home. These are the "10 Commandments for the Home"!

1. Don't major or minors. "When you see a fault in another member of the family, be very careful about calling it to his attention. Instead, seek for understanding."

2. Never shout in the home. One family counselor says, "Never shout in the home unless the house is on fire. When there is much shouting in the home, that home actually is on fire – love is going up in smoke." (Blair; p.25)

3. Practice being considerate and good humored in the home. There is a story of "one young couple who were having a lot of friction between them so they decided that they would work together and overcome the problem of quarrelling. Since they lived on a farm, the husband reminded the wife that sometimes things go wrong with livestock and the machinery, and he said, 'If you see me coming into the house with my cap pulled way down low, you will know that I need help, so be extra kind and loving.' She promised she would, but then she reminded him that things don't always go right in the house – the cream won't churn; the fire won't burn; the stove won't bake right; and meals are late. She said 'When that happens, I am all upset, and those are the days when I need a lot of love and a lot of patience from you. So when you come to the house and see my apron tied up high, you will know that I need special consideration.'

4. Everything went fine. Once in awhile John would come in with his cap way down, and Mary would be very affectionate and understanding. And sometimes he would return from the field when Mary had the apron tied high, so he would say sweet words that every woman loves to hear. But one day he came in, and the cap was down; he took one look at Mary, and the apron was tied high. What do you think happened? They just had to laugh at each other. There was no quarreling that day. You see, sharing responsibility helps create understanding between us." (Blair; p.27)

5. Occasionally write a love letter or note to your husband or wife, express appreciation for the thankless jobs that your companion does each day. Remember, some jobs are not always easy. "A gentleman noticed a lady with ten children getting on the bus, and he asked: 'Are these yours, or are you going on a picnic?' She answered, "'they're mine – and it's no picnic.'" There are many daily tasks performed by those around us that are 'no picnic,' but become bearable when appreciation is expressed." (Blair; p.28)

6. Keep a private date with each other (as husband and wife) once a week, and with each individual child at least once a month.

6. **Compliment your children twice as much for the good they do, as you correct them for the errors they commit.**

7. **Freely and sincerely express physical affection before each other in the home.**

8. **Develop and express a wholesome sense of humor in the home. Learn to laugh at yourself.**

9. **Learn to forgive and to forget. Forgiveness is the oil in the machinery of human relationships. Said one man about his wife: "She always becomes historical when we get into an argument." Answered thee counselor "You mean 'hysterical' don't you?" "No," said the husband. "I mean historical. She always brings up my past failures. She never forgets anything."**

10. **Allow Christ to be the Head of your home.**

DISCUSSION QUESTION - CHAPTER 19

1. What have you done in your marriage to guarantee that it is, in everyday life, much more like a 'Paradise' than a "Purgatory?"

2. What are the outstanding positive qualities that you have identified in the lives of a joyous couple who have been married for many years?

3. Is it true to say that, for a Christian couple, divorce is never an option? Why or why not?

4. Why should every couple, at the time when they exchange their vows, give birth to a "set of twins", namely, "Bear" and "Forbear"?

5. How do you react to Benjamin Franklin's advice: "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and then half shut afterwards"?

6. How do you react to the following quotation: "He (the husband) no more thinks of separating from her than he would think of tearing his own body apart."

7. Does "mutual submission" of husband and wife mean a 50-50 give to each other, or does it mean a 100% giving of husband and wife to each other?

8. What is the difference between "Togetherness" in marriage and "Oneness" in marriage? (Note Genesis 2:24) (Note Mark 10:6-9)

9. Why do you think the Bible (Jesus) teaches that a "man is to leave his parents" when he gets married"? (Mark 10:6-9) Does the Bible explicitly teach anywhere that a women (when she marries) is to "leave her parents"?

10. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There can be no oneness in marriage without Christ being Lord in the life of each marriage partner." (Note II Corinthians 6:14-15)

11. What are some activates that you and your spouse can be involved in which will likely enhance your sense of ever–deepening "Oneness" in your married relationship.

12. To what degree do you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: 'Love is not a mere emotional feeling; but love is a life–time commitment – for better or for worse."

13. Do you think that an unmarried couple (who seem to be sincere) can legitimately enter into a "live in relationship" (with mutual agreements), and choose not to legally get married? Why or why not?

14. How is a man's love for his wife to reflect the very love that Christ has for His Church?

15. Share at least five characteristics of a Christlike love which a godly husband seeks to develop in his relationship to his wife.

16. What is meant by the statement that "there are three parties involved in the Christian marriage"?

17. If you are a husband, tell how you react to the following statement: "The highest duty of the Christian husband is to care for the sanctification of his wife. His model is Christ, who has sacrificed Himself for His church, in order to sanctify it."

18. Suggest specific ways in which a Christian husband might be able lovingly to "Sanctify" his wife.

19. From a woman's viewpoint (and especially if you are a wife), how influential do you think a husband is in the life (inner depths) of a wife? From a female perception, what do you think a husband should "do" and "be" if he (according to the Bible) is a "Priest" to his wife?

20. From a Biblical viewpoint, why is it so important for a wife to lovingly and willingly "submit" to her husband, and what benefits to a wife are derived by such submission? What is the difference between "Submission" and "Servility"? According to the bible is a husband and a wife <u>equal</u> in the sight of the God, and therefore does a wife (as an equal partner to the husband) have a 'right' to dialogue and even to debate issues that she finds herself in disagreement with her husband? Does "submission" mean that she lovingly <u>defers</u> to her husband, if after serious debate, they cannot come to a consensus (because he is appointed by God to be the 'servant-leader' of the Home)?

21. What benefits and blessings from God are promised to children who lovingly and respectfully 'obey' their parents?

22. What did Susanna Wesley (who gave birth to 19 children) believe to be the "First element" in the child's training?

23. Tell to what degree you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: "A child's obedience (to parents) is a divine command. Its denial leads to social chaos and disintegration in the family."

24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A child needs and wants authority. When a parent is excessively permissive, a child develops disrespect for authority, which may lead even to delinquency in later life."

25. **Tell if you believe the following statement is Biblically – supportable: "The controlling factor in all of discipline of children must be love. Lack of love in discipline can lead either to excessive permissiveness or to over–strictness."**

26. **Assuming it is Biblically-encouraged for parents to take time each day to instruct (teach) their children spiritual truths, what specifically and routinely (and sometimes even creatively) can you, as a parent, do to 'build up your children in The Holy Faith of Christ'?**

27. **What are two serious "areas of conflict" within many marriages, and give ideas from your personal life, or from your observation of other marriages, or from serious reading of books on marriage that have helped in "tackling these serious problems and threats to marriages."**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 20

SUBJECT: PUT ON YOUR ARMOUR!

Scripture: ***"10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*** **Ephesians 6:10-20**

Text: "Put on the Armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the devices of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11)

INTRODUCTION

"To God Be the Glory! Great Things He hath done", **is the song of the redeemed whose soul has been set free from the bondage of sin. That is the song of the 'twice born' man who lives in two worlds – the world of earthly existence with all of its perplexities and problems, and the world of spiritual reality, with its hopes and joys. The Christian is not an escapist, but a realist.**

PROPOSITION

How does the Christian maintain a vital relationship with God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation? It is not by avoiding the evil of the world through seclusion, but rather by facing the evil and overcoming that evil. How does he win the battle against evil? By Putting On The Armour Of God.

A. NEED OF ARMOUR

B. IDENTIFICATION OF ARMOUR

1. **Belt of Truth – "Stand with Truth as a belt about your waist."**
2. **Breastplate of Righteousness – "Put on righteousness as a breastplate".**

3. **Sandals of Readiness – "Have your feet shod with readiness to preach the gospel of peace".**
4. **Shield of Faith – "In all things take faith, for with it you will be able to quench the flaming darts of the evil one."**
5. **Helmet Of Salvation**
6. **Sword of the Word of God – "Take the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God".**
7. **Weapon of Prayer – "Keep praying in the Spirit".**

CONCLUSION

Jesus, Lover of My soul, let me to thy bosom fly, While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high. Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the Storm of life is past safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last!

CHAPTER 20

PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF GOD!

INTRODUCTION

"To God be the glory! Great things He hath done", **is the song of the redeemed whose soul has been set free from the bondage of sin. That is the song of the 'twice born' man who lives in two worlds – the world of earthly existence with all of its perplexities and problems, and the world of spiritual reality, with its hopes and joys. The Christian is not an escapist, but a realist. He knows about the strife, tension, and wars that are carried on in this world. He knows about the despair of the world, but his spirit is not despairing. He knows about the fear that is paralyzing our world, but his spirit is free of fear. He knows about the overwhelming evil of our generation, but he has learned how to cope with temptation.**

PROPOSITION

How does the Christian maintain a vital relationship with God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation? It is not by avoiding the evil of the world through seclusion, but rather by facing the evil and overcoming that evil. How does he win the battle against evil? By putting on the armour of God. Let us first note man's need for spiritual armour, and note what that armour is.

A. NEED OF ARMOUR

Paul wrote, "*It is not with blood and flesh you have to wrestle, but against powers and against authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against malicious spiritual forces in the heavenly places.*"(Ephesians 6:12, Barclay) In Paul's day men believed that the entire atmosphere was filled with demons and that there were different classes of evil spirits. The universe was a battleground between good and evil.

Throughout Old Testament history, the concept of Satan had been developing in Jewish thought. Man came to think that Satan was an angel who fell from God because of pride. Isaiah seems to give us evidence of this when he writes: *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit".* (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Jesus considered Satan as a personal and powerful Being. Jesus suffered temptation in the wilderness, overcame Satan by resistance, prayer, and

obedience. Christ sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as He underwent the greatest temptation of His life. The writer to the Hebrews writes that He *"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15)

The devil is the enemy of all mankind and seeks to destroy all good. Peter exhorts Christians to be vigilant and self-controlled: *"Be self-controlled and vigilant always, for your enemy the devil is always about, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey." (I Peter 5:8)* Jesus said to Simon Peter, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thou faith fail not."* (Luke 22:31, 32)

Every man throughout history has felt the influence of Satan's power and temptation. Satan's attack finds its target within the thoughts and desires of man. It is out of the heart of man that all evil proceeds. Although Satan is an evil, invisible spirit whose attack is internal, the power of Satan is so great at times that it seems man is actually confronting Satan as a visible person.

While Luther was in his room in the Castle of the Wartburg in Germany one day, he felt the power of Satan so greatly that he threw his ink-pot at the devil who was tempting Luther.

Robert Louis Stevenson was convinced that Satan was a personal, active power of evil. He said one time: "You know the Caledonian Railway Station in Edinburgh? One cold, east windy morning, I met Satan there." We don't know the details of this experience, but we do know that Stevenson understood the power of evil.

One of the clearest notes that is sounded today which gives evidence to the reality of Satan's evil activity is man's denial of God's existence. Many are the voices that are saying, 'God is Dead!' Such a statement only confirms that the Devil is Alive and is active deceiving the hearts of men. A terrible condemnation is pronounced upon such men of disbelief. In Jude it speaks of men who have *"wormed their way in, the very men whom Scripture long ago marked down for the doom they have incurred. They are the enemies of religion; they pervert the free favor of our God in to licentiousness, disowning Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord."*

Sin is a perversion of natural desire. Writes James: *"No, a man's temptation is due to the pull of his own inward desires, which can be enormously attractive."* Temptation is universal to all men, but has manifestations in different ways to different people and to different general age groups.

There are certain drives and desires that are common to all and legitimate to have, but each legitimate drive can be misused and misdirected by Satan. The desire for sexual fulfillment is legitimately fulfilled in marriage, but can be

misused outside of wedlock. The desire for food can be undisciplined, and gluttony then results.

There are temptations of the flesh such as temptation to cheat, steal, lie, and commit adultery. There are also temptations of the spirit such as temptations to covet, to be jealous and to hate.

The temptations of the spirit may be the most dangerous, for sometimes there are fewer tendencies to criticize the sins of the spirit. The sins of the spirit are usually less obvious and more concealed. The sin of a bitter, resentful spirit may be concealed longer than the sin of stealing or murder. Sin is able to adapt itself to many different and subtle forms. The temptation to religious pride may be the downfall of a man as much as the temptation to commit an immoral act.

Man needs to be equipped to meet the battle of temptation. Temptation itself is not bad; it is the yielding to temptation which results in sin, which is bad. Barclay writes very perceptibly to this point: "What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes to use." (Barclay's Matthew, vol. 1, pg. 56)

The question that every Christian must soon find the answer to is this: "How can I overcome temptation, in order that I may emerge from the ordeal as a much stronger and more mature Christian?"

B. IDENTIFICATION OF ARMOUR

Paul likens the Christian life unto a spiritual battle, and tells the Christian to put on his spiritual armour. ***"Put on the armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the devices of the devil."*** Paul outlines the different pieces of armour that every Christian must put on, in order to wage the battle against sin successfully.

1. BELT OF TRUTH – "Stand With Truth As A Belt About Your Waist."

The belt around the Roman soldier's waist gave him freedom of movement, because the belt held in the soldier's tunic. The belt of spiritual truth gives the Christian soldier freedom and assurance. There are no doubts, perplexities, or questions in the heart of the Christian, regarding spiritual realities, for he is acquainted with the One who said, ***'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life'.*** Jesus said, ***'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'*** The Christian is free from the guilt and power of sin. The Christian is free from the fear of

persecution or death. With freedom of speech, Paul declared, *'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'*

Justin, an early Christian who was condemned to a martyr's death, was asked by his persecutor: "Do you suppose that you will ascendt up to heaven to receive some recompense there?" Justin answered, "I do not suppose, but I know it." (Bishop Taylor's Goodly Heritage)

2. BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – "Put On Righteousness As A Breastplate".

The best guard against sinning is to hate sin and to love righteousness. Some people pride themselves in their knowledge of sin. Not the Christian, for the Christian hates sin and should be able always to blush in its presence. The Christian seeks not to see how close to sin he can live, and yet not be outrightly identified with sinners, but rather the Christian hates sin and all of its manifestations. The best antidote to evil is to abhor evil. To flirt with sin, is to court disaster. To entertain an evil thought is to create an evil mind. The happy man is the man who delights in God's laws day and night. Abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. Cultivate a desire for righteousness. "The degree to which a man prefers holiness to evil, to that same degree is he armed with the 'Breastplate of Righteousness.'"

The language of the New Testament, when it speaks of man's confrontation with evil, is the language of action. Paul writes to young Timothy, *"Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right."* (II Timothy 2:22, Living Letters) Young man, watch the kind of company you keep, the kind of conversation you hear, the kind of books you read, the kind of pictures you look at. The Scripture says, *"Don't deceive yourselves – evil friendships destroy good characters."* (I Corinthians 15:32) Burns met an older man at the time he was learning the art of flax-dressing. Said Burns of the older man, "His friendship did me a mischief". He who loves righteousness – the ways and will of God – is he who finds it much easier to resist temptation.

Paul further writes "Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good." (Romans 12:9, Living Bible) Paul gives the secret to spiritual victory: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Here are the rules when one confronts temptation – Flee all lust – Resist the devil – abhor all evil. These rules spell victory. Being filled with the Spirit provides a mighty defense against sin and the devil.

3. SANDALS OF READINESS – "Have your feet shod with readiness to preach the gospel of peace".

The Christian is one who is equipped and ready to move for God. The Christian is the person who keeps his feet from the paths of evil. The first step on the evil pathway leads to a life of evil and eventually to a destiny of destruction. Never take the first drink of alcohol and you will never become an alcoholic. Never nurture one evil thought and you will never have an evil mind.

Meditate upon God's Law. "The idle mind is the devil's workshop", said one. The man whose mind is saturated with God's Word, is the man whose lips are active with God's praise, and the man whose feet are carrying the Gospel of peace. Isaiah wrote of God's messenger: *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"* (Isaiah 52:7) Prepare to meet trials by experiencing the peace of God. (Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27)

4. SHIELD OF FAITH – "In all things take faith, for with it you will be able to quench the flaming and acts of the evil one."

The heavily armed Roman soldier used a great oblong shield, made of wood, to stop the flaming darts of the enemy. The pitch-soaked, flaming dart sunk into the wood of the shield and was immediately put out. Paul says, *'Take the shield of Faith.'*

Faith can quench the flaming darts of temptation. Through reliance in Christ, the Evil One can be overcome. Isaiah wrote, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him and put him to flight – for He will come like a rushing stream which the breath of the Lord drives." (Isaiah 59:19 – Amplified Bible) The Psalmist wrote, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my keen and firm strength in whom I will trust and take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower." (Psalms 18:2, Amplified Bible)

Faith means that you believe the future will be brighter than the present. Faith means that you believe that God will fulfill His promises to you in the future. That future rewards await you if you wait patiently for God's fulfilling.

'Flaming Darts' – because darts appeal to the fire of our desires (passions instincts, appetites, weaknesses). Illustrations of how to deal with the flaming darts of the enemy:

a. ***Sex*** – ***"I can wait for the proper future time."***

b. **Covetousness** – **"I can wait for heaven's treasures. It is those I covet.**

c. **Desire for Pleasant** – **"I can work Now, and postpone the pleasant until heaven. I will labor hard now and not succumb to laziness."**

d. **Burn with Hate** – **"I will center my hate on the sin that causes the sinner to act so hateful towards me." Hating sin intensely, I will also love sinners intensely.**

f. **Burn with Inquisitiveness** – **"I can wait to know; I need not know now; I will entrust the unknown to a Father who is just and merciful."**

"How exactly is the shield used? When the Christian finds one of Satan's propositions coming his way, he says...'Satan, I know you want me to fall for your suggestions. But I am trusting God to provide me with something better than anything you could give me. I believe Him when He says to me...*"Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give thee the desires of thine heart."* Sure, I'll have to wait for it, b but I am satisfied it will be worth it. I am not ready to trade that for what you're offering me.'" (C.S. Lovett.)

Luther knew God as his own Fortress. He wrote:

"And tho' this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.
(A Mighty Fortress is Our God)

5. **HELMET OF SALVATION - "As the Roman's helmet protected his head, so does the Christian's helmet protect his mind."**

The believer's helmet is the knowledge of sins forgiven, through the blood of Christ. Salvation is a personal saving knowledge of Jesus, which results in a daily peace and in a clear and guiltless conscience. Salvation is not only that experience of initial conversion at which time the repentant sinner experienced total forgiveness for past wrongs, but

salvation is also daily enjoyment of God's presence and assurance as a result of Christ's continuous cleansing from all daily sins and mistakes.

Having a pure heart and a clear conscience, (as a result of daily confession to God and proper restitution to one's fellowmen) means that a believer has intact his 'helmet of salvation'. When Satan, the *'accuser of the brethren'* (Revelations 12:10), seeks to impose guilt on the believer and attempts to destroy the confidence of the believer, the Christian who is relying alone on the 'blood of Christ' can rest assured of his present standing with God. Temptation can be deflected and victory can be maintained!

6. **SWORD OF THE WORD OF GOD – "Take the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God".**

Jesus resorted to the Word of God, in battling against temptation, and He was successful. We would do well to spend more time, studying, reading, memorizing, and meditating upon the Word of God. *"Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee",* wrote the Psalmist. The writer to the Hebrews wrote about the powerful Word of God. *"For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power – making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and (the immortal) spirit, and of joints and marrow (that is, of the deepest parts of our nature) exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the hearts."* (Hebrews 4:12 – Amplified Bible)

"The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the Sword and enables us to use it. Swordsmanship has to do with <u>HOW</u> a particular verse is <u>applied</u> against the devil to <u>cancel his wiles.</u> A verse ought to do more than dispatch the enemy. It should also generate a mind-filling meditation to insure against Satan's return." (C.S. Lovett)

7. **WEAPON OF PRAYER – "Keep praying in the Spirit".**

Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer as an effective weapon against sin. He first says that prayer must be constant: *"Keep praying in the Spirit at every crisis with every kind of prayer and entreaty to God."* (Ephesians 6:18; Barclay) He next says that prayer must be intense: *"To that end be sleepless in your persevering prayer."* (Ephesians 6:19) He says also that prayer must be for others: "Pray for all God's consecrated people". A life that is characterized by constant, intense, and others–centered praying, is the victorious life. Jesus said, *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is*

willing, but the flesh is weak." **The Scripture notes that *"men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* (Luke 18:1)**

Said Gregory of Nyssa about prayer: "The effect of prayer is union with God, and, if someone is with God, he is separated from the enemy. Through prayer we guard our chastity, control our temper and rid ourselves of vanity. It makes us forget injuries, overcomes envy, defeats injustice and makes amends for sin...Prayer is intimacy with God and contemplation of the invisible." (Barclay's Romans, pg. 7)

As Barclay well writes, "In prayer a man kneels before God that he may stand erect in face of men. In prayer a man enters heaven that he may face the battles of the earth." (Barclay's Matthew, pg. 386)

CONCLUSION

What is Paul saying in the sixth chapter of Ephesians? He is saying that the Devil is a real, powerful, and personal enemy – the universal Enemy of every man. Satan seeks man's eternal destruction. Because this Enemy is not physical but spiritual in nature, man is incapable of defeating him on the basis of his own strength or strategy. Man must put on the spiritual armour – the armour of truth, righteousness, faith, the Word, and prayer. Let our prayer be that of Charles Wesley as he expressed his need and desires in song:

Jesus, Lover of My soul, let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.
Hide me; O my Savior, hide, till the Storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last!

How can one distinguish between Satan's suggestions and the Holy Spirit's Suggestion?

1. **Test the spirits. (I John 4:1-4)**
2. **Any Suggestion that would (if obeyed) result in self-exaltation is definitely not of God.**
3. **Ask the Holy Spirit for gift of Discernment. (I Corinthians 12:10)**
4. **Ask Holy Spirit for the gift of Wisdom. (James 1:5)**
5. **Understand the way Holy Spirit works with man in contrast to the way Satan works with man.**

VOICE OF SATAN	VOICE OF GOD
Is loud, clamorous, feverish, and strong.	Is Quiet and persuasive.
Deals in generalities	Speaks in specifics
Is Driving.	Is Leading.
Demands Immediate decision.	Gives time for Decision (Isaiah 1:18)
Perplexes, roils, and creates turmoil.	Accompanies a rest of certainty.
Draws back from light.	Is open, and willing to counsel.
Brings depression and discouragement.	Brings encouragement.
Appeals to lower instincts: Satan suggests, "I want."	Appeals to higher instincts: God suggests, "I ought."
Disappears if no heed is given to it.	Ripens and grows stronger.
Respond: "Satan, in the Name of Jesus Christ, Be gone, for God says..."	Respond: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant listens."

One discerning writer offered the above helpful contrasts:

We need to have knowledge and understanding of how to distinguish between Satan's suggestions and the Holy Spirit's suggestion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 20

1. How does a Christian maintain a vital relationship with God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation?

2. What does Isaiah 14:12-18 indicate was the origin of sin in the Universe?

3. What indicate (evidence) are is these that Jesus considered Satan to be a real and evil personality?

4. What, according to 1 Peter 5:8 should be the Christian's response or reaction to the devil? According to Luke 22:31-32, what kind of help is available for the Christian when he is confronted by powerful evil forces?

5. Give your interpretation (or application) of the following statement: "Satan's attack finds its target within the thoughts and desires of man."

6. Tell what is meant by the following statement: "Sin is a perversion of natural desires." Give illustrations of this general statement.

7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The temptations of the spirit may be the most dangerous, for sometimes there are fewer tendencies to criticize the sins of the spirit. The sins of the spirit are usually less obvious and, more concealed."

8. It is a sin to be tempted? Why or why not.

9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "What we call temptation is not meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good...It is the test which comes to a man whom God wishes to use."

10. How can you as a believer, overcome temptation, in order that you may emerge from the ordeal as a newer, stronger and more mature Christian?

11. Tell, from your personal experience, how you have affirmed the reality of the following statement: "The closer one draws to the Spirit of Truth, the weaker becomes the temptation of sin."

12. Is it any wonder to you that Christians who "flirt with sin and worldliness" eventually find themselves ensnared and trapped in a sinful habit? What does it mean to you to "put on the Breastplate of Righteousness"?

13. What, practically-speaking, does the exhortation (command) of II Timothy 2:22 mean to you? (Note I Corinthians 15:33 and James 4:7)

14. **In light of Jesus' command to Christians "to be in the world but not <u>of</u> the world", tell how you apply, in your own personal life, the truth of the following statement: "The Christian is the person who keeps his feet from the paths of evil."**

15. **Tell what is meant by the popular statement "The idle mind is the devil's workshop".**

16. **Tell how the truth expressed in Isaiah 26:3 and John 14:27 could greatly help you to prepare for the trials and temptations of life.**

17. **According to Isaiah 59:19, what will the Spirit of the Lord do for the sincere believer who is experiencing fierce attacks of evil?**

18. **What titles are ascribed to God that can give you courage and comfort during your times of difficulty, in Psalms 18:2?**

19. **Using the Word of God and your sanctified reason, tell how you could directly counter the following temptations (that come to you as 'flaming darts'):**

    a. **Temptation to Sexual Immorality**
    b. **Temptation to Covertness**
    c. **Temptation to Indulgence in Pleasure**
    d. **Temptation to Hate and Bitterness**
    e. **Temptation to Excessive Curiosity and Inquisitiveness**

20. **Tell if you have ever had a personal experience in your Christian life that validates the truth of the following experience: "When Satan, the 'accuser of the brethren' (Revelation 12:10), seeks to impose guilt on the believer and attempts to destroy the confidence of the believer, the Christian which is relying alone on the 'blood of Christ' can rest assured of his present standing with God."**

21. **If Jesus quoted Spiritual to Satan in His successful victory over the 'Evil One' (Matthew 4), does it not seem sensible and even urgently necessary for the followers of Jesus to quote Scripture against Satan when they are tempted? Tell if you agree with the following statement: "We would do well to spend more time, studying, reading, memorizing, and meditating upon the Word of God."**

22. **How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the Word of God (Bible)?**

23. **Tell to what extent (degree) you think your life of prayer is (1) Constant (Ephesians 6:18), (2) Intense and persevering (Ephesians 6:19), (3) Others-oriented (Ephesians 6:19b).**

24. **Tell why you think the following words by Jesus are so relevant and worthy of consideration if one is to find victory over temptation: *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."***

25. **Tell what personal benefits from a life of prayer you have experienced, as listed in the following quote by ancient writer Gregory of Nyssa: "The effect of prayer is union with God, and if someone is with God, he is separated from the enemy. Through prayer we guard our chastity, control our temper and rid ourselves of vanity. It makes us forget injuries, overcome envy, defeats injustice and makes amends for sin. Prayer is intervening with God and contemplation of the invisible."**

26. **Give your insight as a result of your careful observation of the comparative chart regarding the "Distinguishing between Satan's suggestions and the Holy Spirit's suggestions."**

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 21

SUBJECT: THE LIFE OF VICTORY!

SCRIPTURE: ***"10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*** **(Ephesians 6:10-17)**

TEXT: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of righteousness."

INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis has a very wise word of advice: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."

PROPOSITION

"The Spirit is saying to us first ARM YOURSELF WITH TRUTH -- this is the most basic of all your defense system: everything else gets attached to TRUTH." (David Seamands)

A. KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH (Generally Considered)
- **1. We Need Knowledge of God**
- **2. We Need a Clear and Accurate Image of God**
- **3. We Need Knowledge of the Holy Spirit**
- **4. We Need Knowledge of the Essence and Characteristics of Sin.**

B. KNOWLEDGE OF SATANIC ACTIVITY
- **1. Satan is called an 'Accuser of the Brethren'**
- **2. Satan is called the 'Destroyer'**
- **3. Satan is called the 'Father of all Lies'**
- **4. Satan is called an 'Adversary'**
- **5. Satan is called an 'Angel of Light'**

C. KNOWLEDGE OF ORIGINAL EVIL (Ezekiel 28:11-17)

D. KNOWLEDGE OF APPROPRIATION OF VICTORY

1. **Put on the Breastplate of Christ's Righteousness.**
2. **Be Filled With the Spirit.**
3. **Develop the Right Attitude toward Temptation**
4. **Seek to live a Good and Godly Life and You will find Supernatural Power behind You.**

CHAPTER 21

THE LIFE OF VICTORY!

INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis has a very wise word of advice: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."

"To Paul the whole universe was a battle ground. The Christian had not only to contend with the attacks of men; he had to contend with the attacks of spiritual forces which were fighting against God." (Barclay's Ephesians, pg. 216)

Ephesians "is one of Paul's 'prison epistles', and was written during that time he was chained to a Roman soldier. As he looks up at his Roman guard the soldier's armor is the answer, and so Paul, part by part, takes the armor, turns it into a great military metaphor of spiritual things, and gives to us one of the most precious passages in the New Testament.

"The passage begins with the word 'THEREFORE' --- why? Because the odds are so overwhelming against us: because in our own strength it is an utterly hopeless situation. 'Therefore', you must put on the WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD! You must be strong – No, it doesn't even say that: for its tense is the present passive: 'LET YOURSELF BE CONSTANTLY MADE STRONG', or 'Be made strong' – the strength is the LORD'S; certainly not yours. But as you are IN HIM then everything that HE IS becomes YOURS: all that He is becomes yours...

"Note that Paul does not say anything about FIGHTING: Rather he says STAND! For you see the battle is not ours: That too is the Lord's. I'm sure that the great battle – cry of Moses was in Paul's mind: Exodus 14:13-14, *'Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace!'* Or perhaps it was the word that came to Jehoshaphat when the hordes of Moab were sweeping down on Judah: in II Chronicles 20:17, '*You shall not need to fight this battle; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord with you...Fear not nor be dismayed: tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you...'* (Verse 15) *'Be not afraid...for the battle is the Lord's, not yours!'* (Sermon by David Seamands, entitled 'Arm Yourselves'; pg. 1)

PROPOSITION

"The Roman Soldier began with this belt of Truth: it was the one basic piece of equipment to which all the other weapons were attached. So the Spirit is saying to us, first, ARM YOURSELF WITH TRUTH – this is the most basic of all your defense system: everything else gets attached to TRUTH." (Ibid; 2)

A. KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH (Generally Considered)

Intellectual, objective Truth in the form of Scriptural Doctrine must be applied to daily life to enable us to live realistically, honestly, and truthfully. Intellectual truth must be translated into experiential living.

We will note the objective truths of Scriptures that must be intellectually comprehended, but let us realize that such truths must always become personal and foundational in living the truthful life.

A truthful life, that is, a life whose outward expression and inward experience are one and the same, is the best and basic armament of the Christian. This means living the Scriptures as well as knowing the Scriptures.

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE! Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!" The Bible says, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope within you." II Timothy 3:16 says that one important purpose and use of the Scriptures is for 'Doctrine'. Know doctrine which is able to make you ready for every good work. Knowing right doctrine will keep you from being deceived by the cunning of deceitful men. "Sound doctrine" refutes falsehood. What a man thinks determines what he personally becomes. Thinking wrongly leads one onto a wrong and destructive pathway. Sincerity is not enough. A religious experience by itself is not enough. The Religious Experiences of many are founded upon crumbling foundations. We need a vital experience based upon the reliable and true foundation of the Word of God.

1. We Need Knowledge of God.

One of J.B. Phillips' books is: 'Your God Is Too Small'. Our conceptions of God are often unbiblical and humanly originated. We need to think anew of God's greatness and power and love and unity in the Godhead, and eternity and wisdom and unchangeableness, justice, goodness, mercy, truth, holiness, and redemption.

We need to think afresh of God's revelation through Creation and Nature, through history and personal providence, through personal experience and through the Church of Jesus Christ. What a great God, and how much greater should our conception and experience of Him be than what it is presently!

2. We Need a Clear and Accurate Image of God.

Such an image is found in confronting the person of Jesus Christ. For Jesus is God in human form. Jesus gave God a face. Therefore we need to know as much as possible about Jesus Christ. That involves a

serious study of the four gospels and a study of the New Testament letters which give an intimate picture of Jesus.

3. We Need Knowledge of the Holy Spirit.

His personhood and His work and role in God's economy. We need to know How the Spirit acts and reacts, and how to honor the Spirit by discerning and obeying His 'small, still voice.' We need to have knowledge of the gifts of the Spirit and how to appropriate the power of the Spirit in using the gifts redemptively. We further need to practice praying in the Spirit. Using a series of words beginning with the letter 'C', we can say that the Holy Spirit's activities includes: 'Conviction', 'Conversion', 'Cleansing', 'Comfort', 'Chastening'. 'Challenge', 'Calling', 'Confirming', and 'Conforming'.

4. We Need Knowledge of the Essence and Characteristics of Sin.

Sin, briefly stated, is any lack of measuring up to the standards of God in nature, thought, word, or deed. It is specifically, rebellion against the known will of God.

Sin can also be understood as 'a perversion of a legitimate desire', that is, simply gratifying legitimate desires at the wrong time or in the wrong manner – excessively. The natural inquisitive urge can become perverted and result in gossip. The natural sex urge can be used out of context and result in adultery. The natural food instinct can be excessively indulged and gluttony results. The natural desire for ease and comfort can be perverted and laziness results.

B. KNOWLEDGE OF SATANIC ACTIVITY

We need knowledge of the truth regarding the person and activities of Satan – the evil one and the arch enemy of mankind. The power of Satan dare not be minimized, and the spiritual nature of our battle must be assumed. Our battle is not a 'flesh and blood' battle but a spiritual battle requiring spiritual weaponry. Luther felt Satan's presence so near one time while he was studying that Luther threw an ink pot at him! But Satan will not be defeated by throwing ink pots at him!

An effective battle depends upon knowledge of the devices and strategies of the enemy. Wrote Paul, ***"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, we are not ignorant of his devices."*** (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Satan seeks to attack our joy, peace, and righteousness (thus hindering our progress in holiness and happiness)

1. Satan is called an 'Accuser of the Brethren'.

Pointing at our weaknesses and seeking to make us doubt our present experience by overwhelming us with the great contrast between God's high standards and our low attainments. He seeks to sow SEEDS of doubts and fears. He seeks to destroy our very foundation of holiness and hope, by destroying our confidence in the Christ of love and mercy. Tries to make us feel that we are unworthy of Christ's attention and personal concern.

God's exhortation to you is this: Do not throw away your confidence. Hold tightly to your faith in Christ and His righteousness alone for your salvation. Doubt many things if you will, but do not doubt the basic character of God – that He is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving. Losing faith in God results in "tearing up the very root of the whole work of God." (Wesley) According to the Scriptures we are to "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

The following is John Wesley's advice: "The more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained. So much the more labour to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Never let that slip, Í have 'an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;' and, 'the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Be this thy glory and crown of rejoicing; and see that no one takes thy crown." (Wesley's Sermons; pg. 382; v. 1)

2. Satan is called the 'Destroyer'. Satan is a Destroyer.

He seeks to destroy the very springs of holiness in our lives, such as joy, peace, righteousness, and faith. God is only creative; Satan is always destructive.

3. Satan is called the 'Father of all Lies'.

_Satan is called, by Jesus, the father of all lies.

He has been a liar and deceiver since the beginning. He insinuated to Eve that God did not mean what God said, thus implying that God was either unwise or false. "Ýea, hath God said, Ye shall not surely die." (Genesis 3: 1, 4). Satan is called 'the old serpent' from his beguiling Eve under that form.

4. Satan is called an 'Adversary'.

There is no good thing in Satan. He seeks to devour. He is merciless and totally evil. Wrote Peter, *"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, and seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith."* (I Peter 5: 8,9a)

**"A constant watch he keeps;
He eyes them night and day;
He never slumbers, never sleeps,
Lest he should lose his prey."**

5. Satan is called an 'Angel of Light'.

Satan is called an *'angel of light'* (2 Corinthians 11:14), showing his subtle, wily nature. Paul talks about the wiles of the devil in Ephesians 6:11. *"Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."* Says C.S. Lovett about wiles, "A wile is a device for offering a temptation, just as fancy dishes are devices for making food look appealing. Wiles disguise evil so that it looks right. Wiles are clothing for evil, so that the most vicious idea may appear dressed in holiness."

6. Let me give you a few examples of wiles from the Devil.

- **a). *Money Wile – "It's good to make money, for the more you make the more you can give the Lord."***
- **b) Imagination – "No one can see what goes on in there. That's your own private business."**
- **c) Gossip Wile – "I wouldn't tell you this, except that you might pray about it."**
- **d) The Being Right Wile – "God knows you're right and you must take a stand for the truth, no matter who it hurts."**
- **e) The Family Wile – "God expects us to take care of our families, you know. That's why He gave them to us. God won't mind if you miss a few Church services, to be with your family."**

C. KNOWLEDGE OF ORIGINAL EVIL (Ezekiel 28:11-17)

Angels are personalities created by God and very superior to man. They existed before the Creation of the Earth (Job 38:4-7). They were present at the Creation. In eternity past they all were in perfect harmony with God.

Ezekiel tells us that the most angelic and most powerful angel fell from God and fell from Heaven. (Ezekiel 28:11-17)

Lucifer was the name of that most perfect angel. He was the epitome of beauty and wisdom, next in line to God Himself. Verse 13 shows that, he was the last word in musical ability and creative voice (like a pipe organ is what the verse is saying). Verse 14 shows his innate created qualities: Cherub shows the highest angelic rank and 'anointed cherub' means the highest of the highest angels. 'Covered' shows that he probably was the guarding angel of the holiness of Almighty y God, constantly in the presence of God Himself. He had the greatest of privileges and had the greatest of wisdom, power, abilities, and favor.

Verse 15 marks the beginning of sin in the universe. The word 'TILL' shows a drastic change in Lucifer and marks the time when Lucifer became what is known as Satan.

Apparently the angels had the ability to Choose right from wrong (like human beings have this privilege). Some angels chose to reject God in the face of pure light. Lucifer and the other angels knew what they were doing. Their actions were deliberate. They knew the difference between Good and Evil, but they rejected fellowship with God, and ceased to believe that God was good.

Verse 17 shows that the motivating factor for the first sin was pride of beauty. Isaiah 14:13, 14 shows that Lucifer's deliberate self-will marked the beginning of sin in the Universe. Note the five 'I Wills' in these verses. "What an astonishing change was wrought within, when angels became devils! When the holiest of all the creatures of God became the most unholy!" (Wesley; pg. 14)

A period of grace was given to Lucifer, but, rather than repenting, he rebelled against God, and took one–third of the angels with him. (Revelations 12) A time lapse apparently was given by God to the rebellious angels to repent, but when they refused to repent, God brought judgment upon them. All rebellious angels were called into account and the punishment of eternal banishment (Lake of Fire) was pronounced. Satan's destiny has been determined, and he and the demons that followed him are awaiting torment in the Lake of Fire. (Revelations 20)

Instead of discarding Satan immediately, his great powers would be used to provide a competitive god, making possible a genuine test for man's affection. Says Phillips Brooks: "I think we can have no idea of how the inspiring sense of human dignity would fade out of the life of our race if man came to really think himself a creature of no spiritual capacity or peril, with a chance of no spiritual heaven, in danger of no spiritual hell." (vol. 9, pg. 70)

When Adam disobeyed, the control of mankind passed to Satan, making Satan the god of this world.

Satan goofed when he engineered the death of the Lord Jesus. (Hebrews 2: 14, 15) The cross heralded the end of his kingdom. In the time remaining, Satan takes out his bitterness on mankind. Satan's ultimate destiny is the Lake of Fire. (Revelations 20)

Satan cannot touch the WILL of the Believer. His influence is limited to the intellectual and emotional pressures he can exert through Satan–implanted ideas and suggestions. James 4:7 says, ***"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*** ***"Whom resist steadfast in the faith",*** says I Peter 5:9. God has promised to provide a way of escape in the hour of temptation (I Corinthians 10:13). Watch for the escape hatch! Part of the 'Lord's Prayer' is: ***"Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."*** (Matthew 6:13) Jesus exhorted us to 'watch and pray' that we do not enter into temptation.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 says: "But the Lord is faithful; He will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind." That makes me want to shout! Writes John in his letter: "And you young men, I am talking to you because you have won your battle with Satan, with God's Word in your hearts, and have won your struggle against Satan." (I John 2:13, 14)

Wrote Paul, "For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away." (Romans 8:38, Living Bible)

"Jesus hath died for you! What can your faith withstand?
Believe, hold fast your shield!
And who Shall pluck you from his hand?"
(Wesley; pg. 146)

D. KNOWLEDGE OF APPROPRIATION OF VICTORY

1. Put on the Breastplate Of Christ's Righteousness.

That is part of our text. (v. 14) There is no victory over Satan apart from reliance upon the righteousness of Christ alone. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight, Isaiah reminds us. Our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Paul says: ***"That I may be found in HIM not having a righteousness of my own, but that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."***

Says David Seamands: "Ah, this is the only complete safeguard against all my own failures and falls and Satan's constant reminders of them."

2. Be Filled With the Spirit.

That is a command by God, so important that real victory cannot be constantly enjoyed without regular outpouring of the Spirit on our life. We need to get rid of the enemy of carnality within (called 'rotten human nature' by Paul) to make outward battle against sin more easy.

3. Develop The Right Attitude Toward Temptation.

Says Donald Bastian: "Here's how James sees it: A certain Greek word occurs twelve times in chapter one. Ten times it is translated 'temptation' and twice 'trial'...Since the word used for temptation is the same as that used for trial, why not say that the devil's temptations may also be called God's trials." Barclay comments: "The whole point of them is that they are not sent to make us fall; they are sent to make us soar. They are not sent to defeat us; they are sent that we may defeat them. They are not sent to make us weaker; they are sent to make us stronger. And therefore we cannot bemoan them; we must exult in them and rejoice in them. The Christian is like an athlete. The heavier the burden the athlete's trainer lays upon him, the more the course of training is intensified, the more the athlete is glad, because he knows that it is all fitting him more and more for strenuous and victorious effort. As Browning said, we must 'welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough', for every hard thing is another step on the upward way." (James; p.50)

Donald Bastian gives this practical advice: (1) First, when the way gets treacherous, keep your eyes on God. (2) Be sure of God, but don't be too sure of yourself without Him. (3) Whenever possible, keep a Texas mile between yourself and temptation. God won't give you grace to go through temptations that you could go around. (4) Don't be a loner in the Christian life.

"What to do if you find yourself in a sin? (1) Jesus provided forgiveness for failures, so claim it. (2) If in your lapse you have wronged others, make amends. (3) Than, put yourself again under God's full control and submit to His testing." (Temptations and What To Do About Them)

4. Seek To Live A Good And Godly Life, And You Will Find Supernatural Power Behind You..

"For the Christian all good beings fight; against his simple righteousness all evil beings will beat themselves in vain, and ultimately must go down and fail, here or beyond the stars...Scripture says that he who is doing righteousness is on the side of the great currents of universal life, and has not only God but all good spirits for his friends." (Phillips Brooks; pg. 75, 76)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 21

1. **What does C.S. Lewis believe are "two equal and opposite errors" that should be avoided, when one considers the subject of the devil?**

2. **From what source alone comes a believers strength, as he confronts temptation and evil?**

3. **What is the one basic piece of equipment to which all the other spiritual weapons are attached, as the Christian becomes equipped for spiritual warfare?**

4. **From your own life, tell to what degree you have found the following statement to 'ring true': "A truthful life, that is, a life whose outward expression and inward experience are one and the same, in the best and basic armament of the Christian. This means <u>living</u> the Scriptures as well as <u>knowing</u> the Scriptures."**

5. **Why is personal knowledge of Christian Doctrine so very important?**

6. **What are some of the basic truths regarding God's nature and God's activities that a believer must seriously study (even though he humbly acknowledges that no one can ever fully comprehend the 'greatness and power of God')?**

7. **How can knowledge of the Almighty God best be understood and appreciated?**

8. **Check the following activities (works) of the Holy Spirit that you (to some extent) have personally experienced in your own personal spiritual life:**

   _____ (a) **Conviction**

   _____ (b) **Conversion**

   _____ (c) **Cleansing**

   _____ (d) **Comfort**

   _____ (e) **Chastening**

   _____ (f) **Challenge**

   _____ (g) **Calling**

   _____ (h) **Confirming**

   _____ (i) **Conforming**

9. At times (and hopefully, often) have you honored the blessed Holy Spirit, by discerning and obeying His 'small, still voice"?

10. What are various definitions and descriptions of 'Sin' (from a Biblical viewpoint)?

11. If 'Sin' can be defined as "a perversion of a legitimate desire", give some examples that illustrate this definition.

12. Even though humans (even Christians) have only very limited knowledge of the evil activities (plots) of Satan, how can sincere believers gain some knowledge of his evil devices and strategies? (II Corinthians 2: 11)

13. What is meant when the Bible calls Satan the "Accuser of the Brethren"? What should a Christian do (and think) in his battle against an evil power that tries to destroy the confidence of believers?

14. Called the 'Destroyer', what in the life of believers does the Devil seek to destroy?

15. Called the "Father of all Lies", how did Satan deceive Eve in the beginning, in the Garden of Eden?

16. What "activity," of Satan is described in I Peter 5: 8-9a?

17. How is Satan very strangely described in II Corinthians 11: 14 and how can a believer successfully encounter such an evil and subtle strategy by Satan?

18. Describe what is meant by the "Wiles of the Devil", and share some specific "Wiles" and how these can be successfully confronted and overcome.

19. According to Ezekiel 28: 11-17 (which describes the apparent 'origin of evil'), how is the Angel (before he fell from God's fellowship) described?

20. Was there a "time" before the Creation of mankind, when all of God's created Angels had a "probationary state" – a time when all of the angels were given the responsibility to <u>choose</u> between 'Right' and 'Wrong', to follow God Almighty or to reject His will?

21. Isaiah 14: 13-14 apparently shows that Lucifer's deliberate self-will marked the beginning of sin in the Universe. Note: (identify) the five 'I Wills' in these verses.

22. Because of Christ's total victory on the Cross and through the Empty Tomb, Christ has won the ultimate victory over Satan and all evil. What is the ultimate destiny of Satan and his demons, according to Revelation?

23. **Tell, with what degree of gratitude, you respond to the following expressed truth: "Satan cannot touch the WILL of the Believer. He's influence is limited to the intellectual and emotional pressures he can exert through Satan – implanted ideas and suggestions."**

24. **Can you share (from your own personal life, or from the lives of those fellow believers whom you respect) some of the "escape hatch" that you have been effective during the times of temptations? (Note I Corinthians 10: 13)**

25. **What degree of comfort have you received from reading and applying the promise of 2 Thessalonians 3: 3?**

26. **Why is it true to say that "there is no victory over Satan apart from reliance upon the righteousness of Christ alone"? Why are you such an "easy victim" for Satan's evil power, if you place your hope for spiritual victory on your own personal "righteousness'? Is it too harsh and demeaning to state that "human righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight"?**

27. **Give your interpretation of the following statement: "We need to get rid of the enemy of earnestly within (called 'rotten human nature' by Paul) to make outward battle against sin easier.**

28. **How is it possible to view the universal experience of temptation from a positive viewpoint rather than from a negative viewpoint? From God's viewpoint, in contrast to Satan's viewpoint, what is the true purpose of temptation?**

29. **What should a Christian do if he stumbles and falls into sin?**

30. **When you, as a sincere believer, are going through 'fiery trials' and 'hard temptations', who can you be assured is 'on your side' to guide you to spiritual victory?**

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