

The Theology of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

**A Brief Commentary and Study Guide
for
Personal Study and Bible Classes**

**Dr. Ian A. Fair
2025**



THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

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Please read Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians before you begin this study and the appropriate text before each lesson!

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Lesson 1. The Prison Epistles

Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon

Note the following prescripts and salutations that introduce these four epistles:

Eph 1:1-2; *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Col 1:1-2; *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”*

Philemon vs. 1-3; *“Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Phil 1:1-2; *“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Note the similarities and differences in these salutations.

Note also that some translations of Ephesians (RSV) do not include the words “who are at Ephesus,” or indicate in a footnote that this may have not been in many early manuscripts (NIV). This indicates that the letter originally may have been a circular letter written to several churches in the Roman province of Asia. The Greek manuscripts are divided on this. We will say more on this later in our study of the text.

Notice the interesting comment regarding bishops and deacons in Philippians. This kind of expression is not found elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles.

These epistles are called the Prison Epistles because they were most likely written by Paul when he was in prison in Rome for approximately 2 years toward the end of his ministry, ca. A.D. 60-62 or 61-63.

There are two other places mentioned by some scholars for the writing of the Prison Epistles; Ephesus and Caesarea Maritima (Caesarea on the Coast of the Ocean). However, Ephesus and Rome are the best attested places of origin. Rome is normally considered to be the traditional place of writing and seems the most likely provenance for these epistles.

The circumstances leading to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome were as follows; at Miletus (Acts 20:17) Paul called the Elders of the church in Ephesus to meet with him. The text indicates that he would not see the elders of Ephesus again. Paul then left the Ephesian elders at Miletus and travelled toward Caesarea and Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-15). While in Jerusalem to deliver a benevolent gift from the Gentile churches to the church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8, 9; Rom 15:30) Paul was arrested (Acts 21:27) and was tried by the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1). When the Jews made a plot to kill Paul a Roman Centurion transferred him to Caesarea to be tried by Felix, the Roman Governor of the region. Exercising his rights as a Roman citizen, Paul appealed his case to Caesar and was then shipped off to Rome. Carefully read Acts 24:1-25:12.

After arriving in Rome he was placed in prison or under house arrest until his accusers arrived from Jerusalem. He was released after two years (according to Roman law) when his accusers did not arrive to bring charges against him.

While in prison in Rome, Paul had plenty of time to contemplate his missionary experiences and his ministry. It is most likely that it was during this time that Paul wrote the four Prison Epistles. In due course Paul was released from the Roman prison and spent some time in house arrest. He was able to receive visitors to his house and to conduct a limited ministry of outreach.

One of his visitors was a minister from Colossae named Epaphras. Epaphras came to visit him to inform him of the church in Colossae. He most likely also told Paul of the work in Ephesus. This

prompted Paul to write the letter to Colossae and possibly the one to Ephesus, which as I have already mentioned, was possibly a circular letter to churches in the region of Asia.

Another person Paul met and converted in Rome was Onesimus, a runaway slave from Colossae. Paul reluctantly sent him back to Philemon, a leader of the church in Colossae, with a letter which we know as Philemon; one of the four prison Epistles.

For some reason, possibly the receipt of a gift from the church in Philippi, Paul wrote the letter to the Philippian church toward the close of his two year imprisonment.

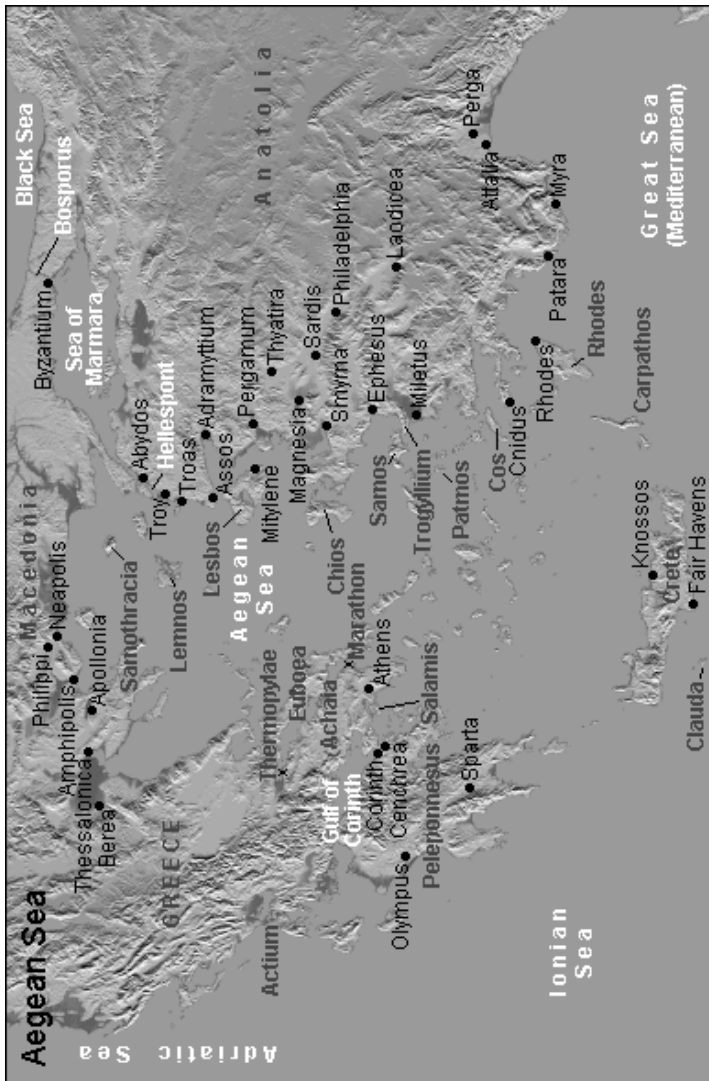
There are some scholars who question the Pauline authorship of Ephesians and Colossians, but this is not a universal opinion. These scholars consider either one or both Ephesians and Colossians to have been written by someone close to Paul, possibly by a fellow missionary.

The epistle regarding which most questions are raised is Ephesians. Reasons for questioning Ephesians are as follows; the impersonal nature of the epistle – it contains no personal greetings; the discussion relating to the church seems to manifest a later understanding and development of the church; a greater emphasis is given to the universal church; some of the language and terminology seems different from the accepted Pauline Epistles like Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians.

However, the fact that Ephesians was possibly not written to one congregation with specific problems and is seemingly a general or universal letter negates much of these arguments. We will notice the universal circular nature of Ephesians shortly in our detailed study of the Ephesian Epistle.

We will, however, work from the view that all four of these epistles are Pauline Epistles, written by the Apostle Paul while in a Roman prison. Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writing of the New Testament*, 1999; Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 2002; Norman Tom Wright, *Paul or Everyone, The Prison Letters*, 2004.

Three cities are involved in the four Prison Epistles; Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi. The fourth letter, Philemon, was written to a church leader in the city of Colossae.



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The church in Ephesus was a leading church in the Roman Province of Asia; the other church at Colossae was a small church, possibly a house church. Colossae was also in the Roman Province of Asia.

The Ephesian letter served as a circular letter intended for other churches in Asia but apparently addressed initially to the church in Ephesus since the church in Ephesus was a center of Pauline activity in Asia. The Roman Province of Asia is today Modern Western Turkey. A third epistle was written to the Philippian church; Philippi was located in the Roman Province of Macedonia. The letter to Philemon was a personal letter written to a church leader, Philemon, who was a member of the small church in the city of Colossae. See the map enclosed above to locate these cities; **Philippi** is toward the top center of the map; **Ephesus** is in the center of the map; **Colossae** unfortunately is not shown on the map but it was located about 3/4 inch to the right of Ephesus, just above Laodicea and below Philadelphia on the accompanying map.

Major Lessons to Learn from the General Introduction

- There are four Pauline Epistles grouped under the heading, Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

- They are called Prison Epistles because Paul was in prison when he wrote them, most likely in Rome.
- The first three are congregational letters; Philemon is a personal letter to a leader in the church in Colossae.
- The best date for these epistles is c.a. A.D. 60-62 or 61-63.

Questions and Discussion

- Can you picture in your mind where the three cities of the Prison Epistles were located? One was in Macedonia. Which one? Where were the other two?
- Where was Philemon living when Paul wrote his letter to Philemon?
- From the salutations in Ephesians and Colossians how did Paul consider his apostleship?
- Why might Paul have needed to stress the point of his apostleship?
- What is the significance of Paul's apostleship to us in the church today?

Lesson 2: The City of Ephesus

Archaeological excavations show that the area around Ephesus was inhabited as early as the Neolithic age (6000 B.C.). In Paul's day it was an old and well established city.

Ephesus, now modern Selcuk, therefore had a long and impressive history. It already had a great cultural heritage and tradition when Paul arrived on the scene.

The ancient city itself was founded as an Attic-Ionian colony in the 10th century B.C. on the Ayasuluk Hill, three kilometers from the center of the present Selcuk (as attested by excavations at Selcuk during the 1990s). The mythical founder of the city was Androklos a prince of Athens, who had to leave his country after the death of his father. Androklos drove out most of the original native inhabitants of the area and united his people with those who remained.

By the time we encounter Ephesus in Paul's day it was a cosmopolitan city with a rich religious history and pagan undercurrent, heavily imbued with Greek mythology and the mystery religions. An incipient form of Gnosticism¹ pervaded the whole region of the Roman Province of Asia.

Ephesus was a major city, a prominent sea port on the Aegean Sea, and the head of the fertile Caicus Valley. At the time of Paul's arrival in Ephesus the city had already for many years been a major cultural, religious, and educational center for Asia.

Ephesus was dominated by the temple of Artemis, virgin Goddess of the Greeks. Artemis² was also the Hellenic Goddess of fertility, of the wilderness, forests, hills, and hunts. She was often depicted carrying a bow and arrows. She was the legendary daughter of the god Zeus, and twin sister of Apollo.

The temple to Artemis was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Legend has it that construction of the temple which took 120 years to complete was begun by Croesus of Lydia, c.a.550 B.C. It was dedicated to Artemis in 550 B.C. Over history, the temple was destroyed and rebuilt four times and was finally destroyed sometime in the 4th century AD.

The temple consisted of 127 beautiful white columns, each 60 feet in height; many of which were beautifully carved. The temple was 450 foot long and 225 foot wide.

The temple housed many fine artworks. Sculptures by renowned Greek artists adorned the temple. In addition, the temple was embellished with fine paintings and gilded columns of gold and silver. The sculptors often competed for opportunity to have their masterpieces installed in the temple. Many of these sculptures were of Amazons who are mythologically said to have founded the city of Ephesus. The temple columns were adorned by magnificent carved reliefs.

Legend has it that on July 21, 356 B.C., the night Alexander the Great was born, a psychopathic arsonist intent on immortality set fire to the temple. Plutarch remarked that Artemis was so preoccupied with Alexander's delivery that she failed to save her burning temple. The arsonist, Herostratus, was motivated by visions of fame regardless of the cost. The Ephesians were so outraged with Herostratus that they instructed that Herostratus' name should never be recorded in any chronicles and that anyone who spoke of him should be put to death.

Legend also records that twenty-two years later, during his sweep through Asia Minor, Alexander the Great offered to reconstruct the temple. In a famous refusal related by Strabo, the Ephesians said it was not right for one God to build a temple to another God.

¹ Gnosticism was a form of Platonism which primarily considered all physical matter to be evil. We will study Gnosticism in greater detail below.

² Artemis is sometimes referred to as the Roman goddess Diana but in the Greek speaking Asian world she was known as Artemis.

The Temple was rebuilt several times following the original model of a raised platform, a feature of classical architecture adopted in the construction of later temples.

By 263 A.D., the temple was first plundered by Nero and later destroyed by the Goths.

The temple was again reconstructed in the 4th cent A.D., but the growing power and influence of Christianity in Ephesus eventually saw the demise of the temple and its influence. Much of the structural material was used to build the magnificent 6th cent A.D. basilica of St. John's on a nearby hill in Ephesus, and stones from the temple were also used to construct the Hagia Sofia, the magnificent Christian church in Istanbul. The Hagia Sofia was eventually converted into a museum by the Muslims after the 1453 Ottoman Turk defeat of the Christians in Constantinople.

The site of the temple of Artemis was rediscovered in 1869 on an expedition sponsored by the British Museum, and several artifacts and sculptures from the reconstructed temple can be seen in the local museum in Selcuk today.

The present day ruins of the temple to Artemis at modern day Selcuk (Ephesus) are hardly existent. All that remains is one reconstructed column and several large pieces of white marble.



Below is photo of an artist's impression of a statue erected to Artemis, a representation of which can also be seen in a square in modern Selcuk (Ephesus).



The Great Theater of Ephesus

The photo below of the Great Theater of Ephesus is possibly of the Roman theater which dated a little later than Paul's time. It was, however, in Paul's time already a major theater and gathering place of the citizens of Ephesus. In Ephesus there was also another minor theater, a magnificent agora, and a school (hall) of Tyrannus which we read of in Acts 19:8 ff where Paul taught for three months. The hall of Tyrannus is believed to be across the street from the great theater of Ephesus.

We read of the Goddess Artemis and Paul's encounter with Demetrius the silver smith in Acts 19:23ff:



“About that time there arose no little stir concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable company of people, saying that Gods made with hands are not Gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great Goddess Artemis may count for nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.” ²⁸ When they heard this they were enraged, and cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹ So the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰ Paul wished to go in among the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; ³¹ some of the Asiarchs also, who were friends of his, sent to him and begged him not to venture into the theater. ³² Now some cried one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³ Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, wishing to make a defense to the people. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all with one voice cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ³⁵ And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the

sky? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be contradicted, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our Goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against any one, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, there being no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” ⁴¹And when he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.”

The Church in Ephesus

We are uncertain as to who actually founded the church in Ephesus. We read of Paul’s work in Ephesus in Acts 18:18-20:1.

Acts 18:18-19:7:

“After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he cut his hair, for he had a vow. ¹⁹And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined; ²¹but on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus. ²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³ After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. ²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

^{19:1}While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve of them in all. ⁸And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God; ⁹but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

When Paul left Corinth on his second missionary journey he spent a short while in Ephesus, leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. He travelled on to Caesarea, Galatia, and Phrygia, then returned to Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquila had converted an eloquent Jew named Apollos. Apollos returned to Corinth leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. In Ephesus Paul found a number of disciples who had been baptized into John the Baptist’s baptism. Acts 19:1 ff records that Paul taught them about Christian baptism and baptized them into Christ.

Paul taught in the synagogue for three months and then remained in Ephesus for two years. While in Ephesus his ministry reached into all Asia (the Roman province of Asia, now Turkey.) At Acts 19:10 Luke records that while Paul was in Ephesus all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

This would have been around A.D. 53.

During the last half of the 1st century A.D three prominent Christian evangelists were associated with Ephesus and that region of Asia; the Apostle Paul, Timothy, and the Apostle John.

The church in Ephesus became the most prominent and influential church in the Roman Province of Asia and towards the close of the first century possibly the most influential church in Christendom.

Major Lessons to Learn from this Study

- Where was the Roman Province of Asia located? In what modern country would it be located today?
- Why was the city of Ephesus so important to the Roman Province of Asia?
- What three features of Ephesus dominated city life?
- Who was Artemis and why was she important to Ephesus?
- What do we learn about Demetrius?

Discussion Questions

- Why would the church in Ephesus have been so important to Paul's ministry in Asia and to the religious makeup of churches in Asia?
- How important has Ephesus been to church life through the centuries of church history? Consider three important evangelists in Ephesus and their role and place in our New Testament.
- How many New Testament books involve the church in and around Ephesus? Include John's Gospel and Epistles, Paul's Epistles, and Revelation.

Lesson 3: Primary Ephesian Theology

It is extremely important to know the primary theological emphases of Ephesians since all the major points in the epistle develop these themes or are related to them in some form.

First, we will shortly demonstrate from within text that the primary theology or message of Ephesians is that Christians are predestined by God to so live that they bring glory to God in Christ Jesus and the church.

Notice how Paul develops this central theology in the *Laudatio* (prayer and praise section) of Ephesians.

“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, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ⁵ He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ which he lavished upon us. ⁹ For he 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 ¹⁰ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”¹

Paul affirms that according to God’s eternal purpose and plan God has *called* and *destined* Christians corporately² to be his children *in Christ Jesus*. The technical theological term for this eternal plan is *Heilsgeschichte*, a German word that states that God has worked out his eternal purpose of redemption in history, which is in the history of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the church.

Paul continues to assert that Christians *in Christ* are *destined*³ according to God’s plan and purpose to *so live their lives that they bring glory to God*, cf. Eph 1:5, 9 and 10.

This translates into both *doctrinal-theological* and *paranetic* (practical, ethical) concerns regarding why and how we should live, cf Eph 4:1 ff.

As he works through Ephesians Paul uses an interesting expression to draw attention to the central issue. He uses this expression strategically three times, *“For this reason ...”* cf. Eph 1:15; 3:1; 3:14. Thus, *“for this reason, that we are destined to so live that we bring glory to God in Christ and the church*, we should live lives that are different from our secular or pagan neighbors. What Paul means by this is that it is our calling as Christians to so live as Christians in Christ and the church *that we will bring glory to God*.

Central to this purpose of living according to our calling to bring glory to God is the need for Christians *to maintain the unity of the Spirit constantly and earnestly in the bond of peace*, cf. Eph 4:1-3. A divided church cannot reflect the glory of God! Primarily in the Ephesian situation this involved

¹ I have italicized certain expressions for emphasis.

² By corporately we have in mind the church as a body of people, not focusing on the individual. We are corporately in Christ called to be saved and bring glory to God. We will develop this distinction below in an excursus on Calvinistic versus Pauline predestination. You will find this excursus in Lesson 5a (see Table of Contents)

³ The expression *destined* from προορίζω, *proorizō*, which means *decided before*, is the same as *predestined*. We will learn in a later lesson that this does not refer to Calvinistic Predestination. Biblical predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge, grace and our choice to believe and not on God’s arbitrary choice of who will be saved and who not.

Jews and Gentiles living together in peace and harmony in the church. By application today this means that Christians should be eager to maintain the unity of the body of Christ, the church, and have a good relationship with one another even though we might differ in some doctrinal issues. Cf. Rom 14:1-23.

A *secondary theological message* of Ephesians is the emphasis on what God has done for us out of his love and grace *in and through Jesus Christ!* By God's gracious giving of his son Jesus Christ *to die for all*, both Jew and Gentile are saved in the one body of Christ. Furthermore it is through Jesus' faithfulness to God's purpose and calling, and our faith in God's working in Jesus that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved and restored to a right relationship with God through faith (trusting) in Jesus Christ. The theme "for by grace you are saved through faith in Jesus Christ," Eph 2:8, is a significant theological theme in Ephesians.

Christ, and being in Christ, and God working through Christ, dominates Paul's thinking in Ephesians. Note how many times this emphasis of *in Christ, in him, through him*, etc. is made in the *Laudatio*, Eph 1:2-14; at least 10 times! In the whole epistle *Christ* appears 46 times in 43 verses. The expressions being "*in Christ,*" "*in him,*" "*with him,*" *through him,*" etc. occur at least 30 times in Ephesians. It is not by accident that this theme of *in Christ* or *through Christ* dominates this *Laudatio*, the first block of theological material in the epistle, and also the whole epistle.

Third, Paul explains that the cosmic scope of God's work in Christ is centered in Christ's death and resurrection. The death of Christ has impact not only on earth but also on the heavenly or spiritual places. The death of Christ brought about the reconciliation of all men to God. The death of Christ brought about the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in one body. In Jesus' death and resurrection God defeated Satan and the spiritual powers that are believed to control our destiny. In Christ, Christians through the death and resurrection of Jesus also decisively defeat all spiritual powers and demons, cf. Eph 1:22, 6:12; Col 1:13. Through the cross Christ has supremacy over all things (powers) *for the church*.

Thus the purpose of the church is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ and in the church by demonstrating what God has done in Christ through his death and resurrection. How the Christian's lives have been shaped by the cross and the Holy Spirit brings glory to God and his eternal purpose. How Christians walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh demonstrates the power of God transforming their lives!

The central doctrinal/theological emphasis of Ephesians is that in Christ and the church Christians have been destined by God to bring glory to God in the one body⁴ of Christ.

Another related theological emphasis related to the first is that God has done all this in and through Jesus Christ and he has done this *for all people, both Jew and Gentile*. To experience God's blessings and victory over all spiritual powers both Jew and Gentile together must live peaceably in Christ, or in his body the church.

The *paranetic*⁵ (practical) emphasis of Ephesians resulting out of and relating to the theological centers of the epistle is that Christians must live good moral lives in their worldly communities in order to demonstrate and bring glory to God in Christ and the church. By living immoral lives in their communities Christians cannot bring glory to God.

⁴ Paul uses the sense of the body of Christ corporately to refer the church that Christ died to establish, cf. Matt 16:16-18; Eph 1:22, 23, Col 1:18.

⁵ The term *paranetic* is a technical term referring to the practical ethical life Christians must live as the extension in their predestined divine calling in Christ.

Major *paranetic* themes to the central theological emphases in Ephesians are that Christians must *maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* and *live moral and family lives* in keeping with the glory of God, Eph 4:1 ff. Through the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit both Jews and Gentiles have been brought into *one body*. Both Jewish and Gentile Christians will need to make every effort empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit in order to do this. By maintaining the unity of the body of Christ, the church demonstrates the working (manifold working) of God through Christ and the Spirit.

Major Lessons to Learn from this Study

- The primary theology and message of Ephesians is that Christians are called to so live that they bring glory to God in Christ and the church.
- A secondary theological emphasis is that God has called and destined all people, both Jew and Gentile, *in and through Christ* to be saved.
- Paul stresses that God has a purpose and plan (*Heilsgeschichte*, plan of salvation) that he has been working since before the foundation of the earth.
- Note how many times *in Christ* or *in him* or *through him* appear in the epistle.
- The activity and work of the Holy Spirit is very important to God's work in and for his people.

Discussion Questions

- What two major emphases should be the center of our theology? How does the church play into this?
- How do these theological emphases impact our worship, ministry, and personal life in general?
- How does the death and resurrection play a cosmic role in our affairs?
- Discuss how this cosmic dimension of Christ's death can impact our everyday lives?
- How does our personal faith, commitment, and corporate ministry bring glory to God in practice?

Lesson 4. Ephesian Characteristics

What distinguishes Ephesians from the other Pauline epistles is that it was most likely intended to be a circular letter to several churches. The address of the Epistle to the Ephesians is somewhat unique! The address “to the *saints who are also (indeed) faithful in Christ Jesus*” which most likely omits a geographical location such as “who are at Ephesus” or “which is at Corinth” as in Paul’s epistles. *This is notable.* Likewise *the lack of a personal greeting* as in Paul’s Pastoral Epistles “to Timothy” *is also somewhat distinctive.*

Thus, it appears that Ephesians might have first been sent to Ephesus, intended as a circular epistle, then copied and sent on to other churches in Asia. We will comment more on this in our study of the text in our next lesson.

As a circular letter it does not discuss the concerns of only one local congregation’s problems and issues, but is more general covering several factors that would impact Christians elsewhere in Asia. The issues that are discussed are therefore “universal” to all churches area of Asia, and even for churches and Christians today.

In Ephesians we have weighty statements of God’s work both in the physical world and the cosmic world of spiritual powers.

Luke Timothy Johnson observes that *prayer is a “pervasive atmosphere” and “most distinctive feature” of the epistle.* Cf. Eph 2:14ff.

The Holy Spirit is also a prominent emphasis in Ephesians. Cf. Eph 1:13; 3:14-21; 4:1-3.

In fact, the epistle touches on all of the major Pauline theological emphases; justification by grace through faith in Jesus cf. Eph 2:1-10; the redemptive power of the cross, cf. Eph 2:16; the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, cf. Eph 3:16ff; the gift of the Holy Spirit in empowering Christians and building up their faith, cf. Eph 3:16ff; Paul’s concern for the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles, and God’s plan to unite them in one body by the cross, cf. Eph 2:12-22; the importance of Christians living good moral lives as they impact their pagan neighbors, Eph 4:17 ff; the need for Christians to observe high family standards out of reverence for Christ, Eph 5:21 ff; and the spiritual war conducted by Satan and his demonic agents against the church and Christians, cf Eph 6:10 ff.

Paul explains that it was his conviction that it was his and the church’s God given ministry to proclaim “good news.” Paul explains that he had received this ministry and message as a revelation from God. Furthermore, his message was intended for all people, both Jew and Gentile.

How God would unite Jew and Gentile in peace had been a mystery for ages, even to Paul, but the message of how the Jew and Gentile were to be reconciled in one body was revealed to Paul as the work of God in Jesus through the death of Jesus on the cross, cf. Eph 3:1ff. In fact Paul believed that in Christ, in the fullness of time, God will reconcile all creation to himself. Cf. Eph 1:10.

The Cultural and Religious World of Ephesus and Asia

We have already mentioned the *Artemesian cult* and mystery religions in Ephesus, notably related to the temple of Artemis. The temple and Artemis’ cult with its pagan and immoral practices seemingly dominated the city and culture of Ephesus. Cf. Acts 19:23 ff.

In the classical period of Greek mythology, dating as early as Homer (ca 750 BC), Artemis was described as the daughter of Zeus and Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo. She was the Greek and Arcadian goddess of the hunt, wild animals, the wilderness, childbirth, virginity, fertility, the protector of young girls, and the one responsible for relieving disease in women; she often was also depicted as a huntress carrying a bow and arrows.

It was primarily because of the immorality associated with the fertility cult associated with the goddess Artemis that Christianity had problems with the Artemesian cult. The fertility cult which included sexual immorality was a major aspect and religious practice in Ephesus. Cf. Eph 5:1ff. We know from archeological discoveries of the presence of a major brothel on the main street on the road from the harbor to the center of the city.

The ancient mystery religions were also a major feature of Ephesian and Asian religious practice. Mystery religions were concerned with esoteric means including drunkenness which was assumed to introduce one to a special relationship with divine and spiritual powers. Through trances induced by a variety of means and practices the individual could escape the confines of the physical world, enter the spiritual world, and gain access to the divine.

Gnosticism, although only in its early form, which is known in scholarly circles as incipient Gnosticism, or early undeveloped forms of Gnosticism, was becoming a major feature of Asian philosophical and religious practices. *Gnosis* is the Greek word for *knowledge*. Gnosticism was a philosophical view that stressed possession of a *special form of intuitive knowledge* that was considered necessary for overcoming the spiritual powers that surrounded the physical and cosmic realms surrounding the life of the individual.

Without this special knowledge which was not learned but which one received by special spiritual endowment one could not escape from the powers of the spiritual world.

Gnosticism was a form of Platonism which held that the physical world was evil and not permanent. In contrast with the physical world the spiritual world was permanent and pure. By special *intuitive knowledge (gnosis)* one was enabled to escape the physical world and those spiritual powers (known as *demiurges*, sometimes *demigods*) that reigned over the physical world.

This mood was already by the 60s A.D. becoming a problem faced by Christians. In the 2nd century A.D. Gnosticism became a major divisive threat to Christianity.

To get a sense of the Gnostic mindset refer to the chart below that diagrams the Gnostic cosmology. Cosmology refers to the discussion of the cosmos including the physical world; how it originated and is controlled. We might today speak of the universe, how it came into being and how it is controlled. Gnosticism argued that a physical world which is essentially evil and transitory could not have been created by a good loving god since according to the Platonic world view the physical world is for all intents and purposes evil.

The Gnostic view was that a renegade disobedient son of the ultimate good god had placed in the physical world an evil spirit which corrupted everything that touched it. Therefore if Jehovah (*Ialdabaoth* in their terminology) created everything physical he could not be a pure good god full of light. Full blown Gnosticism of the 2nd century A.D. rejected Judaism and everything Jewish, notably the Old Testament since it proclaimed a message regarding Jehovah who in the Gnostic minds was an inferior God. This however was more of a later 2nd century challenge to the Christians but the root of this heresy was developing at the time of Paul and his ministry.

The Christian answer to Gnosticism was that the eternally good God, Jehovah, is the pure light who created everything. Jesus, Jehovah's son, claimed to be the light that came into the world (John 8:5; 9:5) and Christians argued that everything the Gnostics were looking for was found in Jesus. In fact, it was in Jesus, the light of the world, that Christians argued they were enlightened and found their way to God. When Thomas asked where Jesus was going when he spoke of leaving them Jesus answered, cf. John 14:5, 6:

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but

by me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him.”

The Christian response to Gnosticism and the evil in the world was that it was Satan who had entered in and corrupted the world and Jesus the son of the pure God had come to save the world. Christians argued that Jesus in his death and resurrection had conquered Satan and the spiritual powers and had provided all one needed for true spiritual and eternal life. This is a major point that Paul argues in both Ephesians and Colossians.

Some Gnostic Concepts

Gnostics claimed that the *real God is Pure Light, Pure Spirit, and not Jehovah*, since Jehovah had created a world that was physical and therefore corrupt, a Platonic world view! A Pure God could not have created a corrupt world.

In the *Ephesian panoply of gods* and Gnosticism lesser god's exist who are not Pure Light but who might be descendants of the Pure God, but who had fallen from the Pure Light.

“*Ialdoboth*,” *Yaldabaoth*, the Jewish and Christian God, was a son of the Pure God who in the philosophy of Gnosticism had rebelled against the Pure God. The term *Ialdoboth* is the Gnostic Greek term for Jehovah!

Gnosis is “knowledge,” but a special *intuitive esoteric knowledge attainable by only the select Gnostic adherents*.

Man needs this *Gnostic pure spiritual esoteric knowledge* which is not the normal human knowledge of this world. It is somewhat *secretive, esoteric, mysterious enlightenment*.

Man needs this special intuitive knowledge *to escape the powers of this world*.
This is special intuitive knowledge that comes directly from the Pure God of Light and not from Jehovah and Jesus.

Gnostic Mysticism involves such special intuitive knowledge.

Some form of “*Gnostic Redeemer*” provides this secret knowledge. Christianity holds that *Jesus is the mystical redeemer of truth and the special knowledge of redemption* from the powers of this world.

Mysterious spiritual powers pervade and control the cosmos. They are the Principalities and Powers. They roam the Heavenly Places. Paul argues that each of these Gnostic concepts is provided through faith in Jesus.

Fallen, or corrupt man, needs this special intuitive knowledge to escape from the spiritual powers. In some forms of Gnosticism these spiritual powers are called “*demiurges*.”

The concept of “*stoicheion*” is a Gnostic technical term used to describe these *special elemental powers of the universe*.

Gnostic Cosmology

Gnostic cosmology is a way of looking at the universe.

It has a strong neo-Platonic world view which understands the physical creation to be corrupt and decaying.

The spiritual world is the real world, not this physical world we live in.

The body is evil, the spirit is pure.

The spirit is held captive in the physical body and desires release “*salvation*” from the false physical-spiritual powers.

The god, “*Yaldabaoth*” that created the corrupt world is and false and evil god.

The real God is pure light and spirit and is beyond human contact ruling out Jesus, the false “Christ”

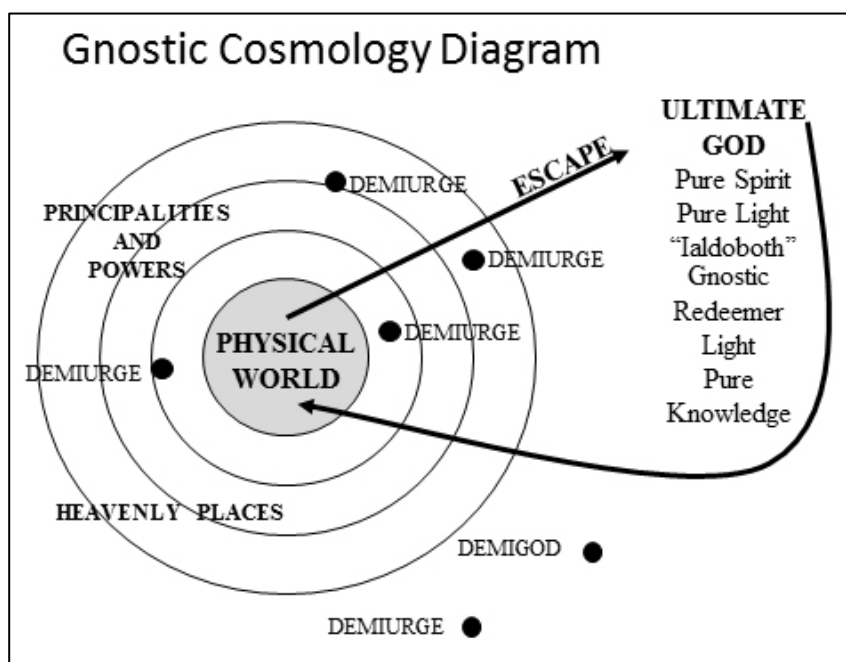
The spirit of man seeks to escape the physical world and have communion with the ultimate good God of light.

The world is surrounded by concentric rings of *demi gods* or *demiurges* who *keep man in the physical world and away from the real God*. They are sometimes referred to as the “*principalities and powers in the heavenly places*.” Paul argues that God has defeated these powers and provides in Jesus all of man’s needs in the spiritual world of “*principalities and powers*.”

The ultimate god of pure light sends a “*spiritual leader*” into the world who guides the lost spirit back to him through the spiritual roadmap of pure *gnosis* knowledge.

The way back to the pure god is through the correct kind of “intuitive” knowledge, hence the Gnostic term derives from *gnosis* meaning *knowledge*.

Refer to the Gnostic Cosmology diagram below.



Major Lessons to Learn from this Study

Note the flow of thought in the epistle; *first theology*, Eph 1:1-3:21; *then practical paraneitic living* based on the theological emphases, Eph 4:1-6:20.

Note the role of the Holy Spirit and prayer in the epistle. Eph 3:14ff.

Be able to discuss the cultural and diverse religious nature of Ephesus, including a form of *Jewish Gnosticism*.

Be able to discuss Gnosticism, the *stoicheia*, and the *principalities in heavenly places* and their role in Ephesians.

Discussion Questions

How should we understand the central concern of Paul in Ephesians which is understood as God's *corporate* calling for Christians to be children *in Christ*? What does this *corporate* emphasis mean? Discuss this among your friends or Bible class mates.

Why do we understand the Catholic, Episcopalian, and some forms of predestination as individual *personal predestination*?

What is the *false principle* behind *individual personal predestination*? Why do you think you are lost, and what does Paul say is the solution to this? Eph 2:1-10.

What role does the Holy Spirit play in the Christian's life? Cf. Eph 1:14; Eph 3:14-21; and Eph 4:1-3. Is *faith* the *gift of the Holy Spirit*. Eph 2:1-10? What is the gift of God in Eph 2:1-10.

We may not be subject to Gnostic powers today, but how can Gnosticism, or a form of Gnosticism or false knowledge impact your lives today as in some school systems, and mysterious new and community spiritual powers? Remember that Gnosticism is an emphasis on *knowledge* as the means of salvation or deliverance in religion. Is more education the answer?

Are we saved today by *how much knowledge* we have or *the right kind of knowledge*? Be careful! *Are we saved by our knowledge or by faith in God's grace and not our own ability*?

What role should knowledge play in salvation? What should its focus be? Where do we find this knowledge? 2 Tim 3:14-17.

What should be the *center of our faith*? *Be careful over the word "what"*! What is the impressive theological focus in the Eph 1:3-14, mentioned over ten times in twelve verses?

What kind of spiritual powers take over our lives today? Where is *your faith, theoretically and physically, most often or seriously challenged*? **Be practical!** [Marriage, children, parents, work, living conditions, friendships, etc.] What is one solution to this? Cf. Eph 3:14-21. *How does that work, and where can you get help*?

Lesson 5. Eph 1:1-14

The Prescript, Salutation, and Laudatio in Paul's Epistemology

The Structure of the Epistle

Understanding the structure of a Pauline *epistle*¹, or any *epistle*, is vital to interpretation of the epistle. For example, we can partially determine the origin of a letter today merely by examining the date! 12.31.2013 as against 31.12.2013. Which one is American and which is British or European?

Early in his ministry Paul adapted the typical Graeco/Roman form of letter writing into an early Christian Epistolary instructional and exhortative form. This standard Pauline form of letter writing was structured around four major components, *Prescript, Laudatio, Body, and Conclusion*.² These are described as follows:

A **Prescript** which includes a greeting, and salutation in which Paul would describe to whom he was writing and include some form of greeting.

A **Laudatio** (a praise and prayer section). This section is very important to determining the theology and purpose of the epistle because in this material Paul introduces his purpose and major theme of the epistle. The *Laudatio* would generally be in the form of, or include a major prayer for the recipients.

The **Body** of the letter often came in two sections:

Doctrine/Theology – which outlines and develops Paul's major premise and argument.

Paranesis/Practical – in which Paul would introduce the practical or ethical implications of the doctrinal material.

The **Conclusion** in which Paul summarizes his main purpose in writing and mentions friends with whom the recipients of the letter would be acquainted.

Enlarged Structural Outline of the Ephesian Epistle

Prescript, Greeting, and Salutation - 1:1-2; greetings and Salutation.

Laudatio - 1:3-23 (praise and prayer section) in which Paul introduces his major theological theme and prays for the church.

Body of the Letter - 2:1-6:20 which normally would be in two sections.

The *Doctrine/Theology* material; 2:1-3:21 where Paul introduces the theology upon which he builds his practical or paranetic material.

Paranesis; 4:1-6:20 where Paul discusses the practical teaching material arising from the doctrinal material.

Conclusion; 6:21-24 where Paul usually would include personal greetings.

The Prescript, Greeting, and Salutation - Eph 1:1-2

Eph 1:1. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." Paul emphasizes that he was an apostle by the will of God not by the will of men or by his own will. *Paul makes this comment*

¹ In technical biblical and theological contexts the term *epistle* indicates literature such as *written communication* that has *more formal community implications* than the term *letter*. "An epistle is a writing directed or sent to a person or group of people, usually an elegant and formal didactic letter. The epistle genre of letter-writing was common in ancient Egypt as part of the scribal-school writing curriculum. The letters in the New Testament from Apostles to Christians are usually referred to as epistles." Wikipedia and Mirriam-Webster Dictionary.

² Some scholars use different yet similar terms to describe these elements of an ancient epistle.

because some challenged the source of his apostleship and charged that his authority was different from that of the other apostles. Here as in Colossians and Galatians (as elsewhere) Paul stressed that his apostleship and authority were not passed on to him by men, but came directly from God. Cf. Gal 1:1. The stress on his divinely pointed apostleship focused attention on the divine authority of his message.

“*To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus.*” Here we encounter the ellipsis in which some manuscripts do not include *in Ephesus* while other manuscripts read “*in Ephesus.*” As I will mention in the following paragraphs, some of the better manuscripts leave *in Ephesus* out considering Ephesians to be a circular epistle to several churches in Asia.

The RSV does not include the locality *in Ephesus*. The Aland United Bible Society Greek text (UBS) places [*en Ephesō*] which reads *in Ephesus* between square parentheses [] indicating manuscript issues. The United Bible Society, Kurt Aland et al, 1968 Greek text ranks the inclusion *in Ephesus* at a C indicating that the evidence is not strong for including *in Ephesus*.

The NIV reads “*To the saints in Ephesus, [a] the faithful in Christ Jesus.*” The footnote [a] following *Ephesus* in the NIV indicates that some manuscripts do not include *in Ephesus*.

The manuscript testimony for including *in Ephesus* is not as strong as some of the major manuscripts which omit the expression. Those omitting it are P⁴⁶ (ca 200 AD), X (Sinaiticus ca 4th cent), B (Vaticanus ca 4th cent), Basil, Origen. Including the expression *in Ephesus* as mentioned above is ranked C in the UBS Greek text, 4th ed., of 2001. The 1979 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek Text agrees with the UBS Greek text, questioning the strength of the inclusion of *in Ephesus*. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 1994 agrees with the UBS and Nestle-Aland Texts, questioning the “authenticity” of the inclusion in the expression *in Ephesus*.³

Eph 1:2. “*Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” is a typical Pauline, Christian greeting. It is believed by some scholars to be an original Pauline expression and it was Paul who had Christianized the traditional Greek epistolary greeting.

“*Grace*” derives from the Greek χάρις, *cháris* meaning *favor*. Sometimes we define this as unmerited favor, which it certainly is, but the word simply means *favor*. In giving his son to die on the cross God did all mankind a favor which we did not deserve and for which we could not pay nor work for, thus the gift of Jesus was an unmerited gift of God’s grace.

“*Peace*” derives from the Greek ειρήνη, *eirēnē* and like the Hebrew greeting *Shalom* refers to *inner spiritual peace and blessing*.

In Pauline theology Christians are *saved by God’s grace through their faith in Jesus*. Christians do not deserve such a gift of salvation and cannot work enough to deserve it. *Salvation* is a gift of God’s *grace* (favor). Cf. Eph 2:8, 9. It is a fundamental principle of Pauline and biblical theology that salvation is a gift of God’s grace and is not received because we have earned it by works, no matter what kind of works we may offer. Christians are thus justified and saved by God’s grace through their faith in Jesus. Only in this way can Christians then have peace with God. Note Paul’s comments on this in two major texts in his Epistle to the Romans. Rom 3:21, 22:

“*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...*”

³ For scholarly discussion of this cf. Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 1, Notes; Clinton Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Introduction; Robert Gundry, *Commentary on Ephesians*, Ephesians 1:1, 2; Peter O’Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Eph 1:1, 2.

Rom 5:1, 2 adds the thought that it is only in this manner that Christians can have peace with God:

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God ...”

The *Laudatio* – Eph 1:3-14

“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**, ⁴ even as **he chose us in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ⁵ He destined us in love to be his **sons through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us **in the Beloved**. ⁷ **In him** we have redemption through **his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ which he lavished upon us. ⁹ For he 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** ¹⁰ as a plan for the fulness of time, **to unite all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ **In him**, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped **in Christ** have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ **In him** you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed **in him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

The *Laudatio* is a literary introductory device common to many ancient Graeco/Roman epistles. Paul developed this *Laudatio* principle into a major Christian epistolary form. With the exception of Galatians we find a *Laudatio* in all of Paul’s epistles. In the *Laudatio* Paul prays for the recipients and introduces his major theological theme.

Laudatio simply means *praise*, hence the *Laudatio* section in Paul’s epistles is where he *praises God* and the recipients of the epistle. In the *Laudatio* Paul also introduces the theology of the something that this must be forefront in his mind!

We have already noted in the introduction to this epistle that the central theological theme of Ephesians is that *Christians should so live that they bring glory to God through Christ and the church*. This theme is spelled out in the *Laudatio*.

In this *Laudatio* section we also find one of the other major ingredients of Paul’s theological program. *God works according to his own eternal predetermined plan!*

Christians are saved by God’s grace through the faithfulness of Jesus and the faith of the believer in God’s working in Jesus. This salvation was all *according to a plan God determined before the foundation of the world*.

As noted above in technical terms we call this redemptive plan of salvation *Heilsgeschichte*, that is a salvation plan *worked out in history*. God has worked his plan in history through humans such as Abraham and Moses, finally through Jesus, in real time history, to bring about his redemption of mankind. This is an important concept to emphasize since the Gnostics held that salvation and redemption came through special non historical intuitive knowledge rather than in the historical fact of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Paul argues that it was through the death and resurrection of Jesus that redemption and salvation are found, not in any kind of special esoteric knowledge.

Cf. **1 Cor 15:1-4**: “Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, ² by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died

for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures ...”

That God has called all to be his children according to an eternal plan is perhaps one of the most significant thoughts in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians since it explains *God’s eternal purpose in Christ* for the church and explains in advance what shapes the remainder of the letter. *We have been destined since eternity to live for the glory of God* in Christ and in the church.

In this paragraph Paul discusses what he describes as the *pre-ordained* plan of God. God according to his *foreknowledge* had planned (*predestined* or *ordained*, *prooridzō*), even *before the foundation of the world*, that both Jews and Gentiles would be his children in Christ and that by living together as one body both Jews and Gentiles together would bring glory to God. On Paul regarding the foreknowledge and predestination of God cf. also Rom 8:29-30. On the unity of believers, both Jew and Gentile in Christ, cf. Eph 4:1-7 which we will discuss in due course.

In Ephesians 2 Paul develops an enlargement of this theme of both Jew and Gentile being saved in one body by the cross. It is a major theme in Ephesians that both Jew and Gentile must realize that they are saved only by grace of God through faith in Jesus and by the working of God in Christ. This was the plan preordained by God in Christ; hence Paul’s observations regarding this in the *Laudatio*. Only by living together in unity in one body through the cross can the Jewish and Gentile Christians bring glory to God.

Thus in order to *bring glory to God* as his children *in Christ* the Jewish and Gentile Christians must learn to get along together in the *one body* of Christ, *which is the church*.

Paul will later introduce the theme that in order to do this Christians will need to be zealous and serious in this effort and furthermore will need the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This introductory prayer and praise section thus sets the tone for the remainder of the epistle.

Eph 1:3. The term “*blessed*” (Greek εὐλογητός, *eulogētós*, Hebrew *berakah*) is a form of Jewish blessing *pronounced on God for his great mercy and redeeming action*. The NIV translates this “*Praise be to the God and Father...*” The Greek reads *eulogētós* for *blessed* which can be translated *worthy of praise* or *blessing*. In the New Testament *eulogētós* is used *only of God and Christ*. *Eulogētós* is similar to a related Greek word εὐλογία, *eulogía* which basically means *a good saying* and is the basis for our English word *eulogy* which often describes the *kind or good words* that are said of one at a funeral. *Eulogētós* emphasizes that Christians are to live *for the praise of His glory* and begin doing so by praising God for planning their salvation in Christ before the creation of the world and for calling all Christians to be His children in Christ. *Notice the emphasis on what God has done for all Christians* (his eternal purpose) *in Christ*. The stress is not simply on the individual but on what God has done for them in Christ, corporately.

Eph 1:3. Paul praises God because God “has *blessed* us **in Christ** with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places.” The word *blessed* (*eulogēsas*, an aorist participle of εὐλογέω, *eulogēō*) indicates that God *has already blessed* Christians with every spiritual blessing they might need in the heavenly places (a loaded expression) or in the spiritual world.

There is nothing Christians need in their spiritual life that God has not already supplied or provided *in Christ Jesus*. This is an important point in view of the presence of Gnostic tendencies in Ephesus. Recall the Gnostic cosmology we noticed in our Introduction to Ephesians. Gnostics taught that Christians needed *special intuitive knowledge* to escape the demiurges or spiritual powers that controlled the “heavenly places” that surround the physical earth. Contrary to this Paul’s argument in Ephesians, and Colossians, is that *in Christ* God has *already provided* all the knowledge and power Christians need to overcome demonic spiritual influences. The knowledge Paul stresses is the *knowledge of Christ and what God achieved in Christ’s death and resurrection*. Christianity does not

hold to some form of esoteric intuitive knowledge that comes to a few enlightened people but simply proclaims the knowledge of what God has done for all in Christ Jesus and his death and resurrection.

Eph 1:4. Paul adds “*even as he has chosen us ...*” Being chosen by God before the foundation of the world strengthens the security God has provided for all Christians as his children. *God* has chosen us in Christ!

Paul adds that there was also a purpose in God’s calling; “*that we should be holy and blameless...*” Without being holy and blameless Christians cannot bring glory to God who himself is holy and blameless.

Paul will add to this as he progresses in his letter that Christian salvation and holiness is provided for *all Christians*, both Jew and Gentile, equally by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God has also provided the Holy Spirit to assist *all Christians* in their Christian living for the glory of God.

That we are *chosen in Christ* with the purpose that we might be holy and blameless is very important! It is *in Christ* that we become holy and blameless, not by special knowledge as was held by the false teaching of Gnosticism.

In Christ God has provided Christians with an *escape* from all spiritual powers, and he has provided them with the power to *overcome* the spiritual powers.

Eph 1:5. We are *destined* (προορίζω, *proorizō*, *destined* or *predestined*) in God’s love to be his sons through Jesus Christ. The Greek word for *destined* is *proorizō* which as we have noticed means *predestined* or *decided beforehand*. God decided before the foundation of the world that *in Christ* Christians (both Jew and Gentiles) would be his sons/children.

This is not Calvinistic predestination⁴ which is based on a view of inherited sin, man’s total depravity, God’s arbitrary choice as to who will be saved and who eternally lost and doomed, and a view of God’s irresistible grace. What we find in Paul’s concept of predestination is a predestination *based on God’s foreknowledge, love, and purpose* (Cf. Rom 8:28-30). Biblical predestination does not preclude God’s grace and man’s accessing that grace through faith, a point Paul will stress in Eph 2:1-10.

Contrary to Calvinistic predestination man’s salvation is not based on an arbitrary decision by God but on man’s willingness to trust in God’s grace through trusting what God has worked in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In Calvinistic predestination man has no choice and makes no decision. God makes the choice and the Holy Spirit does the work. Man is arbitrarily chosen by God either to be eternally saved or doomed. Thus in Calvinism man’s response to God’s calling is not made by man through faith, but by God’s arbitrary choice.

At the conclusion of this study you will find three excursus on Pauline and Calvinistic predestination, the origin and cycle of faith, and the maturing of saving faith, Lesson 5a, p. 128; Lesson 5b, p. 156; Lesson 5c, p. 158.

Pauline and Biblical predestination states that God has according to his foreknowledge predestined that Christians should corporately be his children *in Christ*. Paul’s understanding of predestination is a predestination in which God decided before creation that *those in Christ* would be his children. This is what we call a corporate predestination; God predestined that those *in Christ or in the body of Christ* would be saved.

However, Paul’s theology states that Christians as individuals respond to God by their decision of faith and are then baptized into the body of Christ; cf Gal 3:23-29:

⁴ For a more comprehensive discussion of Calvinistic and Biblical predestination cf. chapter 5a following lesson 12 of this study.

“Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. ²⁴ So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

We decide to react in faith to God’s gracious work in Christ and God’s gracious calling. This response is not an arbitrary predestination but a free will response to God’s calling. Cf. Eph 2:1-9, which we will shortly study in some detail:

This decision that we should be God’s sons/children *through Jesus Christ* was according to God’s *predetermined will*, not by accident or our working.

Eph 1:6. God is to be praised for his great and glorious mercy which he has freely bestowed on us *in the Beloved* (Jesus Christ):

“He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

Eph 1:7. In Christ we “have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the richness of his mercy. Thus in Christ through his blood as an act of God’s rich grace he has lavishly provided *redemption* for us in Christ.

Redemption derives from the Greek ἀπολύτρωσις, *apolútrōsis* which means *deliverance, liberation, release, being set free*. We are set free in Christ from the bond of sin that binds us.

Forgiveness is from the Greek ἄφεσις, *aphesis* and means *cancellation of guilt, pardon, deliverance from guilt*.

The use of the present tense verb ἔχομεν, *echomen*, “we have” indicates that we *continually and constantly* have this deliverance in Christ.

Eph 1:8, 9. Paul explains that this gracious redemption God has richly “lavished upon us. ⁹For he 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.”

The Greek is convoluted and actually reads something like this, “according to the abundance of his grace which he has lavished on us, in all wisdom and insight, he has made known the mystery of his will (or purpose or desire).”

The point is that God has “*abundantly made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will*.” What God has already done in Christ he has already clearly revealed to us? It was in the past a mystery how he would do this but now this mystery of how God would bless both Jew and Gentile according to his will and purpose *has been clearly revealed to us*. *We do not need any special intuitive knowledge to learn this*. We have this in the knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ.

Paul will return to this *mystery* on five other occasions in Ephesians, 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19. *Mystery* (Greek μυστήριον, *mustérion, mystery or secret*) does not refer to something that cannot be known but to that which could be known but had not yet until Christ had been made known. The *mystery* was *how God was going to save both Jew and Gentile*. He was not going to do this through the Law of Moses (Cf. Galatians) for that would exclude the Gentiles. But now he has revealed that he has done this *in one body, the body of Christ, which is the church, by his grace through faith in Christ Jesus*.

The argument of both of Paul’s epistles to the Galatians and Romans is that God does not have two plans, one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. He has only one plan. His one plan is that Jews

and Gentiles will all be saved in one body by the grace of God thorough faith for everyone in Christ Jesus.

Eph 1:9. We see God's eternal purpose explained and set forth *in Christ*. If you want to be a child of God and enjoy all God's provision for man, you must be *in Christ*! Gal 3:25-29 explains how one gets into Christ by faith in God and his working in Christ Jesus:

"But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

Based on their faith in Christ Christians are all baptized into Christ and become one in Christ.

Eph 1:10. God's plan was an *eternal plan made before time for the fullness of time*:

"For he 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 ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

Eph 1:11-14. *This text explains God's plan, purpose, and will in greater detail:*

"In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

God is eminently capable of accomplishing what he plans. He has in fact already accomplished his purpose *in Christ according to his will and plan*.

Christians who have set their hope *in Christ* are *destined (prooridzō, predestined)* and *appointed to live for the praise of God's glory*. *Appointed*, Greek ἐκκληρώθημεν, *eklērōthēmen*, derives from κληρώω, *klērōō* means *to cast lots, determine by lot, i.e., to determine something, choose someone*. Not only had God *predestined* us in Christ to be his children and to bring him glory in Christ and the church, but he had also *determined* that this should be! Cf our previous discussion of predestination or being destined at Eph 1:5.

Furthermore, *in Christ* we are *sealed by the Holy Spirit*. God has chosen to live in us through his Holy Spirit which he has given us as a *guarantee of our eternal inheritance*. The indwelling Holy Spirit is our sign of belonging to God and God dwelling in us. That God has given Christians the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, to assist them to live appropriately and to empower them, is a purely astonishing gift of God's grace. Thus God gives his Holy Spirit to man when through their faith and repentance man is baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Note Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32:

Acts 2:38 *"And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" and Acts 5:32* *"And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."*

At **1 Cor 12:12, 13** Paul builds on this concept of Christians receiving God's Holy Spirit:

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

All of what God has done in Christ is *to the praise of God's glory*. This is an important key to understanding the theology of Ephesians. Note again that we are destined and appointed by God to

live *for the praise of his glory* (1:12). What God has done in Christ is *for the praise of his glory* (1:14).

Notice how in the expression “*for this reason...*” Paul picks up the theme of living for God’s glory at 1:12 again in 1:15, “*For this reason...*” What reason? ***That Christians should live for the praise of his glory!***

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 1:1-14

Ephesians was most likely a circular letter written to several churches in the Roman province of Asia, possibly Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. However, because of the prominence of Ephesus and the church in Ephesus the epistle was most likely sent first to Ephesus then copied and sent the other churches. The message certainly does speak to the church in Ephesus, but is relevant to all churches in Asia.

Paul praises God for what he has planned for the church; an eternal plan which he had in mind before the foundation of the earth.

Out of his infinite love God chose (predestined) those who would be in Christ to be his children. This predestination is not Calvinistic predestination which is based on hereditary sin and total depravity (Calvinistic and Roman Catholic doctrines but not biblical doctrines). In contrast to Calvinistic predestination the predestination spoken of by Paul is based on God’s eternal love for mankind, his foreknowledge, and man’s personal decision, faith, and obedience to the gospel. In Christ Christians have redemption and the forgiveness of sins according to the richness of God’s grace.

God’s plan, spoken of as a mystery, is revealed in the gospel of Christ’s death, resurrection, and God’s loving grace for all men. The plan reveals that God would unite both Jew and Gentile in Christ by grace through faith.

God’s purpose in all of this was that Christians would so live that they would bring glory to God in Christ and the church. The purpose of the Ephesian Epistle, then, is to explain that *Christians should live* in a manner that brings glory to God through Jesus Christ.

In Christ Christians have the fullness of their inheritance through the indwelling Holy Spirit. They do not need any special Gnostic intuitive knowledge in order to gain this. They already have all the knowledge and spiritual power *in Christ*.

Discussion Questions

What is the basic difference between Calvinistic Predestination and Biblical Predestination?

Since the theological message of this pericope is devoted to the *spiritual blessings* that God has provided for you through and in Christ, what blessings stand out in this pericope for you?

What does it mean that God *called* you and *predestined* you for something. What does this mean, and where do you find these blessings in your life?

Discuss some practical ways in which you can bring glory to God, in Christ, today?

What does the term *Heilsgeschichte* mean? It is a German term that has been transferred into our English religious mindset. What has this to say about Jesus? Give a modern day expression for this in terms of Jesus, salvation, or redemption?

What was the basic philosophy of Gnosticism? Work off the meaning of the Greek term *gnosis*, *knowledge*. What kind of knowledge was Paul prescribing?

Are there any kind of “*spiritual powers*” active today? Name some *negative spiritual powers* that are common today that parallel Gnostic *knowledge*, and what was Paul recommending to the Ephesians which are relevant today? Name some that you, or your children, may encounter in our

educational systems, and what can you do to remedy this especially in your life today? Think church! What is the answer to these powers?

How may this particular lesson from Ephesians apply in your life, and how may it strengthen you today? Be practical regarding your *home life patterns, business life, and your sport life, think Television and of your and your children's life patterns*. Some respond, "*well, I need to have a personal life as well!*" How many years do you really have with your children before they develop their own life patterns? *Be realistic!*

Remember, *God called is in Christ, and predestined us primarily to so live our lives that we bring glory to God and Christ.*

A personal example. I remember years ago that one of my sons in a business seminar was asked "*what is most important in your life and career?*" His response, which I have in his own handwriting was, "*Jesus Christ and the church, my wife, my children, and my parents!*" In short order after that seminar he was made a partner in the international consulting group where he worked. I think that his choice of Jesus and his family were, and have been, his response to so living his life for the glory of God.

My other two sons have made to same choices, *Jesus first, church important, wife, children, parents, then career!* I think that more than through teaching *our family lifestyle, missionary, minister, elder, and Bible professor, without neglecting to spend time with our children* made an impression on our three sons.

Lesson 6. Eph 1:15-23

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesian Christians in Asia

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 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; 22 and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.”

The *Laudatio* leads into a prayer of concern for the recipients of the letter. *This prayer is that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and a revelation of the knowledge of Christ so that they would so live that they bring glory to God.*

We will learn that Paul prays that the Christians would also *receive the Holy Spirit working in their lives* in order to help them and to *empower them to bring glory to God.*

Eph 1:15-23. The Greek of this section is in *one long sentence* with no period at the end of 1:17 as in the NIV.¹ The RSV is correct in preserving the long sentence albeit with the understanding that this makes for difficult reading. In this long sentence, almost a full paragraph, Paul introduced a theme that is vital to understanding both Ephesians and Colossians. We have already noticed that Paul's theological theme in Ephesians is that *Christians should so live that they bring glory to God in Christ.* However, in order to be able to live lives that bring glory to God in Christ two things are necessary.

First, contrary to Gnostic claims, Christians do not need a new form of esoteric knowledge; *all they need is the correct knowledge of Christ.* The right kind of knowledge *focuses on what God has already done in Christ.* He has already defeated the spiritual powers in the heavenly places through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has already provided Christians with the truth of their redemption, Jesus Christ. **John 14:6** *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”* The real truth about Jesus is that in Jesus all the divine power of divinity has already come to redeem them. **Col 1:19**, *“For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”*

Second, Christians facing any powerful enemy while living in Christ will *also need the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.* Note Paul's magnificent prayer at **Eph 3:14-21**: *“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the*

¹ Andrew Lincoln observes, “The original Greek text of 1:15–23 forms one sentence. Again, for the sake of English style and intelligibility, the translation has been broken down into a number of sentences and here the words “I pray” have been added in order to begin a new sentence.” Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 47. Indicating the complexity of the punctuation of the text our Greek texts are divided as to whether or not a period appears following 1:19.

*breadth and length and height and depth,*¹⁹ *and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.*²⁰ *Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,*²¹ ***to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.***

Thus, in this long extended sentence Paul addresses both *the right kind of knowledge* Christians need, and *the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit* which helps in understanding the knowledge of Christ and living to bring glory to God in Christ and the church.

Eph 1:15, Paul begins this pericope with the expression “*For this reason ...*” For what reason? For the reason that *they have been destined by God to bring glory to him in Christ!* He is tying the following verses back to 1:14 in which he had mentioned the indwelling Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of the Christian’s inheritance. Paul mentions that he does not cease praying for the Ephesian Christians so that *they will have a spirit of wisdom and knowledge in order to live so as to bring glory to God in Christ. To be able to do so they must have the right or correct knowledge, which is the truth about Jesus, his nature, and his purpose.*

Eph 1:17. Note the precise words of Paul’s prayer for the Christians, “*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened ...*” Paul was well aware of the danger of the Gnostic appeal for special esoteric knowledge. He wanted the Christian’s eyes of their heart (inner being) to be opened by the power of God and the knowledge of Jesus and not by some secret knowledge.

Paul was very aware of the Gnostic threat which claimed to impart a special knowledge for the enlightened. He had already stated that in Christ God had provided the Christians with every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3) they need. Now he adds *that they should draw on the spiritual wisdom they have in the knowledge of Christ.*

The word *knowledge*, ἐπίγνωσις, *epignōsis*, implies *full knowledge*.² The word for knowledge in Greek is *gnosis*. The preposition *epi* implies authority over, powerful, full, or complete. *Epignōsis* was a term common among Gnostic philosophical thinking and had become a *technical term* in the *mystery religious circles*. For those of a Gnostic mindset it stood for some form of *special intuitive full knowledge of the ultimate divinity, god*. Gnostics held that in order to be *one with the ultimate god* one needed to have the *intuitive secret full knowledge* they had that would enable them to escape the powers of the corrupt universe and evil spirits. Paul and Christians argued in response that such *full knowledge comes only from knowing Jesus Christ and what God has revealed in Christ.*

Eph 1:18-20. Paul prayed for the Christians in Asia that “*the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened,*” not merely of their mind, but something that goes deeper than the mind. The “*eyes seeing*” aspect of the heart or mind is a deeper understanding of knowledge! He prayed that “*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened ... you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*¹⁹ *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might*²⁰ ***which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places ...***”

² *Epignōsis* is more intensive than *gnōsis* which simply means knowledge. *Epignōsis* can express a more thorough participation in the acquiring of knowledge on the part of the learner. In the NT it often refers to knowledge which very *powerfully influences the form of religious life*. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

At **Eph 1:18**. Paul continued his long *sentence building on the thought of the proper kind of knowledge the Christians in Asia needed. This right kind of knowledge lies simply in knowing what God has powerfully done in Christ.*

Paul wanted the Ephesians to know what their *true hope* was. It was not some special mystical intuitive knowledge. *It was simply Christ living in them and they in Christ!*

In a great text, parallel to the Ephesian concerns, **Col 1:24-29**, Paul spoke of *this hope* “which is *Christ in you*” and not in some form of esoteric personal intuitive private knowledge:

Col 1:24-29 “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in *Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,*²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints.²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ.²⁹ For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.”

This reminds us today that we are not saved by our own knowledge and understanding of Scripture but *by knowing that our salvation lies expressly in what God has done for us in Christ. Knowledge of Scripture, or the right knowledge of sound doctrine is important but it does not save us.* It instructs us regarding what God has done in Christ but it is what God has done in Christ that saves us, not our knowledge. *Knowledge is important, but it is the right kind of knowledge that counts!* That is, knowledge focused on the real power of salvation, *Jesus’ death and resurrection*, and not knowledge that focuses on our special mindset, no matter how special it may be, but solely on *God’s saving activity I Jesus.*

All *saving knowledge*, including the knowledge of “*sound doctrine*,” only informs us of what it is that really does save us, that is, *God’s gracious redeeming work in Christ.*

To think that our *sound doctrine* or *knowledge of Scripture* saves us is only a modern form of *Gnosticism* which focuses on the power of knowledge to save, but this was, and is, the Gnostics error. *The right kind of saving knowledge, or of saving doctrine, focuses on Jesus Christ who is the means and power of the Christian’s salvation.*

Knowing Jesus does not simply mean knowing *something about Jesus*, but it involves *entering into an appropriate relationship with Jesus through faith or trusting in Jesus and what God has done in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.*

Paul speaks of *the glorious inheritance in the saints* that God has worked for Christians. There is nothing that the Gnostic false teachers (or any false teachers) can offer Christians that is not already available for them in Christ.

Note how Peter in a different context makes the same point at **1 Pet 1:3**. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*⁴ and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,⁵ who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Again at **2 Peter 1:3** Peter adds “*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,*⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.”

In the appropriately focussed knowledge of what God has done in Christ, Christians already have all the saving knowledge they need for life and godliness.

Eph 1:19. Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to know *the immeasurable power available to them* through what God had done for them in Christ, *notable in the resurrection of Jesus*. Again, we stress that **Christians are not saved by knowledge, but by the power of God seen in the cross of Christ and Jesus' resurrection.**

The faith that saves is faith in *the saving grace of God in Jesus' death and resurrection*. This faith is informed by *the right kind of knowledge that focuses the believer on the power of their salvation, the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

Eph 1:20. All that Christians need for *full knowledge*, ἐπίγνωσις, *epignōsis*, is *knowing and believing what God has already accomplished for them in Christ*. Christians do not need any additional knowledge **for salvation** beyond *Christ and what God has done for them in Christ in order to be saved and to bring glory to God*. God has done all this by the working of his great might (Eph 1:20) “*when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places ...*”

It is a fundamental principle that all *Christians must grow in their knowledge of the Christian life of faith and obedience.*

Peter addressed this well in his Second Epistle, **2 Pet 1:3-11**. “³ *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,* ⁴ *by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.* ⁵ *For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,* ⁶ *and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,* ⁷ *and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.* ⁸ *For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁹ *For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.* ¹⁰ *Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall;* ¹¹ *so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

This thought introduces a major point in Paul's message to the Ephesians. *Christ rules even in the heavenly places.* *The heavenly places* may refer to views of the spiritual powers in the heavenly places with whom Paul was concerned. It is not special intuitive knowledge of these powers that saves the Christians, but the knowledge of what God has already done for them in Jesus Christ who already is ruling in the heavenly places. ***It is not the Gnostic demiurges of demigods who rule in the heavenly places; Christ does!***

Christ has dominance over all spiritual powers whatever or wherever they may be! At his death and resurrection Jesus conquered Satan and all of Satan's spiritual powers. **Matt 28:18,** “*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...”*”

Eph 1:20 and the following verses clearly state that God has placed Jesus in control of all the heavenly places which in the Gnostic mind would include the realms over which the supposed demiurges or spiritual powers had control.

Jesus has absolute control of all the heavenly places. Such power does not reside in any supposed spiritual powers! *God has placed Jesus at his right hand (a place of honor) in the heavenly places to rule over them.* *Jesus has all rule and authority, power and dominion for all ages over all creation, including any supposed spiritual powers such as the Gnostic demiurges.* Paul drives this point home powerfully at **Col 1:11-14** which was also written addressing similar concerns as in to the Ephesian epistle. “*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his*

glorious might, **for all endurance and patience with joy**,¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.¹³ **He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,**¹⁴ **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

Paul enlarges on this at **Eph 1:22**, by stating **that God has “put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,**²³ **which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.”**

Notice a fine point here at vs 22! God has done this **“for the church, which is the body”** of Jesus. *The concept of the church as the body of Christ is obviously prominent in Pauline theology and description of the church.* Note especially Col 1:18, *“He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent.”* But the point Paul is stressing in the Ephesian text here is that God has made Jesus supreme over everything and has done this **for the church**, not simply **in the church!** **For the church, in behalf of the church, for the blessing and strengthening of the church,** God has set Jesus above all powers and rulers, either earthly or heavenly!

There is no power, *demigod*, or *other being* that is above Jesus, *including all spiritual powers, Satan, and agents of Satan.* *All are subject to him.* They may be rebelling against him today, but *all are under his authority and power and are subject to him.*

In the *end*, or at the *eschatological end*, all powers will bow their knee before Jesus and acknowledge him as Lord! **Phil 2:11**, *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,”*¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

We know that Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and in his resurrection. John explains that Christians can also defeat Satan today in their lives **by their faithfulness to Jesus.** Note this victorious statement of John at **Rev 12:10, 11.** *“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now [Apti, “for the present time”] the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”*¹¹ **And they have conquered him** *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”*

Confer also **Rom 8:35-39**, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*³⁶ *As it is written, “For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,*³⁹ *nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

At **Eph 1:23** Paul concludes his long sentence by explaining that *the church is the body of Christ and that Jesus is the fulness of God.* He observes, *“the church which is his body is the fulness of him who fills all in all.”*

³ Zodhiates, “Now, at present, at this moment (Matt. 3:15, “Suffer it to be so now,” for the present; Matt. 26:53; John 9:19, 25; 13:7, 33, 37; 16:12, 31; 1 Cor. 13:12; 16:7; Gal. 1:9, 10; 4:20; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:6, 8). In 1 Cor. 4:11, “the present time” (a.t.). See also John 2:10; 16:24; 1 Cor. 4:13; 8:7; 15:6; 1 John 2:9. Now, already, spoken of a time just elapsed (Matt. 9:18; **Rev. 12:10**).”

First Paul stresses that *the church is the body of Christ*. Paul likes the analogy of the church/body. Note **1 Cor 12:12-27**, in which Paul explains that those in the church are all individually *members of one body and have all been baptized into the one body by the Holy Spirit*. Note also **Eph 4:4** where he adds that *there is only one body (church)*, cf. **Col 1:22**. The point is that Christians have all been reconciled to God in the body of Christ, the church, which is the fulness of God's eternal purpose.

Second, the church/body is the *fulness* of God. *Fulness* is an important and loaded theological term! *Fulness*, Greek *plērōma*, was a favorite term among Gnostics and other philosophies in ancient times. It referred to *the fulness of deity*. Christians, in Christ, have reached *their full divine potential* in Christ. *There is nothing more for the Ephesians and Christians to attain other than to be like Christ and God*. Christians have already in Christ been transformed into the likeness of Christ and God and in Christ they continue every day through the power of the Holy Spirit to grow more like Christ. Christians have been united to Christ through baptism, and being born again in a new creation; **Rom 6:1-11; John 3:3-5; Tit 3:5; 2 Cor 5:17**. Now **in Christ** they grow to be more like him, reflecting his glory and the glory of God.

Third, the Gnostics and other mystery religions have nothing to offer that the Christians do not already have *fully in Christ*. Paul also develops this anti-Gnostic argument in his epistle to the **Colossians in which he argues for the preeminence and all sufficiency of Christ**. Note **Col 1:15-20, in Christ the fulness of God was pleased to dwell**. "*He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities, or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things [in time and preeminence], and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*"

When people are **in Christ they share in the fulness of God in Christ**. The Gnostics can offer nothing new, equal, or more than this!

Some Scholarly Observations Regarding this Pericope

All scholars observe that this text is very difficult to interpret in that it has some extremely difficult translation and syntactical issues! This study is not the place to unload these issues, but the student is referred to the commentaries listed in the bibliography for further information. I will include three observations by three excellent scholars, *Andrew Lincoln, Clinton Arnold* and *F. F. Bruce*.

Andrew Lincoln, in a comprehensive exegesis of Eph 1:22, 23, comments:

"The final three clauses of the first chapter are some of the most difficult of the whole epistle for the commentator. Not only do they contain major problems of syntax and translation, but they also introduce key terms (head, church, body, and fullness), to which an immense amount of secondary literature has been devoted. The limits of this commentary forbid any full-scale review of and interaction with the literature, but an attempt will be made to sketch the broad outlines of such scholarly discussion ... Our decisions in regard to the three major areas of contention surrounding the last clause of the first chapter mean, then, that the writer's overall thought is that the church is Christ's fullness and that Christ is the one who is completely filling the cosmos. Here, as in 1:22b, ecclesiological and cosmic perspectives are juxtaposed in a way that underlines the Church's special status, for although Christ is in the process of filling the cosmos, at present it is only the Church

which can actually be called his fullness. The Church appears, then, to be the focus for and medium of Christ's presence and rule in the cosmos."⁴

Clinton Arnold, along similar lines to Lincoln, observes regarding the thoughts that Paul introduced in this text:

"In conclusion, the final clause of this section of the letter asserts that the church is filled with power and grace from its exalted Lord, who, in turn, extends his reign throughout heaven and earth through the church. The church accomplishes this through dependence on the one who fills her and by proclaiming the gospel and manifesting the kingdom of God to all in an extensive way."⁵

Finally, **F. F. Bruce** observes:

"But a more probable interpretation of the passive voice would be to take it as denoting the fact that in Christ the fullness of deity is perpetually resident. The grammatical problem will probably never reach a universally agreed solution, and we may content ourselves for the present with the rendering of the English versions. The Church, the body of Christ, is the complement of him who fills the entire universe."⁶

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 1:15-23

Paul begins the long, one sentence paragraph with "*For this reason ...*" which ties the paragraph and its message back to the reason for the epistle, that is, that *Christians should so live that they bring glory to God in Christ.*

For this reason Paul prays that the Christians would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God and Jesus, not the *Gnostic special intuitive knowledge* but **knowledge of Christ**, so they will know *the real truth of what God has done for them in Christ.*

God has put Jesus *over all authority and rule, including Satan* and any other spiritual powers that Gnostics, or others, can conceive.

Christians have everything they need in Christ who is the head over all things for the church.

Christians reach *the fulness of their potential in Christ* who is himself the fulness of divine power and being.

Discussion Questions

What advantage do Christians have over those *outside of Christ* as a result of the inheritance they have from God? Name one or two and discuss them.

What does this mean in practical life situations and how do we receive these blessings, and continue to receive such?

Where does the Holy Spirit come into the Christians life? How does 1 Cor 12:12ff and Gal 5:16-6:5?

Where can you reach your full potential in life, in financial prosperity, community and political power, position in employment? Discuss this thought more fully. Name some practical life situations that are germane in this discussion, such as political fervor, etc.

In the past week how has the Holy Spirit helped you live your life *for the glory of God*? Be specific and practical.

How do we fit into the working power of the Holy Spirit? Read Gal 5:16-6:5 again!

⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 77.

⁵ Arnold, Clinton E., *Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Eph 1:23, Zondervan. Kindle Edition, 2011.

⁶ Bruce, F.F. *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse by Verse Exposition by One of the Great Bible Scholars of Our Age*, Kindle Edition, 2012. Italics IAF.

Lesson 7. Eph 2:1-21

The Doctrinal Body of Ephesians

Saved by God's Grace through Faith in God's working in Jesus

Eph 2:1-10. “And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—⁹ not because of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Eph 2:1-7. Issues in translation

Translating Eph 2:1-7 challenges the translators since *there is no main verb in the sentence and one has to be supplied!*

Notice **Andrew Lincoln's** comment on this in the *Word Biblical Commentary* on Ephesians:

“The Greek text here does not have a finite verb but rather a participial clause, ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκρούς..., lit. “you being dead...” In fact there is an **anacoluthon** in the Greek syntax, for this clause is the object of a verb whose subject is introduced in v 4 **but which itself does not appear until after the opening clause has been repeated in the first person plural in v 5, ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκρούς**, lit. “we being dead,” and can then be seen to be συνεζωοποίησεν, “made alive with.” In translating v 1, one can either supply the main verb from v 5—“And you he made alive, when you were dead”—and repeat this when one comes to v 5 (RSV) or simply translate the participle as a finite verb (NIV).”¹

Lincoln's explanation is almost as difficult to read and understand as the Greek text itself! **But it does draw attention to the difficulty in translating this sentence.** He mentions an *anacoluthon* which complicates the flow of thought in the sentence.²

Where one inserts the main verb or supposed verb has shaped our different translations: NRSV – “**You were dead through the trespasses and sins** ² in which you once lived...” RSV – “**And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins...**” NIV – “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...” KJV – “**And you hath he quickened**, who were dead in trespasses and sins...” NKJV – “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...”

However, in principle, in spite of the grammatical and syntactical issues, the different translations read much the same! ***Those who were dead in sins God has made alive in Christ!***

¹ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, 1994, p. 84

² An anacoluthon is a clause or sentence in which the wording ignores the normal grammatical flow of words. It can result in syntactical or grammatical inconsistency or incoherence within a sentence as in a shift in an unfinished sentence from one construction to another. It might seem that the writer has dropped some words out or included something for emphasis. Syntax refers to how a sentence is constructed.

Eph 2:1-3,. Dead in sin but alive in Christ

“And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. ³Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

Paul begins with the Greek word *kai*, *and*, which syntactically connects this section back to the *berakah* blessing of 1:3ff, and the theme of God’s redemptive work in Christ. “**And**” since you are in Christ where you enjoy every spiritual blessing provided by God in his plan of salvation “*you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins...*”

We praise God (bless God) for planning our salvation before creation, for *calling us to be his children in Christ, and (kai) for bringing us to life when we were dead in sin!* We who were dead in our sins now praise God for making us alive, “*blessed or praised be the God,*” **Eph 1:3.**

At one time these Christians, most likely Paul had in mind the Gentile Christians, for he picked up this thought again at **Eph 2:11**, “*at one time you **Gentile**” were dead in their sins, having no hope in the world (Eph 2:12), and alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Dead or death here refers to total destruction or ruin. It does not simply refer to spiritual death or physical death. **It means they were in a state of total ruin, both physical and spiritual!** Without God and Christ in their lives they were **totally “lost” without any hope.** Now, in the eschatological “*nun*” of the *last days*, they were saved, children of God, alive in Christ (Eph 2:11ff.).*

Eph 2:4-7. Saved by God’s great love and our faith in Jesus

*“**But** God, who is rich in mercy, **out of the great love with which he loved us,** ⁵ **even** when we were dead through our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** ⁶ and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ⁷ **that** in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

But now in Christ by God’s great love and mercy they have been *made alive together with Christ.* Several commentators believe the reference here to being dead and now made alive with Christ refers to Christian baptism, Rom 6:1-11; Col 2:12, 13.³ At one time the Gentiles had been under the power of the prince of the power of the air – a reference to Gnostic understanding of evil. **Now in Christ** they were freed from such powers.

Note particularly Paul’s reference to baptism at **Col 2:12, 13**, “*and you were buried [you have died] with him in baptism, in which you were **also raised with him** [you have been made alive] **through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.** ¹³ And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ **having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.** ¹⁵ **He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.”***

The result of Jesus’ death and consequent resurrection is that *he reigns supremely over Satan, having repeatedly conquered Satan especially in his resurrection. He reigns over the heavenly places, and over all creation.* Christians, who were dead in their sinful life, and having been being united with his death and resurrection in baptism, *have been made alive in Christ and reign with*

³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 101 f; Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, Eph 2:5; Peter O’Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Eph 2:5, 6. The commentators may not mention Christian baptism but most tied this text at Eph 2:4-6 to passages tied to baptism such as Rom 6:1-4 and Col 2:12, 13.

him! God has done all this so that in the coming ages, that is, *after his coming*, παρουσία, *parousia*⁴ at the end of the age, *hemerai eschatai*, Christians will share in the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness.

Eph 2:8, 9. Saved by grace through faith

In this text we have one of the best known and most often quoted verses of the Bible.

“⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — ⁹not because of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Driving home the point that our salvation lies in the working of God and not our works or knowledge, Paul emphasizes that we are saved by God’s grace through faith in the workmanship of God. Paul also developed this theme of salvation or justification by grace through faith in his letter to the Romans, especially in **Rom3:21-26**: *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; ²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; ²⁶it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.”*

Salvation is the gift of God. It lies in his working in Jesus and our faith in Jesus and our obedience to him. We do not receive it or earn it by our works, as in keeping the Law of Moses, or even works done in righteousness. Neither do we receive it through a *special intuitive knowledge*. We receive our salvation simply by God’s grace and through our faith in Jesus and God’s working in our salvation.

Note that this text does not say that faith is the gift of God! It is *salvation that is the gift of God*. Some, especially of the “faith only” Calvinistic view of salvation, argue that since man is totally depraved he cannot on his own depraved will even believe. Faith it is argued is in this view is therefore the gracious gift of God to the unbeliever. However, **that is not what this text is saying!** This text states quite clearly that we are saved by God’s grace through our faith in Jesus! **It is salvation that is the gift of God in his text, not faith.**

It is a fundamental biblical doctrine that our salvation is a gift of God which we receive through our faith in the working of God. Paul states this quite clearly at **Col 2:12-14**: *“you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.”*

Paul clearly teaches that in baptism we are saved and raised with Christ *through faith (trusting) in the working of God in Jesus*, and not by our own works.

Eph 2:11-21. Jew and Gentile are united in one body by the cross of Jesus

This is a long statement! It is profoundly important to Paul’s message to the Ephesians and to Paul’s theology of salvation, redemption, and reconciliation:

⁴ Παρουσία, *parousia*; to be present, presence, a being present, a coming to a place, coming or arrival. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament*.

¹¹Therefore **remember** that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;¹⁸ for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;²² in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

The major point is that **God has reconciled all people, Jew and Gentile, to himself in and through Jesus Christ.** Those in Christ are not divided, but have been united in one body by the cross. It is because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and his resurrection that both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body since we are all baptized by one Spirit into his one body, the church, 1 Cor 12:12, 13 ff. Our salvation comes not by keeping the Law of Moses or through some esoteric knowledge. It comes only in and through Jesus Christ. Note particularly how Paul developed this in Gal 3:23-29. I have set certain words in bold letters for emphasis:

“Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed.²⁴ So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian;²⁶ **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.**²⁷ **For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**²⁸ **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

Eph 2:11. Paul develops his doctrine of salvation and justification

The word *therefore* takes us back to Eph 2:1-10 and stands in parallel to that text’s message. You Gentiles were dead in your sins and God has made you alive in Christ. *Now remember* that at one time you were separated from Christ, etc.

The Jews who held to a *circumcision made by hands* (circumcision was a sign of a covenant relationship with God) called the Gentiles the *uncircumcised* in that they were in the Jewish view Gentiles and not part of the covenant relationship God made with Abraham and which was carried forward in the Law of Moses. The Jews however forgot or rejected the point that the Gentiles were included by God in the covenant he had made with Abraham at Gen 12:1 ff and Gen 17:1ff.

Eph 2:12. Living in sin the Gentiles outside of Christ

“remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**”

Paul paints a dismal hopeless view of the Gentiles lost condition! “**Remember ...**” In their previous condition, being *alienated from God and Christ*, the Gentiles were *spiritually dead and lost!* Living in a sinful condition Gentiles were *separated from Christ, alienated from the*

commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant promise, having no hope without God in the world. **They were lost in a corrupt and dying world!**

Eph 2:13. A new living saved lifestyle

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.”

The interesting Greek conjunctive expression $\nu\upsilon\iota\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}$, *nuni de, but now*, emphasizes the fact that *now*⁵ in the Christian or eschatological age things have changed. *Now* in Christ, those who had been far removed from God by their sin are *now* brought near to God in the blood of Christ. *In Christ* all people can be saved, both Jew and Gentile, both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, *all are saved together in one body by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.*

Eph 2:14-16. God, in Christ, abolished the law of hostility dividing Jew and Gentile

“For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.”

Christ made the difference by *abolishing the Law*⁶ which had in some measure separated Jew from Gentile, and made peace with God for both Jew and Gentile by the cross. ***In fact, God had never intended the Law of Moses to be a boundary marker between the Jew and Gentile, but the Jews had made it such. God had always intended his covenant relationship with Israel to be based on faith, not Law.*** The Law was given by God through Moses at Sinai, Exodus, *passim*, to define a *right living relationship with God*. It clarified the nature and consequences of sin. Salvation and righteousness under the Law was never intended to be through legal rectitude and obedience to the Law. From the time of Abraham forgiveness and righteousness was through faith in God and his redemptive work.

This is the story of Paul’s Epistles to Romans and Galatians!

In the mind of the Jew the Law of Moses represented a covenant relationship between only God and the Jews. But, the Law of Moses had been instituted to clarify for God’s covenant people the nature and consequences of sin.

Gal 3:19-29 explains Paul’s thought in a concise manner. Paul had argued that *the covenant between God and Abraham was not based on the Law of Moses but on faith*, and was intended for both Jew and Gentile.

“Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary.²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one.

²¹ *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.²² But the scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

²³ *Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed.²⁴ So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian;²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you*

⁵ The little expression $\nu\upsilon\iota\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}$, *nuni de* derived from $\nu\upsilon\iota$, *nun* is an *adverbial* phrase when *nun* is strengthened by the demonstrative *i* (iota). It forms an interesting technical theological term. Scholars call this an eschatological *nun*, *now*, implying that the redemption of the Gentiles in Christ refers to the present eschatological age introduced by Christ, or as we might call it, the final Christian age of God’s plan of salvation.

⁶ For discussion of the annulment of the old Law cf. Heb 8:9-10:10.

are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**"

In practice, the Law which was *good, holy, and spiritual*, **Rom 7:11-16**, had become a *dividing wall* between Jew and Gentile. Now since the Law had been abolished that wall had been removed by the cross. *In Christ God had united both Jew and Gentile as one new "man."* There was now no longer "two men," Jew and Gentile, but one new "man" in Christ.

"For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

Where animosity and hostility had existed, now *peace should reign*. Both Jew and Gentile being reconciled to God *in one body by the cross*.

Eph 2:17-19. Jesus had preached peace for all people

"And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,"

Through Jesus all, both Jew and Gentile, have access in one Spirit to the Father. Two things, **first**, note the Trinitarian function in this text. *Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.*

Second, note **the emphasis on the Spirit and the unity of both Jew and Gentile**, 1 Cor 12: 13. We are *all baptized by one Spirit into one body*, both Jews and Greeks. Jews and Gentiles in Christ are no longer enemies or strangers, but are one family, fellow citizens with all the other saints in God's house.

Eph 2:20, 21. A Pauline metaphor—the church is like a house and family

"you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Paul mixes his metaphors of *family and house*, using now the analogy of a *house or building*. The church or family of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (this is a genitive of apposition in which *the apostles and prophets are the foundation*) with Jesus being the cornerstone by which the building is aligned.

The point here is that *both the apostles* (by their teaching the gospel of Jesus and the cross) *and Jesus* form the foundation of the church, but *Jesus is the aligning principle*, the cornerstone of the foundation and church.

In Jesus all are joined together like stones in a building into one holy temple in which both Jews and Gentiles become a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. *Note the heavy emphasis on unity of all believers in this text.*

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 2:1-2:21

Paul continues the thought he had developed in Eph 2:1-10, namely that *we are all children of God and saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ*. We have been *created in Christ* for good works in which we should walk, live.

Therefore, we should *remember* the depths of sinfulness and lostness from where we have come, *where we were strangers and alienated from God, lost, and without hope in the world*.

Christ's death has changed things and now we all are brought together in one body by the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is not by our works, or Law keeping that we have been brought together in one body, *but solely by God's grace and our faith in his working*.

We are all fellow citizens in Christ, joined together and *forming one holy temple in the Lord*.

The main point is to remember our *lost past condition* and *what God has done for us*. *We have been united by His grace and His Holy Spirit and form one body in Christ, the church*.

We are *justified, forgiven, saved, united with God, no longer aliens or strangers with God all by Gods grace and our faith in Jesus Christ*.

Salvation is the gift of God. Faith is our response to god's grace. We are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

Remember and recount your conversion to Christ experience. What triggered it, and what stood out in your conversion growth?

What are the ingredients of faith development? Begin with *Notitia!* Take a look at Lesson 16.

How has your life changed as a result of that conversion experience? Be specific, name some feature of your changed life.

What sins or changes have challenged you most, and how have you addressed them?

Can you think of times and conditions when you as a Christian have not been united to, and one in Christ?

How have you handled your growth *away from your weaknesses and sin?*

How can this text help you when you have problems in your life or in the church?

Lesson 8. Eph 3:1-21

The Function and Purpose of the Church

Eph 3:1-13 “¹*For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—*²*assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,*³ *how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.*⁴ *When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,*⁵ *which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*⁶ *that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*⁷ *Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of his power.*⁸ *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*⁹ *and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;*¹⁰ *that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.*¹¹ *This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,*¹² *in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.*¹³ *So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.”*

Note again how Paul begins this chapter or section. “*For this reason ...*” He is returning to the theological theme of Ephesians, but before he gets too deeply into this he introduces a new thought. The anacoluthon at the end of vs. 1 and just before vs.2, is interesting, “*For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—*²*assuming that you have heard...*” The anacoluthon which begins with “*assuming that you have heard...*” is a break in thought where the writer wishes to introduce a parenthetical thought into the discussion. Paul will return to the original thought at Eph 3:14. In our bible text the anacoluthon is indicated by a long “dash” --. Determining the end of the anacoluthon is sometimes difficult but is arrived at by examining the context of the discussion.

The *anacoluthon* is best understood as ending at the end of Eph 3:13. Eph 3:2-13 is therefore a *parenthetical* thought that Paul introduces to amplify something that he thinks needs explanation.

Paul will again return to the expression “*for this reason*” at Eph 3:14 indicating that he is picking up the thought introduced at Eph 3:1. He will explain at Eph 3:14 that *the reason he prays (bows the knee before the Father)* is that the Christians may be strengthened with might in their inner person (man). But why does he pray this prayer? He prays for the Christians so that they, called by God as part of his eternal purpose and who are destined to so live for the purpose of bringing glory to God through Jesus Christ, *may have power to live that they bring glory to God.* To bring glory to God is the destiny, purpose, and function of Christians, so *for this reason* Paul prays that they may be strengthened with might in order to be able to fulfill their divinely ordained and appointed purpose!

Now we need to examine Paul’s parenthetical thought. Parenthetical thoughts are important, which is why the writer introduces the parenthesis!

Eph 3:2-13. This long pericope is the parenthetical thought in which Paul digresses from his main thought to introduce a new but important emphasis:

“-- *assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,*³ *how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.*⁴ *When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,*⁵ *which was not made known to the*

sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory."

Eph 3:2, 3. The new thought is to emphasize that by God's grace he, Paul, had been appointed as a special apostle to the Gentiles. Paul does this to stress the thought introduced at Eph 2:11 ff that the Gentiles are important and that God's purpose was that both Jews and Gentiles would be reconciled in one body by the cross. How God would do this had been a mystery in the past to both Jew and Gentile; but this mystery now had been revealed to Paul and the apostles by God.

Paul purposefully emphasized that he had received this mystery and commission to preach to the Gentiles by a revelation from God. This underscores the importance of his ministry and preaching to the Gentiles. It also highlights again that the mystery Paul referred to was how God was going to unite both Jew and Gentile in one body. What had been a mystery was now revealed in Paul's preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Eph 3:4-8. The mystery was that the Jews and Gentiles were to be *fellow heirs* of God's promises and covenant to Abraham which had been fulfilled in Jesus on the cross. The church as the body of Christ was the "place" where Jew and Gentile would be united. This Paul describes was a revelation of *the unsearchable riches of God in Christ*. Paul explains that he was not worthy of this magnificent and significant message but that *out of God's grace* he had been granted the privilege of preaching this great and precious mystery. Notice the repeated emphasis of what God has done *in Christ*.

Eph 3:9-13. It was God's intention that all men should see and understand this mystery. Being united in one body by the cross would demonstrate to the world God's mysterious plan, wisdom, and power. Naturally, this would be contingent on the Jew and Gentile being committed to living in unity in the church, cf. Eph 4:1ff.

Demonstrating God's plan by living together in harmony in the church would be the church's ministry of revealing God's plan to all creation, including the "principalities and powers in the heavenly places." Paul had been granted the honor of preaching this mystery; now it was the church's responsibility to demonstrate this mystery by the members of the body, Jew and Gentile, living in peaceful harmony.

Note this emphasis: It is *in and by the life function and behavior* of the church that the world will be able to see God's great plan and *the riches of God in Christ*.

Paul explains in this text that it is not simply through the church's *preaching ministry* that the church demonstrates and proclaims this mystery. It is primarily through *the manner in which the church maintains the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:1-6) that the world will see the mystery and plan of God demonstrated before them. It is when the world can see Jews and Gentiles (multi-ethnic groups) behaving as God's children in unity in the one church that God's plan is revealed and the church brings glory to God.

Paul's Prayer for the Saints

Eph 3:14-21

This pericope is one of the great texts of Ephesians. With a prayer for the saints Paul ends his anacoluthon and parenthesis and returns to his major theme and concern that the Christians understand their primary purpose of bringing glory to God through Jesus Christ and the church:

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man,¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸ may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.”

The leading thought of this prayer is that Christians may be powerfully strengthened with might in their inner being so that they may be able to fulfill their destiny [eternal purpose] of bringing glory to God.

This prayer is in the form of a benedictory⁷ prayer to the doctrinal section of Ephesians. After expressing this prayer Paul moves on to the parnetic section of the epistle in Eph 4:1 ff. He highlights the importance of the theology of his epistle with the highly liturgical intercessory prayer for God's divine intervention through his Holy Spirit.

In this prayer Paul underscores the important point that all people are equally members of the universal family of God (Eph 3: 15). This sets the prayer in a context that accentuates his point that both Jew and Gentile are equal in the sight of God and both have equal rights to God's blessings.

The “cosmic” fatherhood of God was held not only by Jews but also by several leading Greek philosophers such as Plato and Philo. It would resonate well with the Ephesian and Asian Greek Gentiles.

Lincoln discusses at length the cosmic setting of this prayer which draws on the universal fatherhood of God:

“To extol God the Father as father of all family groupings in heaven and on earth is to set his fatherhood in the context of creation and of the cosmos. The idea of the cosmic father of all who is creator of all can be found elsewhere in, for example, Plato, *Timaeus* 28C, 37C, 41A; Philo, *Spec.* 2.165; 3.189; or *Corpus Hermeticum* 5.9; 11.6–8; 12.15b; 14.4. Explicit statements of God's universal fatherhood are not found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, but a similar formulation occurs again later in this letter in 4:6, “one God and Father of all,” and the thought has been prepared for by the reference in 3:9 to “God who created all things.”⁸

Note the major thoughts of Paul's prayer; he calls on the riches of God's glory in Christ; he prays that God would strengthen the Ephesians and all other Christians in their inner being through the indwelling Holy Spirit; he prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith; he prays that they may be grounded in love since without Christian love no unity can exist, especially between Jew and Gentile; he prays that together with all the saints they may have power to comprehend and

⁷ A benediction from the Latin *bene* (good, well, quite right, in good style, better, best) and *dictum* (saying) which refers in religious contexts to a short prayer for divine help, pronounces a blessing, and calls for <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blessing> guidance. It usually is found at the end of worship service or at the end of a major theological statement or teaching.

⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 203.

know [experience] what is the extent of the love of Christ which passes all human understanding; he prays that they may be filled with all the *fullness* of God. *Fullness* (*plērōma*⁹) was a concept the Gnostics played with and stood for the fullness of spiritual blessing and knowledge of the divine.

The final statement of Eph 3:20, 21 gets to the heart of Paul's concern for the Ephesian Christians and emphasizes that *through the indwelling Holy Spirit God empowers Christians to "do far more abundantly than they ask or think."* The piling up of *far more abundantly* emphasizes the powerful promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit!

What this means *first* is that God is the Father of all mankind, Jew and Gentile, even of the angels, and *second* that as we try to be one body in Christ through faith in Jesus Christ God through His Holy Spirit will empower us to be the kind of people we want to be and he wants us to be. We make the effort by faith and God strengthens this effort through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Thus by the help of the Holy Spirit we are empowered to bring glory to God in one family through the church and in Christ.

The context of this whole pericope (Eph 3:1-21) highlights the point that unless Jew and Gentile can live together in unity the world and the spiritual powers in the heavenly places will not learn of and see God's wisdom and the riches of God's glory in Christ.

It is only when the church lives in unity and harmony that Satan and the spiritual powers, as well as our neighbors, can see God's glory working in and through the church.

Paul recognized that for the Jew and Gentile Christians to live together in harmony in the church it would call for a supreme effort in order to shed centuries of animosity. In order to do this the church needed to know that *first* this was God's foreordained and predestined will and plan for the church; *second* the Ephesian Christians needed to make every effort to achieve this; and *third*, God would strengthen them in their inner person through his indwelling Holy Spirit in order to reach this goal.

Paul develops this major thought of the unity of the body of Christ, which is the church, in the next chapter.

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 3:1-21

Notice Paul's use of the expression "*For this reason ...*" He is tying this section back to the theology of Ephesians he set out at Eph 1:3-14. His theology for Christians is that *they should so live that they bring glory to God in Christ.*

However, before he does, he embarks on an *anacoluthon* in which he explains his *apostolic ministry* to the Gentiles as the *mystery* of God that many had not understood. Paul's ministry was to preach and reveal that gospel *mystery* that was difficult for both Jews and Gentiles to grasp.

The mystery was how God was going to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to himself in one body, one church. For centuries the Jew and Gentile had lived in animosity toward one another. The point Paul made was that *outside of Christ the Gentiles were estranged from God*, cf. 2:11ff, and could *only be reconciled together with the Jews in the one body of Christ.*

When in the church, both Jew and Gentile live in peace, then the church by its example demonstrates to the world the wisdom of God's plan.

Paul recognized that Christians would need additional help to overcome centuries of animosity, so he explained that *God had given his Holy Spirit to dwell in Christians to empower them to maintain unity and do far more than they could ever expect.*

⁹*Plērōma*, πλήρωμα, *plērōma* was a popular term in Greek philosophic and religious tradition which meant fulness, but typically in the Gnostic tradition, the fulness of deity.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the thought introduced by Paul with his expression “*For this reason ...*” *For what reason?* What is the theology of Ephesians that Paul has explained? How would this impact your personal life?

What is the main thrust of the *anacoluthon* of Eph 3:2-13? Give some practical examples.

How does Paul explain that the church would manifest the wisdom of God to the world?

How does this apply to you and your church today? Provide some personal examples.

What instances or occasions in church life today could negate the church’s ministry in this regard?

Explain how the Holy Spirit works in the life of the Christian. Be practical in your own life and experience. Comment on Phil 2:12, 13.

Lesson 9. Eph 4:1-4:16

The Practical Body of Ephesians

Introduction

One important lesson we learn from studying Paul is that he never gave theological or doctrinal instruction without explaining its practical implications. The practical instruction that applies a doctrinal or theological thought to life we call a *paranesis*. *Paranesis* refers to moral, ethical and practical application of doctrinal or theological statements. For Paul *paranesis* is always anchored in doctrinal or theological concepts.

Eph 4:1-6:20 constitutes the *paranetic* material of the epistle which builds on the theology of the Ephesian epistle. If the theological center of the Ephesian epistle is that *Christians are destined to so live that they bring glory to God in Christ*, then the paranetic material should explain *how* this should be done.

The first point of the *paranetic* material in Ephesians demonstrates a central concern of God, Paul, and the epistle. It notably highlights Paul's major concern for the churches in Asia, and everywhere, *the unity of the church*. That this is the first point in the paranetic material accentuates its importance. *How* Christians should bring glory to God by living in *unity* in the church should be a prime concern of all Christians and the church. *Christians (Jews and Gentiles) must make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and live in the one body of Christ, the church, in a peaceful relationship.*

The Unity of the Church (4:1-16)

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

Paul begins this first and possibly the major paranetic material by explaining *how* Christians, Jews and Gentiles, can begin to go about bringing glory to God through Christ and in the church. In this important pericope he speaks of *maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. Lincoln introduces this pericope with an appropriate title, *The Church's Calling to Maintenance of the Unity*

*It Already Possesses.*¹⁰ The point Lincoln makes is most appropriate to the sense of the pericope. He calls on them to maintain the unity *they already possess!* This unity is the unity of the one body of Christ into which they have all been baptized by the one Holy Spirit.

This continuing emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit is important to both Paul's theology, the theology of the kingdom, and the theology of this epistle. At 1 Cor 12:12, 13 Paul had taught the Corinthians that all Christians are baptized by the one Holy Spirit into one body, the church:

“¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit...”

Now in the first paragraph of the paranetic material, **Eph 4:1-2**, Paul *begs, exhorts, strongly urges*, the Christians to *lead a life worthy of their calling*. The Greek, παρακαλέω, *parakalēō*, means *to call on, to summon, to invite, to urge, to implore, to beg, which implies a strong calling or urging.*¹¹

Paul had already established that their calling which had been predestined by God, was that they should live for the praise of God's glory. Paul is reminding them precisely of that calling.

The point Paul will make here is that maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3) is *how* Christians live a life *worthy of their calling and bring glory to God. They live a life worthy of their calling when they maintain the unity of the body in peace and so bring glory to God in Christ.*

We are reminded that the theology of Ephesians is that Christians have been *called* by God in Christ (and destined) to *so live their lives that they bring glory to God* in Christ (Eph 1:3ff).

In this pivotal pericope Paul is emphasizing how important it is for Christians to live in unity without which they cannot bring glory to God in Christ. That they are to do this as the first paranetic emphasis in his epistle underscores this as being of first in importance! Unfortunately the history of the church indicates that this has not been a major concern of some churches, especially in the history the modern Restoration Movement.

Paul accentuates this by stressing that Christians are to be *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit* “*with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love.*”

Lowliness, ταπεινοφροσύνης, *tapeinophrosúnēs* means *a quality of voluntary submission and humility, unselfishness, or self-effacement*¹². That means counting oneself less or lower than other people.

Meekness, πραΰτης, *praútēs* means *gentleness, courtesy, and humility*. The doubling up of these synonyms is interesting. In the Greek *lowliness* and *meekness* are joined in a grammatical construction by a coordinating conjunction, *kai* forming what is referred to as *hendiadys*¹³ which unites the two concepts *lowliness* and *meekness*, as one. Paul is calling for a spirit of *voluntary meek unselfish humility and lowliness*.

In the Greco-Roman world such *lowliness* and *servitude* was not highly praised and was considered *contemptible servility* and not a characteristic to be admired. In contrast to this in the

¹⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 221.

¹¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, pp. 225 f has a great discussion of this paranetic material and the use of the expression *I beg*.

¹² A more complete definition would be, low-minded, base, lowly, humble, *lowliness of mind*, the esteeming of oneself as small, inasmuch as we are small. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

¹³ Two nouns, noun forms, verbs or verb forms in the same case of tense joined by *kai, and*, speak of one thing through two things, with the second noun functioning as an adjective to the first noun!

Judeo-Christian world, including such Jewish sectarian views as the Essenes of the Dead Sea communities such an attitude of humility and lowliness was highly praised.

To these two mindsets of humility Paul adds *patience*, μακροθυμία, *makrothumía*; *to be long-suffering, forbearing, self-restraint before proceeding to action*. Long-suffering is the quality of a person who is able to avenge himself yet refrains from doing so¹⁴. Christians are to be longsuffering and patient with one another.

Then to this Paul piles more on, adding *forbearing one another in love*. *Forbearing* derives from ἀνέχομαι, *ánéchomai*, *putting up with, enduring, and accepting*. The driving influence in this forbearance is love, ἀγάπη, *agápē*, *affectionate regard, goodwill, benevolence, desiring the best for the other person*¹⁵. All of these qualities are *rational cognitive decisions; being willing to consider and put the other person first; getting along together*. We will learn that they are also relational in the sense that all Christians are children of God in Christ, both Jew and Gentile. *Christians are one family*.

At **Eph 4:3** Paul introduces a primary ingredient to the discussion which is that in a spirit of lowliness and humility Christians *must be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.

Christians as children called by God to be his sons in Christ must be *eager* to maintain this unity. *Eager* derives from σπουδάζω *spoudázō* meaning *in a hurry, doing one's best, making every effort, earnestness, diligence*. Christians *must make every effort* to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Andrew Lincoln observes, "Spare no effort; make it a priority for your corporate life to maintain the unity of the Spirit." Such exhortation also makes plain that the unity of the Spirit is a reality that is to be demonstrated visibly.¹⁶

However, in keeping with the previous qualities, they are to do this in *the bond of peace*. *Bond* derives from σύνδεσμος, *súndesmos* which means *a link or joint or bond*. There is something that *bonds* or *links* Christians to this unity. *The bonding agent is peace*. *Peace* derives from εἰρήνη, *eirḗnē*, and carries the *sense of spiritual or inner tranquility*. Εἰρήνη, *eirḗnē* stands in opposition to hostility or conflict. There is to be no hostility or conflict between all Christians as God's *called children*. *Hostility destroys unity!*

Eph 4:3. Paul does not state that Christians *create or bring about* this unity. They *maintain* the unity *that the Holy Spirit has created* or brought about.

Paul speaks of *the unity of the Spirit*. The prepositional phrase ἐνότηता τοῦ πνεύματος, *enotēta tou pneumatos*, is a genitive construction which in this case is a subjective genitive which implies that *the unity comes from the Spirit*. *The unity is created by the working of the Spirit*. *This unity is not our creation!* Christians are to protect, preserve, and maintain *the unity that already exists* as a result of the working of God's Holy Spirit! In this case the unity is a unity that *belongs to* the Holy Spirit or which is *derived from* the Holy Spirit. Andrew Lincoln remarks:

"The unity of the Spirit involves not the human spirit but the Holy Spirit, as v 4 makes clear, and is a reference not to the congeniality of some social grouping but to the unity which God's Spirit gives and which is the ground of the Church's existence. The term ἡνότης, "unity," occurs in the NT only here and in v 13 but it becomes a basic Christian

¹⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*; Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, pp. 22 ff.

¹⁶ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, 1990, p. 237; Peter O'Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Ephesians 4:1-3.

concept later in Ignatius (e.g., Eph. 4.2; 5.1; 14.1...). So whereas Col 3:14, 15 refer generally to love and peace, Ephesians distinctively and more specifically speaks of unity. Although this unity is already given and is not therefore the readers' own achievement, it must be preserved and protected."¹⁷

We need to comment further on the kind of *unity* implied. What kind of unity does Paul have in mind here? In Eph 4:3 and 13 Paul will discuss two kinds of unity; the one which we already have in Christ and the other into which we must grow in Christ! I will refer to these as an *ontological* unity and a *cognitive* unity.

The word unity derives from ἐνότης, *henótēs*, which in turn derives from *heis* which simply means *one*. Thus *henótēs* or *unity* meaning *oneness*, or simply as we translate it, *unity*.

At the root of *henótēs* lies two Greek words, the first *hēs, mia, hen* which are the three gender noun forms of *one*. The other root form is *ontos, eimi* which basically means *to be* or *to exist*. Thus *henótēs* primarily means *to be one, to exist as one*, hence *oneness* or *unity*.

Now the unity referred to in Eph 4:3 is not a *cognitive unity of knowledge or faith* into which one grows over time, but an *ontological unity of being* into which we have been born. Specifically *we are one in being, one in identity, one in body*.

Later at Eph 4:13 Paul will speak of a *unity of faith and knowledge*. *This is a cognitive unity*. We will discuss this unity in the next lesson, but basically it means a unity of knowledge and faith which both imply growth in the future life of the Christian.

At **Eph 4:3** Paul speaks of *maintaining or preserving the unity which the Spirit has created*. This unity has been brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. All Christians have (Jew and Gentile) been baptized by the *one Spirit into one body* (1 Cor 12:13). This takes place at our conversion and new birth when we are born of water and spirit (John 3:3-5, Tit 3:4-7). Luke points out at Acts 2:38 that when we believe, repent, and are baptized we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is all part of the working of God through the Holy Spirit in our new birth. By the work of the Holy Spirit we are born again into the one family of God, and consequently baptized into the one body of Christ.

In keeping with Paul's thinking in Ephesians, note 2 Thess 2:13, 14:

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Thus all Christians (in the context of Ephesians, notably Jews and Gentiles) are *called* by God and *destined* (expected) *to live in unity and maintain the unity* brought about by the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit at their new birth into the born again family of God. By living in the unity of the Spirit we bring glory to God for his magnificent plan to unite all in one body by the cross and work of the Holy Spirit.

Eph 4:4-6 explains the theological foundation for this unity:

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all."

Backing into this verse from its end we observe that if there is only one God, one Lord Jesus Christ, one Holy Spirit, one baptism, and one faith in Jesus, one hope in Jesus, one body of Christ, *there can be only one body, one church*.

¹⁷ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 237, Peter O'Brian *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Ephesians 4:1-3,

There is one Father for both Jew and Gentile, therefore there can be only one family of God. There is only one Lord Jesus, therefore there can be only one body of Christ, one church belonging to Christ. There is not a church for the Jew and a church for the Gentile. *There is only one church!* A church divided by ethnic diversity (or any division) cannot be the one church that belongs to Jesus. *It cannot therefore bring glory to God.*

Note Andrew Lincoln's discussion of this interesting collection of *ones*:

"The Church's unity, already expressed in terms of the unity of the Spirit, is now asserted through a series of seven acclamations of oneness. These fall into two groups of three, plus a concluding acclamation of the one God with its own fourfold repetition of the word "all." For discussion of the use of traditional material here, see Form/Structure/Setting. The sequence of thought can be said to move from the Church, as the writer's most immediate concern, on to the Church's Lord and then on to God himself. This sequence corresponds to a number of the patterns of thought earlier in the letter. But the precise sequence is dictated more by compositional and rhetorical factors than by any deliberate preference for experiential rather than logical order in creedal formulation ... There is a Hellenistic Jewish background to formulations about oneness in general and formulations about the oneness of God (v 6) in particular. For example, 2 Apoc. Bar. 85.14 can state, "Therefore, there is one law by One, one world and one end for all who exist," while Philo, Spec. 1.67, talks of there being one sanctuary because there is only one God. The oneness of God was, of course, a topic in Jewish diaspora propaganda (cf., e.g., 2 Macc 7:37; Philo, Leg. Alleg. 2.1; Josephus, Ant. 5.1. 25 § 97; 8.13.6 § 343; Ag. Ap. 2.23 § 193; Sib. Or. 3.11; 3.629; cf. also E. Peterson, ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926] esp. 141–48, 254–56). Particularly interesting as parallels are passages which derive the unity of the Jewish people from the oneness of God. Philo, Virt. 7.35, asserts that "the highest and greatest source of this unanimity is their creed of a single God, through which, as from a fountain, they feel a love for each other, uniting them in an indissoluble bond" (cf. also Spec. 1.52; 4.159, and 2 Apoc. Bar. 48.23, 24, which claims "we are all one people of the Name; we, who received one law from the One"). For the writer of Ephesians also there is a clear link between the unity of the Church and the various acclamations of oneness in vv 4–6. The behavior for which he has called, the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit, can now be seen to be the only consistent practical expression of the foundational unities he enumerates here. At the same time, by reminding his readers of these distinctive realities to which they are committed, he reinforces both the sense of cohesion he wants them to have as members of the Church and the sense of their distinctive identity vis-à-vis the surrounding society."¹⁸

Introducing a new dynamic into the discussion at **Eph 4:7-16** Paul now explains that God through Christ has given gifts to the church to enable the church members *to grow in their faith into a cognitive unity and maturing ministry* so that they can bring glory to God through their maturing faith in Jesus and developing lives dedicated to the ministry of God.

In **Eph 4:8-10** Paul uses an analogy of conquering kings who give gifts to their soldiers. He then follows it up with the fascinating discussion of Jesus who descended to earth and then ascended back to heaven. The background to this is possibly the Gnostic myth of a teacher who would come from the cosmic heaven above down to earth to bring special knowledge and truth. Jesus has done that very thing! As our conquering king he has given the church all of the spiritual gifts they may need. Remember Eph 1:3, he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. There is no need to look for further kind of spiritual enlightenment and giftedness that Christians do not already have in Christ! As we will now learn a major aspect of that giftedness is that he has given the

¹⁸ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, pp. 237f.

church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors to enrich the church's faith and help them grow in faith and ministry!

Eph 4:11 explains that the gifts Jesus gave to the church are the teaching ministry of the church who “*equip the saints for the work of ministry.*” To be specific these gifts of teaching ministry were that some would be *apostles*, some *prophets* (inspired spokespersons for God), some *evangelists*, and some *pastors and teachers*. All of these ministry gifts function in a teaching ministry whose purpose is for the maturing of the faith and service of the members.

Apostles referenced here were those chosen by Christ and commissioned by him to be the first leaders and evangelists in the church. They were *sent out* by Jesus, cf. Acts 1:8, the word ἀποστέλλω, *apostéllō* means to be sent out with authority to represent the sender. The noun form of this verb is ἀπόστολος, *apóstolos* which refers to one sent out on a mission or commissioned to carry out some duty.¹⁹ Certain men were specifically chosen by Jesus to be his chosen and empowered emissaries or apostles to begin the ministry of evangelism and maturing the church. We refer to these as the apostles of Christ.

Prophets, from the Greek προφήτης, *prophḗtēs*, were inspired speakers who could testify to the truth of a message. “... the prophet spoke not his own thoughts but what he received from God, retaining, however, his own consciousness and self-possession”²⁰ The prophets of the Old Testament and New Testament were inspired by God's Holy Spirit to speak his message clearly and with authority. Cf. 2 Pet 1:19-21:

“*And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*”

²⁰ *First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*

Evangelists from εὐαγγελιστής, *euaggelistḗs* (pronounced *euangelistays*) were the proclaimers or teachers of the gospel, that is, the *good news* concerning Christ. In other words they would be preaching ministers or evangelists in the church today. The gospel as we will learn in Ephesians was the message they proclaimed that according to the predestined will of God Jesus had died on a cross and been raised from the dead to enable those who were dead in sin to be made alive in Christ through faith in the working of God (Eph 2:1-10).

The expression pastors and teachers, ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, *poimenas kai didaskalous*, is in an interesting construction which as I mentioned above we call *hendiadys* in which two nouns are connected by a coordinating conjunction, *kai*, and are tied together as one concept. The second word acts as an adjective defining the first word. Thus *pastors and teachers* means *teaching pastors*. The word *pastor* is from the Greek ποιμήν, *poimén* and is the Greek word for *shepherd*. In the New Testament *pastors* are not the preachers but the *shepherds* or *elders of the flock*. There are three words that describe the work of an elder. They are *elder* (πρεσβύτερος, *presbúteros*) *bishop* (ἐπίσκοπος, *epískopos*, sometimes translated as *overseer*) and *shepherd* (*poimén*). They are used interchangeably to describe the different function of this ministry. Cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-3.

¹⁹ “An apostle, *one sent, apostle, ambassador*. Sometimes used syn. with *presbeutḗs*, an ambassador, The messenger or ambassador ... can never be greater than the one who sends him ... The Lord chose the term *apóstoloi* to indicate the distinctive relation of the Twelve Apostles whom He chose to be His witnesses ... Therefore, it designates the office as instituted by Christ to witness of Him before the world (John 17:18). It also designates the authority which those called to this office possess.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

²⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

The point here is that these *pastors* are *teaching pastors* or *teaching elders*. One of the qualities of a bishop or elder is that he must be “*apt to teach*”, 1 Tim 3:2, meaning not only capable but also willing to teach.

Each of these four ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, teaching pastors) given by Christ as a gift to the church are primarily a *teaching ministry*. Through their teaching and example apostles, prophets, evangelists, and elders “*equip the saints for the work of ministry*.” They also serve in “*building up the body of Christ*” (the church). These four teaching ministries are for equipping the saints for the work or ministry or serving others in the body of Christ. They are “*to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*”, **Eph 4:12, 13**.

The goal of this teaching and equipping ministry is that Christians “*attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God*.” This unity is *not* referring to the *ontological* unity of Eph 4:1-6, but to a *cognitive* unity into which Christians must all *grow and mature* [Eph 4:13, 14]. It refers to a unity of faith and a unity of knowledge, both of which come as a result of teaching, growth and maturity.

Lincoln²¹ draws attention to the difference in the unity being discussed in Eph 4:3 and the unity of Eph 4:13. The first unity, the *ontological* unity, is the working of the Holy Spirit. The second unity, the *cognitive* unity, is the work of the teaching ministries mentioned in Eph 4:11, that of the teaching of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors. The unity discussed in Eph 4:13 is one of progression toward the mind of Christ including faith in the sense of sound doctrinal understanding of Christ in contrast to that which results from the false teachers encountered in Ephesus and Asia. One should remember that Ephesians was written regarding true faith in the pagan world of Artemis, the mystery religions, and Gnosticism. Gnosticism denied that the Christ had come in the flesh; that Jesus in the flesh was not the Christ or Redeemer of Light.

In the body of Christ Christians all share in the same *ontological* unity of the Spirit, we are all equally members of the body of Christ, the church. There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles (God shows no partiality in salvation between Jew and Gentile, Rom 2:10, 11; and Gal 3:28). However, we have not all reached the same *cognitive unity of faith and knowledge*. The teaching ministry of the church is for the purpose of our edification, growth, and maturing in faith. However, even in the *cognitive* realm Christians must strive to maintain the unity of the body of Christ.

Eph 4:15. “*Speaking the truth in love*” we are to grow up into maturity in Christ who is the head of the body, the church, teaching and speaking to one another in love.

Eph 4:16. From our relationship with our head, Jesus Christ, the whole body functions in *unison* (a *functional* unity) when every member (Jew and Gentile) is “*joined and knit together*.” Being joined together in Christ *we grow and build one another up in love*.

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 4:1-16

This chapter is where Paul begins the *practical (paranetic)* application of the *doctrinal/theological* section of the Epistle.

The *doctrinal/theological* section of the Epistle stressed that Christians are *called and destined to so live that they bring glory to God and Christ in the church*.

²¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 254 ff; Peter O’Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Ephesians 4:7-13.

To enable the Christians to do this effectively, and thereby *manifest to the world the mystery and glory of God* he has given us *his Holy Spirit to empower us to live for his glory in a practical manner, for this is our calling.*

First, we are called to so live that we maintain the unity of the body/Spirit in the bond of peace. This is an *ontological unity* of our being one as God's children.

Paul explains that *Christ has given teaching gifts to the church* who can *equip the church* for ministry and growth *to where they have a cognitive unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus.*

The equipped and mature body of Christ, the church as the body of Christ, *results when every Christian (Jew and Gentile) is knit together and functions in unison.*

Discussion Questions

How does the unity of the Spirit come about? Describe this as an ingredient in your life/spiritual growth. Gal 5:16-26, Eph 3:14-2 .

What *attitudes* are needed *in your life* to be able to *maintain this unity*?

What does Paul explain regarding the *ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and elders* in this text? Be practical as a practical aspect of your life and growth in Christ and the church. How does this take place in your life?

What might *three major goals or aspects* be as a result of the *teaching, mentoring, and counseling experiences* of these teaching/mentoring ministries in your own life and church experience. Concentrate on the *practical* aspects of these ministries other than the preaching ministry? Can you stress when one or two ministries may have been the reality of your spiritual life? In this case, whose responsibility should it be for these ministries to impact your life?

In the context of this lesson whose responsibility is it to *maintain the unity* of the Holy Spirit in the church? How **do you** *manifest the glory of God in Christ in the church*? Be practical, cite an example or two. Stay in the context of Eph 4 and Gal 5:16-26!

Lesson 10. Eph 4:17-5:14

The Practical Body of Ephesians

The Moral Standards of the Church

Paul was well aware of the low moral standards of the Asian (especially the Ephesian) pagan Gentile culture. At **Eph 4:17-32** He explains that in order to bring glory to God through Christ and the church Christians must learn to live according to different standard of morals than their pagan neighbors.

Eph 4:1-32

“¹⁷ Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; ¹⁸ they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; ¹⁹ they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. ²⁰ You did not so learn Christ! — ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Eph 4:17, 18. Paul describes the pagan Gentile culture as being *darkened* and *alienated from God* (cf. 2:11 ff). Remember that the Platonic Gnostic philosophy taught that mankind lives in darkness and needs a special intuitive knowledge to escape from the evil world and evil powers of the heavenly places. The Gnostics were correct in concluding that the world is evil, but it was an evil world for a reason different from the Gnostic views and their solution to this evil was wrong!

Contrary to Gnostic and other philosophic solutions, Christ had already conquered the evil power in the world and Christians had already received all the special knowledge in Christ that they need to escape the evil world and its forces. They have been recreated (reborn) in the image of God and Christ. At Col 1:13 Paul clearly stated that God “*has (already*

¹) delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” At Col 3:9, 10 he adds that Christians “*have put off the old nature with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”*

Eph 4:19-22. As former pagan Gentiles the Christians had been callous, licentious, and greedy and prone to practice all kinds of immorality. But this is not what they had learned in Christ! Paul follows this with another anacoluthon (parenthetical statement) “*assuming that you have heard about*

¹ The tense of the word *delivered*, ἐρρύσατο, being an aorist verb from ῥύομαι, *rhuomai*, “to draw or snatch from danger, rescue, deliver,” implies a past action. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.” He encourages the Christians to *put off their former manner of life* and follow Christ.

Eph 4:23, 24. Paul reminds the Christians that they have already been taught to live differently from their Gentile pagan neighbors. They have been *renewed in the spirit of their minds*. They have been *recreated* into new creatures (cf. Rom 6:1-11; Eph 4:23; Col3:10; 2 Cor 3:18). They have been created in *the likeness of God*.

Eph 4:25-29. Falsehood and anger should not be part of the Christian’s makeup. Christians must *learn to speak truth to one another, to treat one another properly, to use their speech to edify* (build up) *one another*, and to *impart grace to one another*. Anger should not be permitted to linger in the Christian’s life. Christians with the help of the Holy Spirit must learn to control emotions such as anger, cf. Ps 37:8f. Christians must be careful not to give occasions to the devil by careless lives. Falsehood, anger, and evil talk (most likely with a sexually immoral implication) should not be part of the Christian’s speech. Christian speech and communication should *impart grace to the hearer* and not set a bad example of communicating and fostering immorality. Paul warns that God’s Holy Spirit who dwells in us and empowers us to live a Christian life is grieved by immoral talk and behavior.

Eph 4:30-32. Christians should not by their unkind actions (notably in their Jewish and Gentile traditional attitudes toward one another) grieve the Holy Spirit who is present in their lives and who has brought them together into one body. They must be “*kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave*” them.

Eph 5:1-14

In this section *Paul develops the moral characteristics necessary to bringing glory to God in Christ and the church. Christians must be imitators of God* who loved them (both Jew and Gentile) and *forgave them equally* (Gal 3:25-29).

Eph 5:1-14 reads:

¹*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.* ²*And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

³But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not associate with them, ⁸for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true), ¹⁰and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; ¹³but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴**Therefore** it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.”

Eph 5:1, 2.

“Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, **as** [just as] Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Paul instructs the Ephesian Christians that they must walk περιπατέω, *peripatéō*,² (live) in **love**. Love, ἀγάπη, *agápē*, affectionate regard for the good of others, goodwill, benevolence, **the desire for the very best for the other**.³ This accentuates the point that Christians should forgive one another just as Christ and God have forgiven them.

Pagan worship and singing was *self-gratifying*. Christian worship praises God and addresses their pagan neighbors.

Note that the moral life of Christians is modelled on Jesus Christ's life example, and God's holy nature. Peter, at 1 Peter 1:15-17, had encouraged Christians in the Diaspora to be *holy* in their living, “¹⁵ as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; ¹⁶ since **it is written**, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Christians should make every effort to live as God desires them to live and not as the world lives, especially the pagan world. Like God, Christians are to be different in their behaviour from their pagan world.

Eph 5:3-14.

“**But** fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ Be sure of this, **that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ **Therefore do not associate with them,** ⁸ for once you were **darkness**, but now you are **light** in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true), ¹⁰ and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² **For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret;** ¹³ but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ **Therefore** it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.”

Pagan immorality must have no part of the Christian experience. Remember from the introduction to this study the mention of the *immoral sexual practices of the fertility cult of Artemis and the presence of a major brothel on the main street in Ephesus*. Sexual immorality was a deep seated part of Ephesian life. Ephesus was a sea port and consequently a hub of immoral life. The *filthiness, levity, and silly talk* Paul mentions here all have to do with sexual impurity.

The Greek word translated *fornication* at the opening of this paragraph (Eph 5:3) is πορνεία, *porneía*, modern term pornography derives from this concept which means *not to commit fornication or any sexual sin, lewdness, or any other sexual impropriety*.⁴

No fornicator or sexually impure person has any part in the kingdom of God. At Rom 1:18-32 Paul enlarges on a pagan life lived in rebellion against God and states that God's wrath will come on those who are disobedient and who practice immorality. Note also Paul's comments on sexual immorality and the kingdom at 1 Co 6:9-12:

² Literally περιπατέω *peripatéō*; means to walk, to tread or walk about, generally to walk. However, figuratively it means to live or pass one's life. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Cf. the other major Greek-English Lexicons in the bibliography. This love is not simply an emotional love but a cognitive decision in favor of the other.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

Eph 5:7. Warning against pagan association

Christians must not associate (συμμέτοχος, *summétochos*, *be a participant, be caught up in a close accepting relationship*⁵) with pagans who live immoral lives.

1Cor 5:9-13

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men;¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.¹¹ But rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?¹³ God judges those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you.”

Eph 5:8, 9

Christians are children of light, not darkness. Remember that Gnostics considered the world to be in darkness, and for pure light to come from the God, light could come to Christians only through some form of *intuitive revelation and knowledge*.

Paul was reminding the Christians, as children of the *God of pure light*, that they must live in the *light of God* which can only come through a *relationship with Jesus, who is the light of the world*, John 8:12, “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “**I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**”

Eph 5:10. Christians as children of their heavenly father must try to *learn what is pleasing to the Lord, and to do what is pleasing to him*.

Eph 5:11-14. Christians should not even *speak* of the things the Gentiles speak of. In their speech they should keep as far away as possible from the things of darkness, notably sexually permeated immoral speech.

Regarding the danger of speech and the tongue as the agent of speech we are reminded of James’ comment at James 3:1-12 that *the tongue can if not carefully controlled be destructive*.

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.² For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies.⁴ Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.⁵ So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell.⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind,⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.⁹ With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so.¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and

⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

brackish? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.”

Major Lessons to Learn from Eph 4:17-5:14

This lesson continues the paranetic material that results from the doctrinal material emphasized in Eph 1:3-3:21. It explains how Christians bring glory to God through their practical and moral living.

It calls Christians to a higher moral standard than that practiced by their pagan or unbelieving neighbors.

No worldly uncleanness should be permitted to linger in Christian lives.

Christians should be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in them and is given to empower them to live better lives for Christ and the glory of God.

Anger, falsehood, filthy talk should not be permitted to reside in the Christian.

Christians must make the most of their time and not use their time carelessly (buying up the time).

The Christian life and joy should be the overflowing of a Spirit filled life and not the response of wine in drunken debauchery as was common in Ephesus and Asian life. Under the influence of a Spirit filled life Christians should sing psalms and hymns of praise to God. Remember Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25ff).

Discussion Questions

What moral issues do you see as a major problem to Christian witness in today's culture?

How can Christians address such issues?

List some of the thoughts that impacted you in this study.

Name some practical helps tools in overcoming anger in one's life?

Eph 5:1 encourages Christians to be imitators of God. What is the context of Paul's encouragement? In this context how can we be imitators of God and what impact will this have on others?

Lesson 11. Eph 5:15-20

Look Carefully Then How you Live

In this pericope, **Eph 5:15-20**, Paul continues his concern for the Christians in Ephesus and the surrounding region of Asia.

Paul encourages the Ephesian Christians to *not be like their immoral corrupt neighbors, but to be imitators of God and Christ*, Eph 5:1-14. “**Look carefully, then, how you walk ...**”

Study Procedure

We begin by examining the “original” or “actual” epistle Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians as we might have it reflected in one of our regular English or Greek New Testaments such as the KJV, the RSV, or the ESV. We call this process an *inductive exegetical* examination of the original text.

In an earlier lesson we noted the influence of the Temple of Artemis and the many prostitutes and brothels in the seaside port city of Ephesus through which sailors disembarked to satiate their sexual passions. *Fornication* and the worst moral practices were part of the pagan lifestyles impacting the lives of the Christians.

In this first *exegetical*¹ section we will seek to understand *what it was that Paul originally communicated* to the Ephesian Christians.

After the exegetical section in the *theological* section we will seek to understand the *theological principles* that surface in Paul’s concerns, and the *exhortative*² *imperative* directives in this compact short pericope or paragraph.

We will seek to identify the *religious* and *theological principles*³ Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to grasp as they *looked carefully into how they lived* in a corrupt immoral pagan world dominated by *lascivious religious practices in ceremonies* directed to their pagan gods in *drunken festivals*.

In this study we will first *seek exegetically* to understand, *inductively*⁴, *what* it was Paul, in his primary manuscript, communicated to the Ephesian Christians, *then why* he was concerned and *how* he wished they would respond.

Finally, we will examine *how* we can apply Paul’s lesson and theological principles in our own lives.

Inductive Exegetical Study

This involves getting our theology or message *out of the text* and *not reading our contemporary religious persuasions in to the text*.

Eph 5:15-20

“**Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,**¹⁶ *making the most of the time, because the days are evil.*¹⁷ **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**¹⁸ **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit,**¹⁹ *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all*

¹ The term *exegetical* refers to a *critical biblical examination* of the text that takes into consideration the *historical, grammatical, sociological, literary, and religious* components surrounding the text, notably in Ephesus.

² There are several kinds of imperative found in Greek grammar, one of which is somewhat milder than the imperative command; the *exhortative* imperative of *entreaty* being one of them. The different degrees of the imperative mood of the Greek verb are determined by the general context of the discussion.

³ Behind the teachings of Sacred Scripture we detect *religious* or *theological principles* the author intended his readers to learn. These *theological principles* are couched in historical, literary, and sociological contexts that must be determined via an *inductive exegetical method*.

⁴ *Inductive exegesis* implies *from within the text*, and not *deductively* from *our own present day practices or persuasions*.

your heart, ²⁰ always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”

The Greek grammatical principle of having five imperatives in this comp[ound paragraph

Into this concise paragraph Paul inserts five *exhortative imperatival directives* in a *sequence of directives* which, in Greek literary syntax, infers a *series of different new imperatival directives*.

Paul begins with the firm *exhortative hortatory imperative*, **be careful how you walk** or live, followed by *four subsequent imperative directions set in three groups, cognitive, moral, and theological*.

“Be careful how you walk-live not as unwise men”

*“therefore, do **not** be foolish”*

*“**but** understand, become wise to, what the will of the Lord is”*

*“do **not** get drunk in drunkenness, debauchery, dissipation”*

*“**but** be filled with the Spirit addressing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart”*

We must note that the *sequence of imperatives* in Greek literary syntax in one paragraph infers a series of *different or new imperatival directives*. If that were not implied, the author would use the *more directive indicative mood*.

Eph 5:15-19

As mentioned above, Paul opens this compound pericope with the *present imperative verbal* statement, βλέπετε, “**you must then** [therefore, οὖν] **be careful** how you live.”

Two cognitive imperatives

*“therefore, do **not** be foolish or unwise”*

*“**but** become wise, what the will of the Lord is”*

One moral; directive

*“do **not** get drunk in drunkenness, debauchery, dissipation”*

One religious/theological imperative

*“**but** be filled with the Spirit **addressing** one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart”*

The impact of successive imperatives in a paragraph

The major impact of these successive imperatives is that in Greek syntax the *repetitive imperatives introduce new or different ideas*.

The importance of this Greek syntactical⁵ comment on Eph 5:15, 16 is profound to the exegesis of this text.

Eph 5:15, 16

The Ephesians must “**be careful.**” “*Making the most of their time*” is a *modal middle participle* explaining **how** they should **look carefully** by *making the most of their time*.

The expression itself is interesting; ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, *exagoradzomenoi ton kairon*, literally means *buying up the time*. Ἐξαγοραζόμενοι, *exagoradzomenoi* derives from *ek* and *agora* which mean *out of the marketplace*. The expression builds off the marketplace concept of purchasing.

The word καιρός, *kairós* means *significant, urgent time, the days are evil!*

Some translations render this expression as *making the most of the time*, others as “*buying up the time.*”

It means that *Christians should not be foolish and careless with their time and their lives*. They should *make the most of their precious time*, for, as Paul adds, “*the days are evil.*”

Eph 5:17. Paul introduces *the first two new cognitive imperative directives*

“**Therefore** [διὰ τοῦτο in Greek syntax and context indicates that a series of **new imperative statements and clauses is to be discussed**] **do not** [*negative adverb*] **be** [present middle/passive imperative verb *become*] **foolish, but understand** [*present active imperative to know and understand*] **what the will of the Lord is.**”

Eph 5:18, 19. Paul adds **a new moral directive**

“**And do not get drunk** with wine, [*do not get drunk is a new imperative instruction introducing a new clause and statement*] for that is *debauchery*; but **be filled with the Spirit**, [*present imperative verb*]

Christians should *not live in pagan debauchery*. The expression “*drunk with wine*” refers to *drunken debauchery especially associated with the mystery cults*.

Eph 5:18b. Paul introduces **a new and different religious imperatival directive**

In contrast to being filled with wine and *under the influence of wine*, **Christians should be filled with the Spirit** and *under the influence of the things of the Spirit who dwells in them*.

“*Be filled,*” πληροῦσθε, is a passive **imperative verb introducing a new instruction** instructing the Christians *to sing in a particular modal manner, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, not drunken orgy songs of the pagan cultic festivals*.

The cultural context of Paul’s admonition was *the pagan mystery religions*, especially the celebration to Bacchus, *the god of wine and of the drunken debauchery of pagan celebrations*.

In contrast to pagan debauchery and *drunken singing*, Christians are to be filled with the Spirit and sing *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs* to God.

Notice the motivation for the singing, being filled with the Spirit, the kind of songs to be sung, and the direction of the singing, not to a god of debauchery, but to a God of life.

⁵ *Syntax* relates to how words take on meaning shaped by their literary grammatical context. *Syntax* is the grammatical structure of words and phrases to create coherent sentences

Eph 5:19 Paul adds *a theological directive* to singing in the Christian assembly

This verse introduces several key elements Paul has in mind for the *Ephesian Christian's singing*. *It is in contrast to the cultural norm and pagan practice.*

“**Addressing** [λαλοῦντες, present active participle] **one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** [ᾄδοντες] and **making melody** [psallontes from psallo] **to the Lord** with all your heart [instrumental noun].” Λαλοῦντες, is from the Greek λαλέω, *lalēō*. It refers to a **formal mode of speaking**, not generic discussion, but *teaching, instructing one another*. Λαλοῦντες is a *present active modal participle*, explaining **how** the Ephesians should address one another; they should *address* one another in *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*. By context, the *addressing* or *teaching* element is by *addressing others in song*, λαλοῦντες. That Paul adds *being filled with the Holy Spirit* introduces a *worshipful occasion*.

Singing [ᾄδοντες] as modal participle modifies the form of instruction. The motivation for the Christian singing is *being filled with the Spirit*. Which several fine scholars, Gordon Fee, *et al*, understand as a “Temple” or *formal gathering* which Paul explains in several places as *in your assembly*, 1 Cor 5:4; 11:18; 11:33; 14:26ff.

“**To the Lord**, dative noun, indicating direction, states that Christians should sing songs of praise **to God** or directed to God. This again indicates a worship service on contrast to the pagan “religious” festival worship services. By *singing spiritual songs and hymns to God* Christians *address and instruct* one another.

Christians should join together in the celebration of God, not singing in pagan celebrations to the pagan god's.

The instruction *to sing* a modal participle, *singing*. It is a *present active modal participle* explaining briefly *the kind of songs* Christians should sing, hence, *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*.

The modal participle *singing*, ᾄδοντες, is connected to a following modal participle καὶ ψάλλοντες in a *hendiadys* construction where *the second participle as an adjective explains the first and enriches a spiritual context and nature of the singing*.

The saints are addressed through the words being sung, that they are sung to the Lord, and sung with a Spirit purpose, all together worship the Lord and edifies the assembled community.

Filled, πληροῦσθε from πληρόω, *plerōō*, implies that the singers by being **filled with the Spirit** would be edified and uplifted.

The Ephesians by **singing** [ᾄδοντες] and **making melody** [ψάλλοντες] **in their heart** [*the heart is the instrument for the making melody, to import a musical instrument into the text is introducing modern concept not mentioned in the text*], filled with the Holy Spirit, contribute to Paul's overall concern for the *spiritual nature* of the Christian singing in contrast to the pagan *drunken* singing.

When *singing*, they should *make melody in their heart, singing praises to God and not in a drunken stupor like the pagans*.

It is debated by some whether in this text Paul is referring to *singing in the formal worship services when they are gathered together*, or to *singing in a personal or private response to the Holy Spirit in life in general in contrast to the response to drunken debauchery*.

The view of several scholars is that the liturgical language used by Paul in the text is “temple oriented,” and that Paul had in mind a *formal “templelike” worship service*, that is, the *formal worship assembly of the church!*

Suffice it to say that there is sufficient evidence in the use of the words ᾄδω, *ádō* and *psallō*, ψάλλω, *psállō*, reflected in the New Testament and early Christian practice to identify this *singing* and

the meaning of the word *adō* and its related word *psallō* to support the practice of corporate singing *acappella in the formal worship assembly of the church*⁶.

Eph 5:20. Paul moves on to the next imperative relating to the overall behavior of Christians

“Always and for everything **giving thanks** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”

Paul encourages the Christians, “*always and for everything they should be giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*” It is debated whether this verse should be attached to the previous paragraph, or begin the next paragraph as will be discussed in the next lesson.

Many scholars see this verse as a *transitional verse* between **Eph 5:1-19** and *Paul’s instruction of living a moral family life.*

At **Eph 5:21ff** Paul gives instruction of *the ideal family life.* However, wherever the verse is placed it emphasizes that *the joy of Christian life is expressed in giving thanks to God and Jesus Christ for all they have done in saving them and calling them to be God’s children in Christ.*

Discussion Topics

Why should we begin a study of sacred Scripture with an *inductive exegetical approach* to the text? What does that mean?

Does “*inspiration or inerrancy*” say anything to this question of ***be careful how you live ...?*** What does it say about the fundamental imperative of the pericope?

What was Paul’s major concern when he wrote this letter with *exhortative* imperatives? Keep this discussion in the context of the *religious and cultural contexts* of the city of Ephesus.

What do we learn from Paul’s successive use of imperatives in this compound pericope?

What is the major theological principle we learn from this paragraph. Cf, Eph 5:1-4, what triggered Paul’s concern? In other words, *why* did Paul write this fascinating series of directives, and *how* did he intend the Ephesian Christians to respond?

Which of the theological principles or topics speaks to you, and how would you respond to them? Be practical and honest!

How should we insert *Paul’s theological principles* into our contemporary lives today? Can you identify four theological principles *from within Paul’s concern that are relevant today?*

How do we make melody to the Lord, and how does this address, or instruct us?

⁶ Cf. Rubel Shelly, *Sing Praise! A Case for A cappella Music as Worship Today*; Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*; Everett Ferguson, Jack P. Lewis, Earl West, *The Instrumental Music Issue*.

Lesson 12. Eph 5:21-32

Christian House Rules

“**Be subject to one another** [ὑποτασσόμενοι, present passive participle from ὑποτάσσω, hupotássō, to place oneself under] **out of reverence for Christ.** ²² **Wives,** [be subject, not in Greek, but in context of 5:21] **to your husbands, as to the Lord.** ²³ **For the husband is the head of the wife as** [ὡς καὶ, as indeed, just as] **Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.** ²⁴ **As the church is subject** [ὑποτάσσεται, present passive indicative verb from ὑποτάσσω, hupotássō¹] **to Christ, so** [οὕτως καὶ, thus indeed] **let wives** [also be subject which is not in Greek, but is in the context of 5:21] **in everything to their husbands.**

²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives,** [ἀγαπάτε, present active imperative verb from ἀγαπάω, agaráō, which implies a cognitive decision to desire the best for others] **as** [καθὼς καὶ, just as indeed] **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** ²⁶ **that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** ²⁷ **that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.** ²⁸ **Even so** [οὕτως, a relatively high degree, so much as.²] **husbands should love** [ἀγαπᾶν, present active infinitive expressing purpose, aim, or result] **their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

²⁹ **For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,** ³⁰ **because we are members of his body.** ³¹ **“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”** [Gen 2:24, Bible, *passim*.]

This **mystery is a profound one,** [The mystery could refer to marriage, or to the Christ/Church relationship. Lincoln discusses this at length commenting on the possibility of a sacramental relationship, the Roman Catholic view, or a covenantal relationship, the protestant view. Paul’s point was that both relationships convey deep profound meaning not apparent on the surface.] **and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;** ³³ **however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**

^{6:1} **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** ² **“Honor your father and mother”** (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ **“that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.”**

⁴ **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

⁵ **Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ;** ⁶ **not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,** ⁷ **rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men,** ⁸ **knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.**

⁹ **Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”**

Eph 5: 21. The Greek Syntax relating to Eph 5:20

The Greek syntax of **Eph 5:21** is closely connected to **5:20** indicating that the expression **be subject to one another** is a result of a life of thanksgiving to the Father and is **out of reverence for Jesus Christ.** Christians need to give thanks to God through Jesus Christ for what he has done for them, and for what God has done for them in Christ.

¹ Zodiates, ὑποτασσόμενοι, present passive participle from ὑποτάσσω hupotássō, to place in order, to place under in an orderly fashion.

² Louw & Nida, οὕτως, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 1996.

This pericope introduces a block of material relating to *how Christians should live in both the home and in the church in a manner that is in reverence for the Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Christ*. Christians should be aware of their influence in their community but this, important as it is, is *secondary to their reverence for God and Jesus Christ*.

Lincoln emphasizes that the “house rules” address how *members of a Christian household should live, relate to one another, and to others*: Eph 5:21–33 should “be seen as a unit. Its first verse acts as a link, completing the thought of 5:18–20 about **being filled with the Spirit** and at the same time **introducing a new topic, submission**, which is to be developed in the rest of the passage. Its introductory function is twofold. Not only does the admonition of v 22 depend on the participle of v 21 for its sense, but the notion of fear in the latter verse also provides the opening element of an **inclusio** which will be completed in v 33.”³

Careful comparison of several translations, e.g. the NASV, the RSV, and the NIV reveals that there are several punctuation and paragraphing differences in this text. These differences are discussed in the major Greek New Testaments such as the Kurt Aland *et al*, and the Nestle Greek New Testaments. *The differences do not make any significant change to the meaning of the text*.

In this pericope Paul introduced an interesting and significant *sociological* and *ethical* block of material, technically identified by a German term *Haustafeln* which refers to the concept of “**house rules**” or *rules of behavior which are recognized as good sociological citizenry*. Romans and Greeks being cultured and educated Gentiles recognized *certain sets of family or house rules* for the family to *be in keeping with good society*.

Both Roman and Greek philosophers wrote extensively on the nature of a well behaved family and community, society, and culture, especially in an educated and “religious” community like Ephesus. Statues and images in the famous Ephesian Celsus library, although a little later than Paul’s epistle, bear testimony to this.

Lincoln adds regarding scholarly opinion on *Haustafeln* in Eph 5 that some regarded Paul’s list as the outgrowth of his use of the *Haustafeln* in 1 Corinthians where he wrote of excessive behavior relating to *women* and *slaves* who believed that because they were *in Christ all roles or rules of behavior* had been **reduced to equality** in the church. Note Lincoln’s comments:

“More recently, however, it has been argued convincingly, especially by Balch ... that this sort of analysis does not do enough justice to the important influence of the discussion about the topic of household management in the ancient world. This discussion, which treats husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave relationships, **focuses on authority and subordination** within these relationships, and relates the topic of the household to the larger topic of the state, can be found as early as the classical Greek philosophers ... It is worth noting how Aristotle introduces his discussion of the topic: “Now that it is clear what are the component parts of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management; for every state is composed of households ...”⁴

As a demonstration of that, the Christian system held to *a lofty set of house rules and respect* which Paul encouraged Christians to live by in a culture of *haustafeln* which were similar to those recognized by cultural Greek and Roman societies.

We know from the *writings* and *teachings* of cultural Greek and Roman societies that they prized orderly households and families that lived contrary to their pagan cultures.

Carolyn Osiek observes, “Earlier and contemporaneous writers were convinced that *the stable household under firm patriarchal rule was the basic unit of a stable patriarchal society*, reflected in

³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 352 ff; Pater O’Brian, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Eph 5:18-21.

⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 357.

the husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave relationships. *New Testament writers wanted to give assurance that the Christian household contributed just as much to a stable society.*⁵

The literature on *haustafeln*, *house codes*, is replete with references to the values of such to the stability of a community. The following is a sample of such literature.

David Balch of the Bright Divinity School, Texas Christian University, discussed this topic at length in *Neopythagorean Moralists and the New Testament Household Codes*, ANRW. II.26.1, pp. 389-404. Balch was a recognized scholar in this field. He assumed a dating of the “Ps.-Charandas” text cited by Stobaeus to be somewhere between the fourth and first century BCE and considers Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 12.11-19 as a limit to this study.⁶

Christians, however, did not simply do this because of cultural norms, although this surely was part of Paul’s concerns. They do so **out of reverence for Christ** and in **thanksgiving to God the Father**. Furthermore, by demonstrating good family life and citizenry they bring glory to God through Christ and the church. *Without sociologically recognized ethical house behavior Christians would not be able to bring glory to God in their Gentile communities, or to influence Gentiles for Christian consideration.*

The connecting *present* participle ὑποτασσόμενοι, *hupotassomenoi* of **Eph 5:21** implies **constantly being subject to**, or *in submission to* (ὑποτάσσω, *hupotássō*). This does not mean degrading or debasing oneself, but implies *being personally submissive, subjecting oneself, or considering the other person first, being subordinate to, being subject to, submitting to, or obeying.*

Since the *participle of submission* is a *present participle* it carries the sense of *constantly being subject to one another, constantly being willing to put the other first! Out of reverence for Christ* implies that all Christians should *constantly be subject to one another.*

Friberg and Miller add that the **submission** is “with a component of **voluntary** submission, *be submissive, obey, subject oneself.*”⁷

On *hupotássō, be subject*, Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary* adds, “**to place oneself under, the general rule demands readiness to renounce one’s own will for the sake of others, i.e. agapáō**, and to give precedence to others.”⁸ In keeping with this, note Paul’s exhortation at **Rom 12:9-18**, “*live in harmony with all, outdo one another in showing honor*”.

Thus, in the Christian context, being subject to one another means **out of love putting the other person first**. Delling in Kittel continues his comments on the relationship between submission and lowliness by referring to **Eph 4:2**, “The demand for mutual submission among Christians shows especially that ὑποτάσσομαι (submission) bears a material relation to Christian ταπεινοφροσύνη, lowliness.”⁹

An important point is to note that all Christians *out of reverence for Christ and as an example to their neighbors are constantly to be subject to, or in submission to one another; wives to their husbands (5:22); husbands to their wives (5:25); children to parents (6:1); parents to children (6:4); slaves to masters (6:5); masters to slaves (6:9).*

⁵ Carolyn A. Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, Westminster John Knox Press.

⁶ Stambaugh, John E., and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, Westminster Press, David L. Balch, Carolyn Osiek, editors, *Early Christian Families in Context*, Wm. B. Eerdmans.

⁷ Friberg, Timothy, Friberg, Barbara, Miller, Neva F. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

⁸ Gerhard Delling, in Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Italics IAF.

⁹ Gerhard Delling, Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.

Eph 5:25. The Christian role model

*Christ, although he was the divine head of the church, so loved the church that he humbled himself, Phil 2:5-8, and **gave himself up for the church**.*

This is a profound point; *Christ as the Lord of all creation, the head of the church, **submitted himself for the church by giving himself up for the church!***

Note carefully Phil 2:5-11 regarding *having the mind of Christ and emptying oneself of self, becoming a servant to all. “**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,** ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ **but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.** ⁸ **And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.** ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

This point is so striking that I simply must re-emphasize it! ***Christ, the sovereign Lord of the kingdom and head of the church so loved the church that he gave himself up for the church.** Now that is submission!* If Christ can submit himself to the church as a humble servant then Christians surely can submit themselves to one another!

Consider verse 11 in the above quote, *“and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father.**” Christ certainly is an outstanding model of how to bring glory to God!*

The key to this whole Christian *Haustafeln* is **Christ’s example**, and all Christians follow him by *submitting themselves to one another*. Christians do this, **not** as a duty, **but** out of thanksgiving and reverence for Christ!

Compare Paul’s similar *Haustafeln* at **Col 3:18ff**, *“Wives, be subject to your husbands, **as is fitting in the Lord.** ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but **in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord.** ²³ Whatever your task, work heartily, **as serving the Lord and not men,** ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; **you are serving the Lord Christ.** ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.”*

Eph 5:26, 27 Christ’s love for the church

Paul emphasizes that Christ in his love for the church *sanctified and cleansed the church* by his blood so that the church may be without blemish. ***Christ’s concern for the church was in the best interest of the church, not of himself.*** The *analogy* Paul is drawing in this little piece about Christ’s love for the church is that ***this is how the husband should love his wife.*** His point is that the husband should always act in the best interest of his wife, not selfishly in his own interest.

Eph 5:32. The theology of *Haustafeln*

Paul sets this whole *Haustafeln* again *in a theological context*. *“The **mystery** is a profound one, and I am saying that **it refers to Christ and the church,** however, let each one of you **love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**”* Although starting off with the regular

Haustafeln Paul reverts to Christ and the church as the ideal model for Christian household and family behavior in the Ephesian or Colossian culture¹⁰.

Major Emphases from the Lessons

This lesson has several foci! *One is a neighborhood social cultural focus, another is the family life focus, but primarily the focus is living well out of reverence for God and Christ and so living that we bring glory to God and Christ in how the church as the body of Christ lives in a Gentile world.*

This pericope does not encourage Christians to adopt the *Haustafeln* of their Roman and Greek neighbors, but to demonstrate an *approved family living style in which they would be recognized as respecting their God and their neighbors recognition of good Haustafeln behavior.*

The emphasis of the *Haustafeln* is on *being submissive, not simply being subject to God and Christ, one another, and family members.*

The *model and standard* for being *submissive and for encouraging submissiveness* is **Jesus** and *his love for the church for which, or for whom, he gave himself, dying for the church, or more specifically, for the members of the church.* Family members, including those who are slaves, should *love on another just as Christ loved the church!*

Discussion Points

¹⁰ Difficulties arise when one examines Paul's *Haustafeln* and attempts to insert it into contemporary sociological postmodern egalitarian concerns. This is not the place to engage in the complex dialogue between postmodern, complementarian, or egalitarian concerns. However, the fundamental exegetical and theological hermeneutic principles apply. The practice of *translating contextually* defined texts in historical contemporary situations. This involves careful *biblical critical exegetical studies of the text, identification of the theological principles involved in the text, then finding contemporary situations in which to apply the theological principles.* It does not matter whether one is of a complementarian, moderate complementarian, egalitarian, moderately egalitarian, African tribal, or African matriarchal culture or mindset, *the same principle applies; through sound biblical critical exegetical practice seek to identify the theological principles presented in the text to the original readers.* Only then can we apply the theological principles of the original text to whatever culture or mindset in which one finds oneself. In the case under consideration, the Christian *Haustafeln* outlined by Paul, the fundamental theological principles are *to live in the family with appropriate respect for God and Christ*, thereby manifesting love and concern for those in the family. For a brief bibliography on this topic cf. Piper, John, et al. *Discovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, Wheaton: Ill.: Crossway, 2002, and Grudem, Wayne, et al, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002 Osborn, Carroll D., Ed. *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vols. 1 & 2, College Press, 1993, 1995, and *Women in the Church*, ACU Press, 2001.

Lesson 13. Eph 6:10-20

The Christian's Warfare

Paul, from his own experience living in a hostile political and religious world, understood the future battles the churches, and the Ephesians, would experience with Satan and his demonic spirits, imaginary or real, and Roman and Jewish religious opposition and persecution.

Eph 6:1-20. *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word [ῥῆμα¹, the living utterances, message] of God. ¹⁸ Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

Remember the Gnostic concept of *demiurges surrounding the earth, controlling life*. Paul writes to explain that **in Christ the Christians need have no fear** of the principalities and powers in the heavenly place, that is, the Gnostic or any other demon world.

Christians living in Asia in the first century A.D. were well aware of the fact that **there are spiritual powers that oppose man. Satan being the chief power!**

Paul emphasized that Christ defeated the principalities and powers (the spirit world) at the cross and has delivered Christians from these powers, **Eph 1:20-23**. At **Col 1:13, 14**, he wrote **“He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

However, Paul explains that *although Satan has ultimately been defeated at the cross he still carries out a bitter war against the saints*. Nevertheless, because of Jesus' victory and power over Satan and all other spiritual powers, Christians can also in Christ defeat Satan in their lives through their faith in God's power. Note these two great passages:

Rom 8:37ff, **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Rev 12:10f, **“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”**

¹ *Rhema*, ῥῆμα, is stronger than *logos*, implying *the very word spoken by God*. In the context it refers to *the divine message spoken by God regarding Jesus*.

Eph 6:13, 14. The Christians defense protection

“Therefore take **the whole armor** of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand** [στῆναι, ἵστημι *hístēmi*, stand firmly, set in place].”

The discussion of the armor Christians must wear is characterized by *the support system they have in Christ*. **God is the whole armor** Christians must wear in their warfare with Satan. **In the presence of God evil has no power!**

God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are all Christians need in their battle against the demonic powers and Satan himself; they have no need of special intuitive Gnostic type knowledge.

A significant background to this Christian armor would be **Isa 11:5** where the *Messiah* is predicted as being *shod with righteousness and faithfulness*. “Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.”

The Christian armor would naturally be figuratively based on an *analogy of armor* with which the Ephesians, and anyone living in the Babylonian, Persian, and Roman world identify with the powerful military strength of a Roman soldier. **Eph 6:14ff;**

“**Stand** [στῆναι, ἵστημι *hístēmi*, stand firmly, set in place] therefore, **having girded your loins with truth**, [the truth about Jesus, his divine nature, his being the truth, that which can be relied on] and **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**,¹⁵ and **having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace**;¹⁶ besides all these, **taking the shield of faith**, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.¹⁷ And **take the helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit** [the μάχαира was the short attacking sword of the Roman armor as opposed to ῥομφαία, the long sword. The μάχαира was the critical offensive weapon for close combat²] the **Sword of the Spirit** which is **the word of God** [ῥῆμα, the powerful utterances of God, what God has said. The indwelling Holy Spirit is ever present with the Christian, Eph 3:14-21.]

Christians must **stand firm** in their **faith in the Lord**. The word for **stand**, *anthístēmi* means to **stand against, to oppose, to resist firmly**.

Eph 6:14. The power in the truth about Jesus

Christians must *gird themselves with truth*. *Gird* derives from *perizōnumi*, **to wrap around**. Figuratively, *girding denotes readiness for activity*. The Christians must wrap themselves *with the truth about Jesus*, and be constantly ready for action against *the wiles of the devil*, notably in the presence of Gnostic or other false teaching. False teachings relating to numerous philosophical views were rampant in Ephesus with the dominance of the Artemesian cult, mystery religions, and Gnosticism.

In contrast to the many false and strange views *truth, alētheia, that which is genuine and not false must surround the Christian life and faith*. At **Eph 4:11** Paul had referred to *the teaching ministry of the church which would build up their faith and ministry and mature them in Christ*. Truth is simply genuine values about life; the opposite of *fiction or myth*.

In the context of Ephesus *truth* would represent *that which is true about Jesus* in contrast to the *Gnostic denial that the Christ had come in the flesh*. Furthermore, truth would strengthen the point that all Christians need to combat Satan and the principalities in heavenly places with the correct knowledge of Jesus. Remember, Paul had prayed for them at **Eph 1:16ff**. “I do not cease to give thanks for you, **remembering you in my prayers**,¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him**,¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts **enlightened**, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what

² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 451.

are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and **what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ 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;²² and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,²³ which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.**”

Eph 6:15-20. The *footwear of the Christian soldier should be the gospel of peace*

“and having **shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace;**¹⁶ besides all these, taking the **shield of faith,** with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.¹⁷ And take the **helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,** which is the word of God.¹⁸ **Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.** To that end keep alert with all perseverance, **making supplication for all the saints,**¹⁹ and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

The *good news, the gospel and truth regarding Jesus* is all the knowledge Christians need. The gospel message speaks of the good news about Jesus as bringing peace. **Rom 5:1**, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Eph 6:17. The *helmet of salvation* is the safety and security Christians enjoy **knowing they are saved.** They also have *the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.* Christians need no other knowledge to defend themselves from the demonic world than what they already have, *the knowledge of Jesus.*

Christians should remember that *in his temptation Jesus leaned on scripture*, “It is written...”

Matt 4:4, 7. Correct knowledge of God and Jesus as revealed in scripture is essential in the Christian’s defense against temptation.

The Christian’s armor is thus comprised of faith, righteousness [a proper relationship with God], *their knowledge of God and Jesus, and the fact that they had already been saved by God in Jesus.*

Eph 4:18. Christians should also *draw on the power of prayer.* **Phil 4:6, 7.** “The Lord is at hand.⁶ Have no anxiety about anything, **but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, **will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**”

Eph 6:19, 20. Paul encourages the Ephesians to continue to pray for him that he may have openings to preach and to speak boldly in witness for Jesus. He reminds them that he is still a prisoner “in chains” yet is as such an *ambassador for Christ.*

Major Emphases of the Lessons Learned in the Ephesian Epistle

This lesson emphasizes the *moral and character aspects* of the Christian life and spiritual purpose in their Christian witness, notably in their *struggles with the flesh and temptation.*

Paul in the earlier pericope had drawn an analogy to the typical *haustafeln* common to most cultured societies in ancient times, and to the spiritual defense system available to the Christian. It is important that Christians demonstrate to their neighbors that *they know how to live good moral lives.*

A basic reason for this *moral family code* and *defensive* behavior is to remind Christians of their *opportunity to bring glory to God in their communities* through their practical living style; they should live *good family lives* and *resist the temptation of Satan* to live like the Gentiles do.

However, Paul adds a major theological ingredient. They live model lives *out of reverence for God and Christ.*

Christians must realize that *they are engaged in a spiritual war with Satan* and other *spiritual powers in heavenly places*, that is, their currents spiritual Gnostic or aggressive Gentile decadent world.

Christians must *wear the whole armor of God which primarily hinges on faith in God himself. They must clothe themselves with God*, living in the context of God as their father. In addition there are several important *pieces of spiritual armor* such as *truth, faith, salvation, the gospel, and prayer*.

Christians must wrap themselves in the whole armor of God, that is, *they must draw on every form of divine and spiritual help in their battle against the wiles of the devil*.

Discussion Questions

Why should you be concerned about your family and church behavior? *Remember first the theological purpose* Paul listed in the *Laudatio* of Ephesians, Eph 1:3-16. What is the core of this great pericope? To what purpose are you called and destined to live?

What is the guiding principle behind the Christian *Haustafeln* mentioned by Paul? *Out of whose reverence* should you strive to maintain a healthy spiritual life in the family? How should this guide or govern your moral behavior?

Who, or what, would most likely work to oppose your living a good moral life? How does this temptation and spiritual war take place? Where do you spend a lot of your *entertainment life*? How can you defend yourself and your family from the immoral nature of most of our entertainment?

Give some practical situations where the principles of the *Haustafeln* of Ephesians would apply in life today?

How have you most often abused the principles of the *Haustafeln*? We are not speaking of how *others* do this, but of *how have you fallen into this trap*?!

What does *submission* mean or apply to you in the context of living out of reverence of Christ?

What does it mean to be in *submission* to one another? Give some practical examples of this, and *how have you* attempted to achieve such submission.

How can you practice this in the home and in the church?

Lesson 14. Eph 6:21-24

Concluding Thoughts from Ephesians

“Now that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, **Tychicus** the beloved brother and **faithful minister** in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. ²³ **Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** ²⁴ **Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying.**”

Tychicus was Paul’s secretary, *amanuenses, scribe*, who carried this letter to Ephesus and the surrounding churches. He was also Paul’s beloved brother and a faithful minister. He is also mentioned in **Col 4:7** as Paul’s beloved brother and faithful minister. Tychicus would inform the Christians of Paul’s welfare and future plans.

The letter closes with Paul’s typical Christian greetings and farewell words. These emphasize the significant and meaningful Christian concepts, *peace, love, and grace*. Paul’s use of these three concepts is in the form of a prayer for the Christians.

Peace be to the brethren, *eirénē, inner spiritual peace and tranquility, the cessation of anxiety and tribulation.*

Love with faith from God and Jesus, *agápē, the desire for the very best for the other person or persons.*

Grace for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, *cháris, favor from God and Jesus Christ.*

Love undying, *aphtharsía, without corruption!*

This is a thoughtful letter from Paul who had for several years been involved in missionary evangelism in Asia during the period he was resident in Ephesus, Acts 19. He understood well the challenges faced by the Christians in that region..

Ephesus was a major city in Asia, not the capital of the Roman province, but *a major sea port* and the *religious and intellectual center* of Asia. Ephesus had been and would continue to be a major center of mission activity in the Roman Worlds of Asia and Macedonia.

The Ephesian church in the years following Paul’s ministry there became the stronghold of Christianity in the region and more books in our New Testament were written for, in, and about the city of Ephesus than any other place.

In later years Timothy ministered in Ephesus, 1 and 2 Timothy, as did the Apostle John, The Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation.

Several religious movements were prominent in Ephesus, The Temple of Artemis, a goddess of immorality, the Mystery Religions, the Worship of Bacchus, the God of wine, and Gnosticism. All these formed the cultural background behind Paul’s concern for the church in Ephesus and the surrounding region.

One should remember the dominance of spiritual powers, Gnosticism and other similar views, in the thinking of the residents of Asia.

Likewise, Christians today should remember that the *theology of Ephesians* is built around the **called destiny of Christians to so live their lives that they bring glory to God through Jesus Christ and the church.**

Being in Christ is a major theological theme to this epistle

Notice *the flow of thought in the paranetic sections of Ephesians; the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church, the moral life of the Christians, the conduct and general example of the Christian family in society, the war with spiritual powers and Satan, and the strength of being in Christ in this battle.*

Overall the Christians should draw on the *strengthening power of the indwelling Holy Spirit* in their lives of Christians living.

Christians *must seek the right kind of knowledge which is centered on the knowledge of Jesus Christ applied with spiritual wisdom and understanding.*

Major emphases to learn from this lesson

Discussion Questions

First, discuss the major theological theme for this study of Ephesians which Paul laid out at Eph 1: 3-16, notably verse 12, and what does this mean to you. Cite one or two situations where this would be a practical application for you.

Second, cite what major encouraging lessons can you learn from Eph 1:3-14? Be practical. List these and discuss how they can be an encouragement in your life.

Third, when did God decide **you** could be his children in Christ? What does this mean to you today? Be practical!

Fourth, what do you think of Biblical Predestination? How is it different from Calvinistic Predestination, and how does Biblical Predestination work?

Fifth, what kind of unity is *ontological* unity and how does it come about, Eph 4:3? What is *cognitive* unity and how does it come about Eph 4:12-16?

Sixth, what should an understanding of the two kinds of unity do for us in the church today? Notice particularly and comment on Rom 14:1-15:7.

Seventh, how should the church manifest the mystery of God and the wisdom of God to the world today, Eph 3:9, 10? Keep your answers or discussion in the context of this text.

Eighth, what is the *theological* basis of Christian family life, Eph 5:21? Stay within the text.

Ninth, what is the overriding principle of submission Eph 5:20, 21? Discuss ways in which this would apply to us today.

Lesson 15. Predestination. Rom 8:28-31, Eph 1:3-12

A Brief Excursus on Predestination

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Introduction

We encounter the biblical doctrine of predestination primarily in Paul at Eph 1:3-12 and Rom 8:28, 29. Predestination is a biblical topic and doctrine. Although Paul makes considerable use of the principle of predestination his views are vastly different from Calvinistic Predestination.

This study does not portend to be an exhaustive study of Calvinistic Predestination. Our purpose will be to pursue what Paul has to say about predestination and then briefly compare this with Calvinistic Predestination.

Predestination in Paul's theology is closely tied to God's *foreknowledge* and a *plan* that God *determined before the foundation of the world*, not to some arbitrary choice God makes as to who will be saved and who lost!

We will examine the two texts in which Paul discusses *predestination* (προορίζω *proorizō*), the *foreknowledge* (προγινώσκω *proginōskō*), and God *destining* (προορίζω *proorizō*) something to happen in the future (Eph 1:5, 12, and Rom 8:29, 30) long before he created the world and man.

There are several other texts that make statements regarding God's predetermined actions or knowledge; for example, Acts 1:23; 4:28; 1 Cor 2:7. We will first examine the two major Pauline texts in which we find biblical predestination being developed and then consider Acts 1:23; 4:28; and 1 Cor 2:7.

As always, it is imperative that we consider these texts in their immediate biblical and theological context to get the flow of thought Paul was making.

Eph 1:3-12:

“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, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ⁵ He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ which he lavished upon us. ⁹ For he 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 ¹⁰ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.”

Rom 8: 29, 30:

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

We will note below that a better translation of this initial text reads, “We know that everything works for good for those who love God ...”

Acts 2:23:

“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men ...”

Acts 4:28:

“The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’— ²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place.”

1 Cor 2:7:

“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification.”

Brief Study of the Word Group Surrounding “Predestined”

Προγινώσκω, Προορίζω, Οικονομία

Προγινώσκω, *proginōskō*, to know beforehand. Spiros Zodhiates comments regarding προγινώσκω:

“Προέγνω, προγινώσκω, *proginōskō*, means “to know before. To perceive or recognize beforehand, know previously, consider or specially consider beforehand, to grant prior acknowledgement or recognition to someone, to foreknow ... Used of God’s eternal counsel it includes all that He has considered and purposed to do prior to human history. In the language of Scripture, something foreknown is not simply that which God was aware of prior to a certain point. Rather, it is presented as that which God gave prior consent to, that which received His favorable or special recognition. Hence, this term is reserved for those matters which God favorably, deliberately and freely chose and ordained.”¹

Several commentators observe that the Old Testament background to the use of God’s *foreknowledge* as in the Hebrew behind the Septuagint (LXX) is *yāda*. *Yāda*, it is maintained, was used in reference to the covenantal love in which God sets his affection on those who he has foreknows and has chosen.² Thus, we see in the use of *foreknew*, a reference to those who are in a covenant relationship with God, which in the context of Paul’s discussion in Romans refers to those in a righteous relationship with God based on faith in God or in Jesus. The Hebrew concept of *election* based on the *foreknowledge* of God and *covenantal faith* is evident in Paul’s use of *foreknowledge* in this periscope, Rom 8:26-30.

Προορίζω, *prooridzō*, regarding προορίζω, *prooridzō*, to *destine or predestine*, Spiros Zodhiates observes, “Προορίζω, *proorizō*; derives from *pró*, *before*, and *horizō*, to *determine*. Προορίζω, *proorizō* thus means to *determine or decree beforehand*.”³

K. L. Schmidt in Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* on προορίζω notes that:

“This comparatively rare and late word is used in the Gk. Bible only 6 times in the NT in the sense “to foreordain,” “to predestinate.” Since God is eternal and has ordained everything before time, προορίζειν is a stronger form of ὀρίζειν ... The synonyms and textual history show that the ref. in προγινώσκειν is the same. R. 8:29: οὗς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, R. 8:30: οὗς ... προώρισεν ... The omniscient God has determined everything in advance, both persons and things in salvation history, with Jesus Christ as the goal. When Herod and Pilate work together with the Gentiles and the mob against Jesus Christ, it may be said: ἡ χεὶρ σου (God’s) καὶ ἡ βουλή προώρισεν γενέσθαι, Ac. 4:28. Herein lies the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery, ἦν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν, 1 C. 2:7, → IV, 819. *The goal of our predestination is divine sonship through Jesus Christ ...*”⁴

Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, and Danker in the Arndt and Gingrich *Greek-English Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* state that προορίζω, *proorizō*, means “to *decide upon beforehand, predestine*.”⁵

Spiros Zodhiates in his *Complete Word Study Dictionary* observes:

“Πρόθεσις *próthesis*; to purpose or plan ... setting forth, presentation, an exposition, determination, plan, or will. It involves purpose, resolve, and design. A placing in view or openly displaying something.”⁶

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000.

² Cf. for instance Thomas R Schreiner, *Romans*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, p. 452, and other similar references in Fitzmyer, et al.

³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000.

⁴ K. L. Schmidt in Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G., Eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964. I have italicized last sentence for emphasis, IAF.

⁵ Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago: University of Chicago.

⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

Οικονομία, *oikonomía*, *to plan*. Regarding the *plan*, *οικονομία*, *oikonomía*, which God has had since the foundation of the world, Spiros Zodhiates states that this is the kind of plan that the manager of a household would have regarding the management of his estate:

“Οικονομία, *oikonomía* ... from *oikonoméō* ... to be a manager of a household. The position, work, responsibility or arrangement of an administration, as of a house or of property, either one’s own or another’s (Luke 16:2; Sept.: Is. 22:19); a spiritual dispensation, management, or economy (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). The “dispensation of God” means the administration of divine grace.”⁷

Otto Michel in Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary* writes: “In the NT *οικονομία* first means ... the office of household administration and the discharge of this office ... Paul uses the term for the apostolic office, 1 C. 9:17: *οικονομίαν πεπίστευμαι*. He is entrusted with an office; he does not preach the Gospel of his own accord; he does what he has to do, cf. 1 Th. 2:4: *δεδοκιμάσμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*. The word also occurs, with paraphrases and embellishments, in the Prison Letters: Col. 1:25: *κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς*, according to the divine office towards you with which God has commissioned me; Eph. 3:2: *τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς*, you have heard of the office of divine grace which has been laid upon me in service towards you. A distinctive feature in these epistles is that there is room for doubt whether *οικονομία* denotes office or the divine plan of salvation; the two are closely linked in the Prison Letters ... The word also means “plan of salvation,” “administration of salvation,” “order of salvation.” In this sense it has both a religious and a general significance ... In Eph. 1:10 the reference is to God’s plan of salvation which He has undertaken to execute in the fulness of times (*εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν*). Eph. 3:9 also refers to the actualising of the mystery which was hidden in God, the Creator of all things, before the times (*τίς ἢ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι*).⁸

Brief Exegesis of Eph 1:3-12

Predestined to Bring Glory to God in Christ!

In the following quote from Eph 1:3-12 I have intentionally italicized in bold certain expressions for emphasis since they are profoundly important to our discussion.

“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, ⁴ even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world** (God’s corporate election in Christ according to his foreknowledge), that we should be holy and blameless before him. ⁵ He **destined** (*προορίζω*, *proorizō*, *predestined, decided, or determined beforehand*) us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ (a corporate not individual purpose), according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ **In him** (corporately in Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ which he lavished upon us. ⁹ For he 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** ¹⁰ as a **plan** (*οἰκονομία*, *oikonomía*, *economy, plan, system*) for the fulness of time (an eschatological plan) to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ **In him** (corporately), according to the purpose (*πρόθεσις*, *próthesis*, *determined plan*) of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped **in Christ** have been

⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*

⁸ Otto Michel, *Οικονομία*, in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich, Eds., 1964.

destined (προορίζω, *proorizō*, *predestined, decided, or determined*) **and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.**”

This text is extremely important to any understanding of predestination: Several points stand out from this text. *God knew what he was doing* when he planned his creation; creation did not happen serendipitously, or by accident!

God had a plan to save or redeem man and his creation even before he created the world and man! Before creation God *destined or predestined* man’s salvation, that is, *he had a plan to save or redeem fallen man in Jesus Christ.* Paul argues later in Ephesians that fallen man is saved by God’s grace through faith *corporately in Jesus Christ.*

Eph 1:3. “*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 ...*” Paul affirms that it is *in Christ* that we have every spiritual blessing. In the Gnostic or pagan environment this is an extremely important point. There is nothing the Gnostic Redeemer could add that man needs that God has not already provided for in Christ Jesus! God has already provided every spiritual blessing man needs and this is found in Christ and not in some esoteric secret knowledge. To this Paul adds **Eph 2:1-8;**

“*And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.³ Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—⁹ not because of works, lest any man should boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*”

God’s plan was predetermined (predestined) according to his foreknowledge as a *corporate* plan. Man would not be saved in view of personal traits or works! It is only **in Christ** that man would be saved. God planned, destined, decided before creation that *those corporately in the body Christ* would be saved and bring glory to himself.

The lengthy pericope, **Eph 1:3-12** thus speaks of *corporate predestination in Christ*, not private personal or Calvinistic arbitrary predestination!

Fallen man decides for himself after hearing the gospel message whether to believe it and be saved by and *in Christ*, or not to believe it! *Man has the freedom to believe or not to believe!* Man’s coming to faith or rejection of faith in Christ is not an arbitrary predetermined choice of God. It is fully within man’s freedom to make this decision to have faith. If not, then all of the calls on men in Scripture to believe mean nothing!

At **Rom 10:14-16** Paul asks a perceptive question,

“*But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!”¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.*”

Salvation is the result of God's *predetermined grace* (*by grace he determined before time*) to send Jesus to die on the cross. Note the interesting statement by John in Revelation regarding Jesus' death. Rev 13:8. The NIV translation of this verse is more in keeping with the Greek text which unfortunately the RSV has translated to be parallel to another similar expression regarding the book of life rather than a precise translation of the Greek. The NIV reads;

"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."

The point is that according to John and Revelation God had decided *before the foundation of the world that Jesus would die for fallen man*. We should note that Rev 13:8 is a theological observation; not an historical statement!

Likewise Jesus' resurrection was not an afterthought but a predetermined plan. This predetermined plan of God lay at the root of Peter's great Pentecost sermon at Acts 2. Cf 2:23ff.

"²²Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."

Before creation God had planned for Jesus death and resurrection and it was God's predetermined power to raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was not a spur of the moment decision by God forced on him by the death of Jesus. Like Jesus' death his resurrection had been predetermined by God as part of his eternal plan to redeem man. Paul explained to the Corinthian church that the death, burial, and resurrection was a primary and central fact of the gospel proclamation, 1 Cor 15:1-5:

"Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, ²by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures ..."

In contrast to the gospel call for everyone to believe, repent, and be baptized, Calvinistic Predestination holds that Jesus died only for those who God had predetermined would be saved and not for all fallen men! I like Peter's response the Jews on the day of Pentecost when they asked what they needed to do after believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, "Repent, and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" Acts 2:38.

According to Calvinistic predestination this call of Peter's to the Jews for everyone to repent does not make sense! According to Calvinistic predestination the gospel call is *not for everyone*, only for those predestined to salvation! We will examine this further shortly.

John, however, in his Gospel wrote;

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." John 3:16-18.

Sounds to me like God was offering salvation to all the world if they would believe in Jesus!

There is a strong *proleptic eschatological* emphasis in God's predestined plan, (a *proleptic*⁹ *inaugurated and final end time plan*). God's predestined eternal plan which will be fulfilled finally at the end of time is *being received in advance of the end through the faith of believers and not by an arbitrary predestined decision of God that some should be saved!* God's plan was conceived before time began to be fulfilled (inaugurated eschatology – the end has already begun) in history in Christ and ultimately to be full realized at *the end of time*, at the general resurrection and final judgment. Note Paul's comment at Eph 1:9, 10:

"For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ¹⁰ as a plan (οἰκονομία, oikonomía, economy, plan, system) for the fulness of time (an eschatological plan) to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

The point to be stressed in Eph 1:3-10 is that man's salvation and redemption was *predetermined or predestined in God's plan to be fulfilled in Christ by those who would believe in Jesus and God's plan*. Paul was not saying that individuals are predestined to be saved only that *they were predestined to be saved corporately in Christ*. Simply put, Paul is saying that *God had decided before creation to save people in Christ*.

A point not to be overlooked is that according to God's predestined plan those in Christ were predestined to bring glory to God! Eph 1:11, 12;

"¹¹ In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory."

Brief Exegesis of Rom 8:29, 30

Predestined to be Conformed to the Image of His Son!

Paul also addressed God's predetermined plan in a powerful text in which he was reassuring the Romans of the decisiveness of their redemption. Rom 8: 29, 30 reads;

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."

First, Rom 8:28 is a notoriously difficult text to translate! The Greek reads "οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν." Translated *literally* this reads "Now we know for the ones loving God all things work together for good, for those being called according to purpose." The passage is complicated in that there is no subject/nominative noun (Θεός, *Theós*, God) in the better manuscripts to the verb συνεργεῖ, *is working*, but Θεός is found as a subject/nominative in some good manuscripts¹⁰. Should we read that *God works all things for good* (RSV) or simply that *all things work together for good* for those who love God (NIV, NRSV)? The better manuscripts support the last reading, as do Fitzmyer, Schreiner, Barrett, Dunn, and

⁹ This is a theological term which implies that we are receiving something in advance of the end. *Proleptic* derives from a Latin word and two Greek words, the Latin *prolēpsis*, and the Greek, from *prolambanein*, *to anticipate before*. It announces that something is received before its fulfillment.

¹⁰ Bruce M. Metzger in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, United Bible Society, 1994 on Rom 8:28 observes that the committee working on this text "deemed" the evidence for including Θεός, *Theos* to be "too narrowly supported to be admitted into the text."

Käsemann¹¹! But on its own this latter translation still raises problems! Do all things simply work together for all kinds of good for those who love God? How can this be and what does *good* mean?

Second, how do we understand ἀγαθόν, *good*! In the Jewish context it usually meant *spiritual good*, not necessarily all kinds of good. Most scholarly commentators observe that what Paul has in mind with his reference to *good* is the *ultimate eschatological good* that comes at *the end of time*, especially in the general resurrection of the saints to glory with Christ.¹²

When this text is considered in its Pauline Romans context of suffering, the prayers which Christians have difficulty expressing and in which the Holy Spirit assists, and in the real context of Christians ultimately being more than conquerors in Christ, then the eschatological end time *hope* and *good* defines everything working for *the ultimate eschatological good of those who love God*.

Thus in this somewhat complicated text we see Paul assuring Christians in the context of their weakness, hardship, and suffering (Rom 8:26) that all things will ultimately work out for the good of those who love God and do not lose their faith. He then moves on to explain that the Christian's salvation and future is sure since it has been *predetermined* by God in Christ. Those whom he foresaw he predestined to be saved and glorified in Christ. We should remember that at Eph 1:11 Paul had assured the Ephesians that God is capable of accomplishing his purpose and predetermined plan. Note Rom 8:37-39:

"³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If we see Rom 8:28 as a transitional verse between the Holy Spirit interceding for us and God having predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son, the Jewish spiritual sense of ultimate good seems more appropriate to the context. Joseph A. Fitzmyer observes: "The overall context of this pericope is that nothing in this life can harm Christians, whether it be suffering or the attack of hostile evil powers, for all of these can contribute to the destiny to which Christians are called, and they are now referred to as 'those who love God'."¹³

Joseph Fitzmyer also has a few other significant statements regarding Rom 8:29: "One encounters in these verses the first mention of "predestination," which Paul will again mention in chap. 9. The combination of Pauline verses on the topic in these chapters led to a preoccupation with them in predestinarian controversies of later centuries. What Paul asserts here in this regard is stated from a corporate point of view. He does not have in mind the predestination of individuals (either to glory or damnation)."¹⁴

J. D. G. Dunn adds significantly to the interpretation of this text: "Paul assumes that his readers will have in mind the continuity of thought from the previous verses in which human suffering and creation's travail have been integrated. The assurance that he offers his readers here then is that the experience of human contradiction in which they share as believers is no cause for despair, because God is also God of creation; his purpose for believers is also his purpose for creation and works through creation. His people therefore can be confident that their place within God's purpose is basically in harmony with the unfolding history of creation. (Italics IAF) Those who love God are those who have acknowledged their creatureliness and let that fact shape their living. Their confidence

¹¹ Cf. The bibliography above for these authors.

¹² Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer; Ernst Käsemann; Thomas R. Schreiner; R. D. G. Dunn in the bibliography.

¹³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible Commentary, New York Doubleday, 1992, Rom 8:26-39.

¹⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*.

is in God who is both Creator and Father. Just as believers can still pray even when their prayer is marked by complaint and irritation or the complete frustration of speechlessness, so they can still trust even when their sense of alienation and contradiction is at its sharpest, the sense of complete helplessness in the face of nameless forces. They can draw on the assurance that the Spirit who is active in these very frustrations and groanings is active also in these dark providences to bring about good—that is, presumably, for Paul, in helping forward the maturing of the believer (cf. 5:4) and the mortification of the deeds of the body (8:13) ... But in fact, the idea of loving God is untypical of Greco-Roman religiosity, while being characteristically Jewish. Paul therefore draws the vaguer hope of all religious piety within the circle of the more distinctive Jewish faith in the one God. The vaguer, more speculative piety of Greco-Roman religiosity is given clearer definition and more substantial foundation in the Jewish trust in God as Creator and Father ... Having hidden nothing of the contradiction and temptation in which believers find themselves, Paul rounds off his discussion of what God’s righteousness means for believers in the harsh reality of daily existence, by voicing his firm certainty that God’s will stands over all, in control of all, and that his purpose to bring his creation and creatures to their full intended potential is undefeatable. The goal he purposed for his people was formulated in the mists of time, effected by his own summons, to bring his human creation back into fullness of relation with himself, owned by him and sustained by him and given to share in his splendor. In the full assurance of faith Paul sets aside all the “ifs” and “buts,” the qualifications and warnings of the previous three chapters, and affirms the certainty of God fulfilling his purpose of creation and salvation in the tense of action already completed ... The goal of the creator-savior is expressed in terms of the original creation transposed into eschatological mode, as Paul could expect his readers to recognize. It is a transforming of believing man back into the image of God which disobedient man lost.¹⁵

Furthermore Robert H. Mounce astutely adds that this verse does not address the salvation of the individual but their transformation into the likeness of Jesus; “In the present context predestination is not concerned with election to salvation. Rather, God has foreordained that believers be brought into “moral conformity to the likeness of his Son.” What is predestined is that we become like Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18).¹⁶

What we find in **Rom 8:29, 30** is a creative poetic use of a string of aorist verbs! Paul writes;

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Käsemann and others point to the unique and purposeful collection of aorist verbs Paul has strung together in this text. The aorist indicative verb has many possibilities but most agree that the construction found in this text is making a positive affirmative statement of what has happened.

Fitzmyer and others point to the possibility that we might have in this pericope an early Christian confession of faith, one possibly related to baptism, or a possible baptismal chant or hymn.

If this is true then Paul is simply affirming a confession that Christians have already made! *In Christ they have been predestined to be conformed to Christ!*

Paul reference the foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification of the saints to assure them that at their baptism that God had done this. He had predestined them to justification and to be conformed to Christ. This was the confession they had made at their baptism. The purpose of this poetic confession would be to confirm the security of the saints and assure them

¹⁵ J. D. G. Dunn, J. D. G. *Romans 1–8*, Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998, p. 494 f.

¹⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995, p. 189. Italics, IAF)

that God has been working for them since before creation (the foreknowledge of God) and would not fail them in their difficult present. In God's eternal plan the saints were destined by God to be conformed to the image of his son, an eschatological concept, both a proleptic in the present and a final transformation at the end.

Rom 8:29 states clearly the purpose of God's predestination! "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the image of his Son ...*"

The point is that biblical predestination as referenced by Paul in this pericope was not to the personal salvation or damnation of a select few as is claimed by Calvinistic predestination, *but to a progressive eschatological transformation into the image of God's son, or into the image of their creator* (Eph 4:23; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 3:18).

Summary of Eph 1:3-12 and Rom 8:29, 30

These texts explain that God has an eternal plan, *determined before creation, to redeem those in Christ* who loved him and shared in his covenant relationship based on faith and to transform them into the image of his son.

This predetermined predestined plan was that *in Christ* the Christians, by faith in Christ, would be transformed into the likeness of Christ, God's son and bring glory to God in Christ and the church. God knew beforehand according to his foreknowledge that, certain things would occur and based on his foreknowledge he had decided to do something so Christians could be his children. He decided to send Jesus to die for the sins of all, and then called all to faith through the gospel message proclaiming the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus who died for all. The heart of the gospel plan calls all people through faith to be transformed in Christ into the children of God.

This predestination is not simply a predestination to salvation but to being transformed daily and ultimately into the image of our creator; that image which we lost through sin and disobedience, not simply through Adam's sin, but through our own sin. We chose however to emulate the example of Adam to disobey God, and to be lost. In Christ God predestined us to be saved and transformed into the image of his son, Jesus, and not into the image of Adam, so that we could bring glory to God through Christ and the church.

Calvinistic Predestination holds that God arbitrarily decided beforehand that some persons (individuals) should be saved, and some persons (individuals) should be lost. Pauline and biblical predestination holds that based on his foreknowledge that man would sin God decided "beforehand" that Jesus would die for sin, and that through the faithfulness of Jesus and faith in Jesus believers in Christ would or could become His sons and be "conformed into his image."

Simply put Paul decrees that God predestined, decided beforehand, according to his foreknowledge that those in Christ would become his children and be transformed in to the image of Christ! This is a *corporate* predestination, not an *individual* predestination; it refers to those who love God and who are in Christ, *corporately*. We might claim that God knows before we would individually believe in Christ and that we would individually obey him and that we would individually become his children, and this is true, but the predestination, or predetermining Paul describes is a *corporate* one that proclaims that those in Christ would become transformed into Christ's image and become God's children.

Thus it is *corporately in Christ* that this takes place and this is what God had decided before creation!

Calvinistic Predestination¹⁷

Broadly speaking Calvinistic Predestination arose out of the Augustinian doctrine of Inherited Sin and Total Depravity.

According to these views man is born totally depraved since his image of God in which he was created was destroyed in the sin of Adam. Man at his birth inherits the sinful nature of Adam and is alienated from God by sin and has his being created in God's image either totally or seriously impaired.

This doctrine was early proclaimed by Augustine ca 400 A.D. and eventually adopted by John Calvin and the early Protestant Reformation.¹⁸ It is defined variously by predestinarian groups.

Calvinistic (Reformed Theology) and Lutheran theology holds that in the fall of man (Adam's sin) man lost his image of God (*Imago Dei*) and has as a consequence lost the ability to reason and understand God fully. It is only through the direct action of the Holy Spirit that man can fully understand God and come to faith; faith thus is not man's working, but the work of the Holy Spirit. Luther held that unregenerate man can understand the outer clarity of Scripture, but without the Holy Spirit could not understand the inner meaning of the Scriptures. In the Calvinistic view God decided who of fallen men would be saved and who lost. All men in this view deserve to be lost and in God's sovereign freedom God can decide who to save and who not to save. We do not deny God's sovereign freedom to do as he wills but Calvinistic predestination is not what Paul explains God has decided to do!

Summary of Calvinistic Predestination under the Acronym TULIP

T represents total depravity and holds that every person is born inheriting Adam's sin and is therefore depraved and unable to understand God.

U represents unconditional election. God chose some to be saved and some to be lost as an arbitrary choice by his grace and we have no say in his choice since we all deserve condemnation for our sin.

L represents limited atonement. Jesus died only for the elect; those whom God has chosen. God limits his choice and calling.

I represents irresistible grace which means that when God chose and predestined a person to be saved he sends his Holy Spirit to bring about their faith and conversion. The elect cannot resist the working of the Holy Spirit.

P represents preservation of the saints. The Holy Spirit sees to it that the saved cannot fall away from grace. No matter what happens, the elect will get to heaven! It is this mindset that develops the doctrine held by some that once the saved are saved, they are always saved.

Typical Church of Christ and Christian Church Thinking

Followers of the Restoration Movement, Church of Christ and Christian Church, obviously influenced by John Locke [ca. 1700] and Alexander Campbell [ca 1800], both classical rationalists, have traditionally and theologically held that the origin of faith in an individual is located in the belief that the Scriptures are rational and can be understood by rational man, even fallen man, and that through the study and conviction of the Scriptures, individuals can without the aid of the Holy Spirit come to know the Scriptures and come to faith and make the decision to repent and accept Christ.

¹⁷ For studies in Calvinistic Predestination for the purposes of this study I recommend Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*. The topic is widely discussed in most major theological or biblical dictionaries. Cf. also Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 2, and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*.

¹⁸ Cf. Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, "Doctrine of Man and Predestination."

Faith, then, according to this view results from an individual's *rational comprehension* of Scripture and a *decision* to accept that rational conclusion.

Although Campbell had an appreciation for the working of the Holy Spirit he would not accept the direct intervention and operation of the Holy Spirit on man in the initial development of faith in the individual. Faith had to be a rational conclusion to the evidence of Scripture.

Some of Campbell's followers took Campbell's views to the extreme and held that the only way the Holy Spirit ever works in one's life was exclusively through the Word. This may help us understand why some members of Churches of Christ have until recently had difficulty accepting the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit in that by doing so they may detract from a rational approach and comprehension of Scripture.

This is unfortunate and has led to a diminution of appreciation of the working of the Holy Spirit in the new birth and *maturation* of faith. It would have been better had members of the Church of Christ paid closer attention to Barton W. Stone, who although similar in approach to Campbell in a rational understanding of Scripture, also accepted the working of the Holy Spirit in the development of faith! Stone view was perhaps a more balanced approach than that adopted by Campbell's extreme rationalist followers!

Several Scriptures however Support the Conclusion that Faith Results from the Hearing, Learning, and Comprehension of Scripture

In **2 Tim 3:14-16** Paul wrote to Timothy his young disciple encouraging him to remain firm in his faith.

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Likewise at **2 Tim 2:15** Paul wrote, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth ...*"

On the same topic Paul wrote concerning a disobedient Israel at Rom 10:16, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ *So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."*

Note particularly **John 5: 39**: *"You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me ..."*

John 20:30, 31, *"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."*

It seems obvious that Scripture, and an appropriate understanding of Scripture, has a large part to play in the development and maturation of faith, but this does not exclude prayer and the working of God, the Holy Spirit, and biblical teaching in the development and maturation of faith.

The issue or difference between a Restoration Movement, Church of Christ, view of faith and that of Luther/Calvinism relates to their divergent views regarding the relationship between man's unregenerate mind, Luther/Calvin, and faith and man's rational ability to understand Scripture and the Gospel of Christ. Lutheranism/Calvinism holds that unregenerate man cannot understand the Scriptures so as to bring them to saving faith. Those in the Restoration Movement, Churches of

Christ, Christian Church, do not accept the negative anti-rational Lutheran/Calvinistic views¹⁹ of man's total depravity and loss of the *Imago Dei*. Restorationists adhere to man's rational capability (as in Paul), and man's ability to understand Scripture and the saving message of Jesus Christ. Restoration thinkers do not reject the work of the Holy Spirit in the maturing of faith but hold that man's rational capacity is adequate for understand the rational nature of Scripture in bringing man to understand God's saving grace and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Radical Calvinism holds that without the *initial direct operation* of the Holy Spirit man cannot reason adequately and consequently cannot unaided by the Holy Spirit believe, for man is primarily totally depraved and has lost the Image of God which Calvinism relates to rationality!

Moderate Lutheranism holds that *without the assistance of the Holy Spirit one is not able to understand the inner meaning of Scripture*. One can read and understand the outer nature of Scripture but not receive the inner regenerating power of Scripture without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Both Luther and Calvin held that man's *imago dei*, the *image of God*, which is his rational reasoning nature, was destroyed or seriously impaired by Adam's fall. Man inherits this impaired or lost *imago dei* "gene" either in birth, through parents who have lost their *imago dei*, or through man's corrupt and impaired mind.

Both Calvin and Luther held to the importance of Scripture but in addition held that without *the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit* one would not be able to understand the inner regenerative nature of Scripture which brings one to a redeeming faith in Jesus. In the Reformed Calvinistic and Lutheran theology of Scripture, and *sola scriptura*²⁰, it is held that without the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit Scripture cannot either be properly understood or that it lies beyond unregenerate man's irrational comprehension.

In my PhD dissertation on *Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology as a Reaction to Dialectical Theology: Carl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann*, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, I trace the thought of Barth in which he stresses the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the creation of faith, and Bultmann who stressed an exegetical experience in the creation of faith. Barth's and Bultmann's primary objection was of history being an adequate source of faith. Pannenberg rejected both approaches and stressed a rational approach to Scripture in the creation of faith, which conclusion I supported.

I am referring the reader also to an Abilene Christian University College of Biblical Studies faculty discussion of three positions adopted by different approaches to Biblical theology and faith regarding man and the role of reason and the Holy Spirit.

One view is that there are those who have a *low* estimate of man's potential and a high estimate of Holy Spirit intervention, Calvin/Luther.

¹⁹ One should recognize that Lutheran and Calvinistic views are not monolithic and that what is being described as Lutheran/Calvinistic is a broad definition of these views.

²⁰ *Sola Scriptura* can be variously defined but primarily stand in opposition to human interpretation and the church's right to define faith ... the key implication of the principle is that interpretations and applications of the Scriptures do not have the same authority as the Scriptures themselves; hence, ecclesiastical authority is viewed as subject to correction by the Scriptures, even by an individual member of the Church. Luther said, "A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it". The intention of the Reformation was to correct the perceived errors of the Catholic Church by appeal to the uniqueness of the Bible's authority and to reject what Catholics considered to be Apostolic Tradition as a source of original authority alongside the Bible ... *Sola Scriptura* ... sees the Bible as the only final authority in matters of faith and practice. As Luther once said, "The true rule is this: God's Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so ..." This summary is drawn from comments from Wikipedia, *Sola Scriptura*, and is intended only to be a guide to understanding the general doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*.

Then there is the view that holds to a *high* estimate of man's potential and a low estimate of Scripture and the working of the Holy Spirit (classical liberalism and some post- modern views).

Finally, there is the median view of Restoration Movement estimates regarding the relationship between man's *high rational ability* and a *high estimate of Scripture* and the *operation of the Holy Spirit*. This view holds that man through his high rational ability has a high view of Scripture which he can understand and believe. One may then call on the Holy Spirit to help one understand how to apply Scripture to religious faith, life, and maturity.

Emphases to gather from this lesson

Discussion points from this lesson

Lesson 16. The Origin and Cycle of Faith/Trust

The progressive components of faith development

In the origin and development of faith as saving faith or trust there are four elements, information (*notitia*, to take notice), knowledge (*assensus* the acceptance of that information), and trust (*fiducia*, the decision to act on that information or knowledge), and the cycle of returning to reexamine the information and build on it from a deeper understanding of the information, in the Christian faith, Scripture.²¹

Notitia. *Notitia* refers to the **content** of faith, or **information** that we believe. We place our faith in something, for example, our *education, profession, Scripture, personal experience, family issues*, family faith or lack of faith. We examine these components in the light of *life's success or failure*, and our *knowledge of Scripture* to determine whether they are sound or reliable.

Assensus. *Assensus* is our **decision to accept the information** provided by life's cycles, Scripture which become the *knowledge or acceptance* for *Assensus*. We **give our assent to**, or **accept** such information. But one can know about the Christian faith from Scripture and yet decide to do nothing about that knowledge. *You might acknowledge this information to be reasonable, but not act on it.* Many people believe in Jesus, they accept the information regarding Jesus, but ignore him as the Lord that Scripture teaches.

Jesus is just part of the **knowledge** (*Assensus*) one gains from the information one accepts, (the *Notitia* or *information* gained from *life* and *Scripture*), and even believe that knowledge to be reasonable, but that is not a mature *faith or trust*, **Fiducia**. maturing faith, or **Fiducia** derives from a *wilful decision to accept and act on the knowledge we have*.

The knowledge may not be perfect, but that is what faith is, it is seldom perfect, but it is a reasoned decision to accept the knowledge we gain from life's evidence, and Scripture.

Fiducia. *Fiducia* or **trust** results from the decision to accept and act upon the evidence of Scripture. This leads to **personal trust** and reliance. Knowing and believing the content of the Christian faith is not enough, for even demons can do that (James 2:19). Faith is only effectual if, knowing about and assenting to the claims of Jesus, one personally trusts in Him for salvation.

The Cycle of Faith

Faith often begins slowly and may begin as an immature faith and trust, but one returns to the source of the faith, the *Notitia* which is Scripture and continues to examine Scripture and its teachings and implications, learning more and growing on one's knowledge of the faith.

²¹ This cycle is adapted from information from Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions and Answers*, Vol. 2, Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1971, pp. 30 ff; Ian A. Fair, *Wolfhart Pannenberg's Reaction to Dialectical Theology*, PhD dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1975; E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, Philadelphia; The Westminster Press, 1972, pp. 122 ff.

A diagram depicting this process

The dynamic of this cycle of faith begins in most cases with the point *Notitia* and progresses in a cycle through *Assensus* to *Obedience*, and then as faith grows one repeats the cycle through *Notitia*, *Assensus*, and *Obedience* toward a *mature faith*.

THE ORIGIN OF SAVING FAITH-TRUST

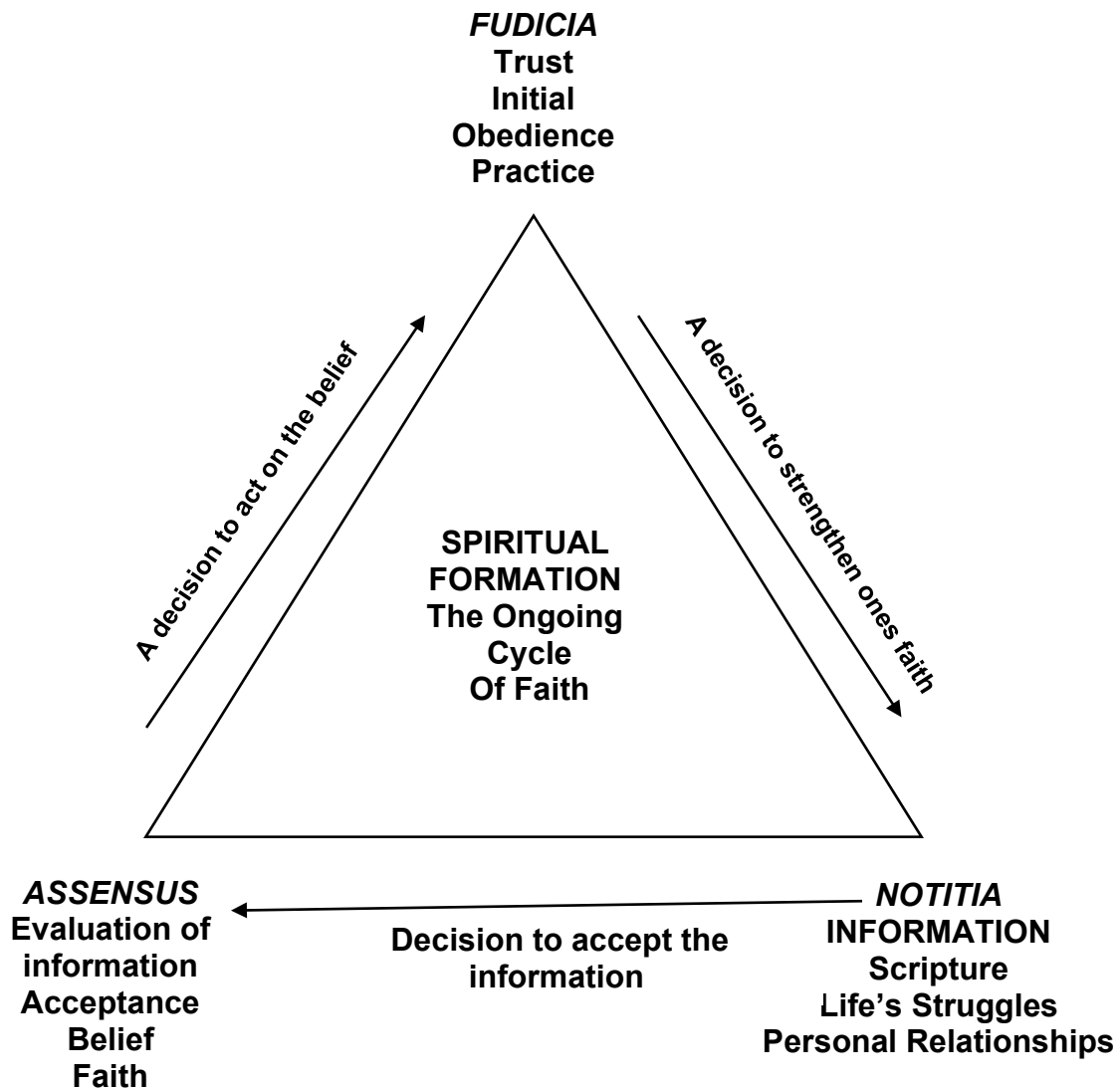


Chart and process of *Notitia*, *Assensus*, *Fiducia*, informed by my research and final PhD dissertation on the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Emphasis in the Cycle of Faith

Points of entry into the Cycle of faith

One can enter the cycle of faith at any point depending on one's *personal educational level, religious background, or cultural context.*

A colleague of mine who for over 40 years worked with me in the South African mission field among the Zulu people, and then independently, Samson Peters, a Zulu Highschool teacher. In his early years turned away from his Zulu patriarchal cultural tradition, became an avid communist in South Africa. Another Zulu tribal leader, John Nguma, was a committed Christian. He took Samson "under his wing," mentored him, challenged his communist life, and converted him to faith in Jesus and a long life in Christian ministry. *Scripture, the failure of communism* among the Zulu, and Jesus became the *Notitia* of a process that resulted in over sixty years of Christian mission! His entry point into this faith cycle was indeed unique and very individual; *Notitia*, Zulu traditional faith, communism. *Assensus*, Jesus, Scripture, conversion to Christian faith. *Fiducia*, ministry, and over sixty years in the Christian faith. His original *Notitia* was challenged. He worked through this toward a more stable *Notitia*.

In this remarkable process and Christian *Notitia*, *Assensus*, and *Fiducia*, a missionary of great faith resulted. *Samson's faith was not a miracle produced in him by the Holy Spirit!* In Paul's understanding of this process as reflected in Eph 1:3-16, God obviously knew, knew before, predestined, and called Samson Peters while he was still a communist, *knew of his character, called him through the gospel* of Jesus and John Nguma, challenged him to rework his *Notitia*, and then through the teaching ministry of John Nguma and Scripture, challenged him to look again at his *Notitia* "briefcase," rethink his reaction with the supporting ministry of the Holy Spirit, *Assensus*, Eph 3:20ff, finally to recommit, faith/trust his life, *Fiducia*, maturing in Christ as a powerful missionary evangelist.

A personal "mentor" of mine, Wolfhart Pannenberg, began life as a committed atheist in Germany post WWII, ca 1950. A brilliant student, he entered university in Germany, studied philosophy, the religion of the German Karl Barth and his Hegelian fellow neo-orthodox colleagues. Pannenberg eventually retired as one of the most prestigious New Testament scholars and Evangelical Lutheran theologians of the 20th century. He entered the cycle of faith as a *committed atheist*, and agnostic, *Notitia*, and through a disciplined intellectual academic career, studied his way out of atheism and into the Evangelical Lutheran faith, *Assensus*, then through a dedicated maturation into Christian apologist, *Fiducia*. He was the central theologian of both my MA and PhD theses.

Finally, we have Charles Staples Lewis, C. S. Lewis of post WW II recovery. Lewis was a British writer, literary scholar, and Anglican lay theologian. He held academic positions in English literature at both Magdalen College, Oxford (1925–1954), and Magdalene College, Cambridge (1954–1963). He is best known as the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but he is also noted for his other works of fiction, such as *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Space Trilogy*, and for his non-fiction Christian apologetics, including *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*.

Lewis was a close friend of J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Both men served on the English faculty at Oxford University and were active in the informal Oxford literary group known as the Inklings.

According to Lewis's 1955 memoir *Surprised by Joy*, he was baptized in the Church of Ireland *but fell away from his faith during adolescence*. He returned to *Anglicanism at the age of 32*, owing to the influence of Tolkien and other friends. He consequently *became an "ordinary layman of the Church of*

England". Lewis's faith profoundly affected his work, and his wartime radio broadcasts on the subject of Christianity brought him wide acclaim.

However, Lewis did not inherit his faith from his father, and turned against it to agnosticism while in boarding school in England. Finally, through many hours of dialogue with religious friends, he re-evaluated his *Notitia* and *Assensus* history and renewed his *faith* into *Fiducia* as a result of changing circumstances in his life.

Lewis wrote more than 30 books which have been translated into more than thirty languages and have sold millions of copies. The books that make up *The Chronicles of Narnia* have sold the most and have been popularized on-stage, TV, radio, and cinema. His philosophical writings are widely cited by Christian scholars from many denominations.

The Cycle of Faith

A vital feature of the cycle of faith is that it *does not necessarily or habitually have a terminus*. It continues as we go through different life contexts in which new questions or issues arise.

The *Notitia* point changes due to the developing crises of life. Normally, as a twenty five year old bachelor, one is not normally confronted with the illness and death of children and spouses. Such varied events and circumstances encourage, or even challenge us to *reexamine* our faith through new or different lenses. One is periodically forced to *reexamine our trust level and effectiveness*. New “insurgents” encourage us to reexamine the *sources of faith*. Questions like “*why do I believe this?*” “*Why is my faith not working, helping me in this crisis?*” For the Christian, we often need to reexamine our understanding of a particular text, or search for the help we know Scripture provides somewhere. Perhaps we need examine old texts in a new light.

Assensus suggests that we need to “*decide*” to accept, possibly temporally, what the solution gained from *Notitia*. This stage we identify as **Assensus**, *acceptance*, in our triad of faith development. We have to accept the new proposal of factors and move on.

One must go on from the new *Notitia* proposals and *accept* the new information, the *cognitive* element of faith and recognize that *faith must mature into action of some nature* which we have identified as *fiducia*, *trust*, in our faith development triad! The process must go on and mature!

I have two *real life* contexts to work with as examples to this process.

First, the birth and gradual maturation of a human baby, me for example! I was born in 1934 with a brain that was *tabula rasa* regarding life outside my mother’s womb. Gradually through the years of education, non-formal and then formal through schooling I graduated from high school. *Notitia*. I had to decide what to do with all the information I had garnered. *Assensus*. I now had to *decide* and find a job. But during the process of *gradual maturation* I met a beautiful lady with *titian* gold colored hair and striking blue eyes. I had to make several trust decision and contrary to my introverted nature and trust my *Assensus* instincts, and court her, eventually proposing marriage to her. However even in a fine marriage of over seventy years, new *Notitia* information such as health had to be confronted, and the process goes in to some form of maturity!

Not surprisingly, in the above process new circumstances surfaced. My religious conversion, not to Christ for I had since childhood believed Jesus. Good emotional information from my parents and environment had “matured” into what I now recognize was an “immature faith!” I was working on completing our new house/home when one day a Texan came up to help me. He asked what I thought of at the time was an impertinent important *Notitia* questions. *Why* do you believe what you believe about Jesus and your faith and salvation? I was challenged to take another look at Scripture, *Notitia*, and then to decide what to do about this new information, *Assensus*. Once I had decided that the *Notitia* information in Scripture was correct I had to decide whether to *trust* this information, *Fiducia*,

and be baptized into Christ as Scripture, *Notitia*, had proclaimed something and I had decided to accept this, *Assensus*, and then trust what I had learned, *Fiducia* trust.

Re-examine the chart on The Origin of Saving Faith-Trust

Faith is built around information that is credible which we identify as Notitia. Notitia is the Latin term used to refer to the content of faith, or the information we believe. This information is repeatedly examined to verify its credibility.

Assensus refers to our **decision to accept the information** provided by life's cycles, and Scripture which become the *knowledge we tentatively accept*. We give our mind *assent* to, or accept such information.

Fiducia. Fiducia or **trust** results from the decision to accept and act upon the evidence of Scripture. This leads to the maturing nature of faith as **personal trust**.

Emphases from this lesson

Discussion Topics

What components to faith could you find under the topic of *Notitia*?

Can personal experience be a beginning point in this cycle of faith? Explain this point.

What role might family experience or the dynamic of growing up in a family contribute to faith development? Positive and negative influences!

Where does Scripture fit into this dynamic? How perfect does your knowledge of Scripture have to be?

Has your understanding of Scripture grown as you repeatedly return to survey Scripture, examining its nature and its purpose and function?

As your faith-development works through the cycle of *Notitia*/Scripture , *Assensus*/acknowledgement of the value of Scripture, and sense of *Obedience* to Scripture and life's situations, do you feel the need to explore Scripture more deeply or practically, and acknowledge its value?

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Revelation
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Romans
Prison Epistles
Synoptic Gospels
Matthew
1 & 2 Thessalonians
Leadership

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Revelation
Romans
Matthew
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Leadership
Unity in Diversity

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