

Works cited

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Introduction

Ephesus is presently ruins, situated in western Asian Minor, now western Turkey. It was built in the 10th century BC. Early Greeks established it as a colonial city. In the 6th century BC the Temple of Artemis was completed and became the major draw for this city. The Ephesians claimed an image of Artemis fell from the sky (Acts 19:35). For this image they built the temple. Silversmiths and others made copies of this image which they sold and made good money (Acts 19:24). The Goths destroyed the city in AD 263, and after being rebuilt, it suffered tremendous damage from an earthquake in 614. At the time Paul arrived, the city was home to about 60,000 people and a regular stop for travelers moving freight from the nearby port of Miletus to inland locations.

Paul's Brief Visit

The Bible first mentions Ephesus in Acts 18. After God protected Paul from the hostile opposition in Corinth, he left for Syria with Priscilla and Aquilla (18:18). Paul left his companions and entered the Synagogue (18:19). There he discussed [*dialegō*] with the Jews. The response was positive as they asked him to remain long with them (18:20). Paul declined and left.

The Ministry of Priscilla and Aquilla

In Paul's absence Apollos arrived in Ephesus (Acts 18:24). He was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt. He was a man of words, a description that expresses both his training as well as his skill in speaking. He was powerful or capable in the Scriptures, being able to communicate them well and to connect Scriptures to teach a point. He had been taught orally about the way of the Lord (18:25). Therefore, he knew something about what God wants for us, most likely in regard to salvation. His spirit, greatly interested in communicating truth, he spoke and taught accurately about Jesus. However, he knew only John's baptism. This meant he was missing other key truths. To know only John's baptism meant he did not know about Christian baptism or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without knowing about Spirit baptism, one does not know about being in Christ and cannot fully know the way of God (18:26). Knowing the way of God more accurately involves some of what Paul reviews with the Ephesians about the dispensation of grace.

When Apollos left for Achaia (the area where Corinth was situated) the disciples welcomed him and he then helped through the grace many of those who had believed (18:27). The word "helped" [*συνβάλλω* *sumballō*] has the idea of throwing ideas together. Mary did this with what she knew and observed in her son Jesus (Lk. 2:19). A king throws the idea of going to war into his thinking (Lk. 14:31). The Jewish religious council tossed ideas among themselves regarding the disciples and their preaching (Acts 4:15). These illustrate that Apollos helped them by throwing together some instruction or ideas they needed. He helped those who had already believed, expressed by a perfect participle. He helped them through the grace. While Paul may have explained life by grace, some believers may not have understood or needed further explanation. Apollos provided this. This maybe why some believers in Corinth were so loyal to him. I take this extra time with Apollos because his more accurate instruction was provided by Priscilla and Aquilla, who in turn learned from Paul as they worked together both in service to believers and making tents as their livelihood. This demonstrates that some of Paul's instruction which had been passed on to Apollos involved life by God's grace.

Paul's Return Visit - 12 Disciples

Paul stops in Ephesus on his return from Syria (Acts 19:1). Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul found about twelve disciples. During Jesus' earthly ministry, people could be disciples (students) and not be believers (cf. Jh. 6:64-66). Beginning in Acts "disciple" applies only to believers. Therefore, these men were believers. For many years during the period of Acts, people did not receive the Holy Spirit apart from an apostle being present. God may have done this to demonstrate the connectivity of all New Testament believers, a truth Peter recognized when God poured out His Spirit on the believers of Cornelius' household (cf. Acts 10:44, 47; 11:17; 15:6-9).

The disciples had not received the Spirit. They hadn't even heard if the Holy Spirit had been given. The Greek text is

ἀλλ'	οὐδ'	εἰ	πνεῦμα	ἅγιον	ἔστιν
but	not even	if	Spirit	Holy	is

This statement is similar to John's explanation in John 7:39, "Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive, for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. The Greek phrase

οὕτω	γὰρ	ἦν	πνεῦμα
not as yet	for	was	the Spirit

John wrote that John the Baptizer saw the Holy Spirit visibly descend and remain upon Jesus (1:33). Therefore, 7:39 does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not yet exist. Many Old Testament Scriptures testified to the Spirit's eternal existence and work. It is unlikely the group of disciples in Ephesus did not know about the Spirit. Rather, it was not until the Upper Room that Jesus promised that His disciples would receive the Spirit (Jh. 14:16-17). Jesus stated that the Spirit was "with" [*para*] the disciples but when the Spirit would come He would be "in" [*en*] them." Because Jesus spoke these words the night before His crucifixion, only the eleven disciples in that room heard this promise. Therefore, the disciples had not heard that the Spirit had been sent.

Paul responded by asking, "Into what, therefore, were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3). Paul asks this question because Christian water baptism pictures the Spirit baptizing believers into Christ (cp 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 1:5). If they did not know the Spirit had come, they would not know that the Spirit was placing believers into Christ.

They told Paul they were baptized into John's baptism (Acts 19:3). Paul explained that John's baptism was related to repentance (19:4). Repentance was a change of mind. John told people to repent that the kingdom from the heavens was near (Mt. 3:1-2; Mk. 1:4). As people responded to John's message, he then announced that One (Jesus) was coming after him who is greater than him (Mt. 3:11). This Paul explained. These disciples of John the baptizer had never believed in Jesus, having never received any further information.

Immediately hearing about Jesus, the disciples were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus (19:5). “Into the name” does not mean that a name was uttered over the one being baptized. It meant they were baptized into the recognition of who the Lord (deity) Jesus (the man) is. This also applies when people are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, where the three share a single “name” (Mt. 28:19-20). The three are one single God (deity), while being three distinct persons. The singular name is the same character of the Lord Jesus. Their baptism evidenced that they believed into Jesus as Paul had explained.

Upon the faith into Jesus and their baptism, Paul, an apostle, laid his hands on the twelve. The Holy Spirit then came upon them (19:6). Again, this group, previously separated from other believers, are now believers in what all the others have believed. The Spirit comes upon them as an apostle is present. This is the last time the Spirit will come on believers when apostles lay hands on them. From this point on, all believers will receive the Spirit immediately when they believe. They also spoke in tongues. Tongues served as a sign, normally to unbelievers but also to Jews (cp 1 Cor. 14:22; 1:22; Jh. 2:18). I do not think that the tongues were for Paul’s sake but for theirs. It testified to them (they were Jews) that this message was genuine. It testified to them that this new message was genuine. Further they prophesied (19:7), and prophecy is for the sake of believers. As in Acts 15, this prophecy may have revealed God’s good plans for these new New Testament believers. 19:7 tells us that there were about twelve. Why Luke did not know precisely how many is not revealed. These twelve disciples formed the initial Ephesian assembly.

Paul in the Synagogue

Paul then went to the synagogue (Acts 19:8). This was his normal custom upon entering a city. In the synagogue, Paul began discussing and persuading about the kingdom of God. When the kingdom of God involves believers, it is the sphere of salvation, the sphere where believers are born from above by the Spirit (Jh. 3:3, 5). Paul was talking about what God has done to save us and how we respond. Paul did not discuss by means of philosophical reasonings, for his habit was to reason from the Scriptures (17:2). He did so boldly for three months. “Boldly” meant that he spoke freely during this time. However, not all respond positively to the gospel, so in the synagogue some were hard and unpersuaded. They began speaking against the Way. “The Way” likely derives from Jesus’ words in John 14:6, that He is the Way. He is the Way to the Father to be eternally righteous with God (1 Cor. 1:30). He is the Way for the believer to approach the Father (Eph. 2:18). He is the Way who will come and bring believers to the Father (1 Thess. 3:13). We can say that Jesus is our Way from beginning to end. His being the Way is at the heart of grace living.

Paul Separates the Believers

Due to the growing opposition, Paul withdrew and separated the disciples from those in the synagogue (19:9). Perhaps there is a lesson for us. Believers do not always benefit by being subjected to hostility. Solid teaching can be drowned by constant verbal opposition, so that believers may become confused or unable to sift through the voices. Addressing Titus, Paul told him that some teachers need to be muzzled (Tit. 1:11). In this setting, since Paul was sitting in their synagogue, Paul withdrew the disciples to a location free of such disruptions. He took the disciples to a meeting hall (school) belonging to a man named Tyrannus. Luke does not tell us whether this man was a believer or unbeliever, only that he owned this meeting hall, and Paul used it as a large gathering space. There, Paul went on discussing daily. Presumably, he continued discussing from the Word. Since he separated the disciples to this

location, his discussions addressed present tense Christian living within the kingdom of God. Paul wrote that the kingdom is not about what we can eat or drink but about our character towards fellow believers (Rm. 12:17). He said that the kingdom is not about how well we can speak, but about how we live out power (1 Cor. 4:20). This is the application of salvation truths (kingdom of God) to practical living. Paul continued teaching these disciples for two years, the longest teaching time recorded for Paul (Acts 19:10).

The gospel of Jesus Christ went throughout all of Asia as a result of his extended stay (Acts 19:10). The word about the Lord was not restricted to one racial group but offered to both Jews and Greeks. This emphasis by Luke may reflect the later issue which arose within the Ephesian church, that of favoritism and conflict between believers of different backgrounds. After Paul and Barnabas spent a year teaching believers in Antioch, those disciples were the first to conduct their business as “anointed ones” (Acts 11:26). Paul’s new ministry of explaining God’s work of grace through the Spirit, resulted in believers living out this new work of the Spirit so they lived out their anointing. The word “called” in 11:26 is an active voice verb that attributes the activity to the disciples, not to others who were “calling” them some name in a mocking fashion. Further that verb does not mean “call” but indicates how one conducted his public or business affairs. In a similar manner, when Paul writes Ephesians, he needs only tell the Ephesians to “be filled by the Spirit.” He does not have to explain how, because he spent two years with them teaching daily.

God’s Witness to His Word

God also bore witness to Paul’s authority as an apostle and to his teaching by doing works of power through Paul’s hand (Acts 19:11). From the beginning of the Church until about the end of the first century, God confirmed the word of the apostles through signs, works of power, and wonders (Heb. 2:3-4). He confirmed their word because He had revealed new truth to these men. Any knowledgeable about the Old Testament Scriptures would have called into question the legitimacy of this new revelation. For example, even Jesus revealed several new truths in the John 13-17, truths He had not addressed during the three years of His earthly ministry. In addition to those new truths from Jesus, God revealed to Paul a series of mysteries (new truths) for how we are to live and about His future plans. One extreme example of these works of power involved handkerchiefs or cloths which had touched Paul and were given to the sick who were immediately healed and if they had evil spirits, those spirits left (19:12).

Luke tells us of one event in which God distinguished Paul and his ministry from others who might try to claim some notoriety by referring to the Lord Jesus and miserably failed (19:13). These men were not believers in the Lord Jesus. They treated the Lord Jesus as one Paul preached, indicating they had no personal knowledge of Jesus. As a result, a group of Jewish “exorcists” attempted this method of casting an evil spirit out of a man, when he jumped upon them and dominated them to the point of injury and they fled (19:14-16). The spirit acknowledged Jesus and Paul but stated he did not know these men. Word of this event spread so that people all through the region heard, feared, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (19:17). Since much “magic” involves attempts to manipulate the world and the spirits in it, God’s dramatic show of power over the spirits and the lack of authority on the part of unbelievers trying to imitate such activity affected those who practiced magic. Those who believed were continually coming and confessing and telling of what they practiced. They then burned the books in which they recorded their magic. The total value was about fifty thousand pieces of silver, the value of which has been estimated to be about 50 thousand days’ wages for a common working man, or a year’s wages for 160 people.

Regarding these events, a couple observations are in order. First, God was the one who caused this dramatic contrast to His power through Paul versus men's lack of power. Second, the demonstration of power impressed believers as well as unbelievers. Third, some believers had continued to practice magic even after salvation. In fact, it appears it was a common practice among the people. When God demonstrated the lack of power magic had on spirits, and how much infinitely greater is His power, believers abandoned the practice. They were so impressed by the contrast that they did not even attempt to gain money from the resale of their books but burned them. The observation here is that Paul did not forbid the people from practicing magic, but allowed the display of God's power to convince them that it was not consistent with who they were and God's work in them.

Resistance to the Message of Christ

While Paul planned to move on to other communities after his two year stay, he remained in Ephesus a while longer (Acts 19:22). He had sent some of his fellow workers to other locations. Sometime during this longer stay, a disturbance arose (19:23). A silversmith assembled others of his trade to complain about a supposed drop in their business (19:24-27). While he turns his complaint to endangering the reputation of "the great temple of Artemis" his opening comment about their trade demonstrates his main concern was with his pocketbook. Like the problem in Philippi, the real complaint involved individuals' livelihood. They turned the matter to something about civil law in Philippi, albeit false, and to religion in Ephesus. This demonstrates why Paul so often wanted believers to know that he did not serve them for the sake of money. His service was not a cloak to hide his real motives, though some implied he wanted material support (1 Thess. 2:3, 5, 9-10; 2 Cor. 11:7-9).

Demetrius' words filled the people of the city with anger (Acts 19:28). They began to cry out "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." They did this for two hours (19:34). They forcefully drug two of Paul's friends into the city's theater, presumably intending to bring charges and harm against them. The disciples did not allow Paul to enter the public square (19:30-31). They apparently feared for Paul's safety. The crowd became so disorderly and confused that they were not even chanting the same words, and many did not even know why they were assembled. This is simple mob mentality.

Some from the crowd pushed a Jew named Alexander into the chaos (19:33). Since the Jews were known for not worshipping idols (this is after the return from the Babylonians captivity and the good influence of the Pharisees). These who wished for Alexander to step up may have wished for him to distinguish the local Jewish population from the the present matter. The Ephesian citizens seemed to have made no distinction between the Jews and the disciples during the two years Paul has been teaching in Ephesus. Though he tries to answer this errant conclusion, the crowd silences him with a two hour chant (19:34).

The city "clerk" or "recorder" silences the crowd (19:35). He rehearses the city's history and claims that it cannot be denied or spoken against. He warns the crowd against acting recklessly regarding these men. He points out that the men were doing nothing against the temple nor blaspheming their god (i.e. Artemis)(19:37). Certainly Paul did teach that gods made by men are not gods at all (19:26; Gal. 4:8). Paul taught there is but one true and living God (1 Thess. 1:9). However, Paul taught this to believers, not to the world. To the world, with the exception of his brief conversation in Athens, Paul presented Christ and Him crucified. Believing in Jesus Christ severed any confidence in false gods. The clerk suggests that the

silversmiths can bring charges in the formal courts if they wish, but the matter will not be settled in the council of mob-rule (19:38-40). He warns them of lawless rioting.

With the assembly ended and the commotion quieted, Paul determined to pursue his plans to travel to Macedonia (19:41, or 20:1 in most modern translations). He does not leave without first encouraging the disciples (20:1).

A Visit with the Elders

Paul determined to sail past Ephesus 20:16

It is ironic that Paul the champion of grace, the apostle who emphasized the fact that all believers are not only equal but their earthly status is gone, he is in a hurry to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Pentecost is the Jewish festival of weeks or first fruits. At Pentecost God began the Church, but Pentecost was still primarily a Jewish festival. Due to the schedule, Paul was not going to spend time in Asia. Recall that Paul spent more than two years in Ephesus. How could a brother keep his visit short if he were to begin traveling in Asia?

Paul calls for the elders 20:17

Instead of visiting Ephesus, Paul called for the elders to come visit him in Miletus. The time to send someone to get the elders and for them all to return, demonstrates this was not a matter of expediency for the trip. As already established, Paul did not wish to go to Ephesus because he determined not to spend time in Asia. A trip to Ephesus would not have been a short visit but would likely have become an extended stay. The elders arrived and Paul began his short talk with him. Whether Luke records the entirety of the Paul's talk or his key points, we have what the Spirit wanted us to know. Any other words in this conversation were unnecessary for us.

Paul rehearsed his time in Ephesus 20:18-21

Paul began by reminding the Ephesians of what he did while in Ephesus. Paul served the Lord in humility. With all he had done, Paul could have easily thought of himself as indispensable and superior but he maintained an attitude of humility fulfilling the role of a slave. The word "serving" is a verb form of the Greek word for a slave. Paul also served with tears. His tears were likely for the Ephesians not for himself. His tears expressed concern for the Ephesians to understand God's will and to know how to live by God's grace and not resort to the problems that had risen in Corinth. Beginning in Philippi, Paul had opposition in every city in which he served. The problems affected the believers in each of these locations. He was beaten and jailed in Philippi for interrupting commerce. He was opposed by the Jews in Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. He was opposed by Greek philosophers in Athens. In Corinth the Jews formed a mob as the Gentiles propelled by the silversmiths did in Ephesus. So Paul wept. He also reminds them of his temptations due to the Jewish plots. Luke did not record any Jewish opposition in the previous section, but he includes Paul's reference to it here. The noun *πειρασμός*, translated "trials" in some English Bibles refers to a test that expects or is looking for failure. "Temptation" better represents this word. If one fails under a "trial" has one acted righteously or unrighteously? Is that then a temptation. A temptation is not always immediately to sin, but often to get a person to move off the path God has set for them. This may end in sin, but it may also simply distract a believer from God's will. Satan often used people as a basis for tempting believers. Paul does not explain the nature of the temptations but we might suppose that Satan

tempted him to be silent in the same way he later tempted Timothy to be silent to avoid suffering (2 Tim. 1:7-8; 2:3). The constant suffering and opposition on his trip from Philippi to Corinth became the basis of Paul becoming silent, for which the Lord appeared to him and encouraged him to stop being afraid and silent (Acts 18:9-10).

Despite the opposition and temptations, Paul did not back away from announcing to them anything that was beneficial (Acts 20:20). He wanted them to know everything God had taught him to this point. At times we think we should ease believers into truth, but Paul held nothing back from them. He taught them publicly. He began in the synagogue and moved to the meeting hall. In both settings, others could enter and listen. He was not holding secret meetings. In this case the “you” may refer to the whole church but may also refer to the elders. Elders describes first a level of spiritual maturity. Second, that level of maturity allows one who is gifted as a teacher to teach others in the local church. Whether the whole church or the elders, Paul’s words present a different version of training than many Christians observe. He did not bring the elders into a private situation and train them separately from the rest of the church as is done in colleges and seminaries. What he taught the elders, he taught them before the any from the Ephesian church who wished to be present. Paul later wrote that Timothy was to commit to capable teachers the truth he received from Paul (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul did not tell him to do so privately, but rather to identify those who demonstrated the ability to teach and focus on their getting these key truths. Elders should always be considering those God will use in the church when the present generation of elders are gone. He also taught them from house to house. This seems to simply indicate that when they were not at the meeting hall they met in the homes of believers.

Paul testified thoroughly to both Jews and Greeks how they should respond to God and the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:21). They needed to repent towards God. Both Jews and Greeks had a problem regarding God. The Jews believed in one God, which was correct, but would not consider that the one God is also three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jews needed to change their minds (repent) and allow for another person to also be God. The Greeks were polytheists and needed to change their minds about many gods recognizing there is but one true and living God (1 Thess. 1:9). If they changed their minds toward God, they were then to have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Because the issue involves the identity of God, in this statement, “Lord” refers deity. Jesus is the man who died for their sins and rose, and we know Paul preached this to unbelievers, both from Luke’s record of Paul’s preaching and Paul’s enunciation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This Jesus is also deity (God). He is the object of our faith today as the man who is God and has died for our sins and risen again.

Paul’s plan 20:22-25

Paul was heading to Jerusalem. Luke has already told us that his goal was to be there for Pentecost if possible. In 20:22, does “by the spirit” refer to Paul’s human spirit or the Holy Spirit? In the next verse, Luke quotes Paul that the Holy Spirit had been telling him in every city of the danger that was ahead (20:23). Later on this journey, Luke tells us that the disciples were telling Paul through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem (21:4). If we make “spirit” in 20:22 the Holy Spirit, then who is the singular spirit through whom the disciples in Tyre spoke? Clearly in 21:11, the prophet Agabus bound Paul’s hands and feet and announced the Holy Spirit’s warning of what would happen to Paul if he went to Jerusalem. The other believers encouraged Paul not to go (21:12), but Paul stated that he would be willing even to die in Jerusalem (12:13). We should keep in mind that was not God’s will for Paul at this juncture. We, like Paul, may be willing to endure something horrible because we are so focused on our own

objective. We may even think the objective is good and God-honoring, but if God has told us otherwise, it neither honors Him, nor accomplishes His will. Therefore, the evidence favors Paul being constrained by his own spirit not by the Holy Spirit.

Paul wished to win Jews. He testified of this wish in the first verses of Romans nine. However, God's work for Paul was focused on the Gentiles and then heavy on teaching for those who believed. In Acts 22:17-21, Paul tells the Jewish crowd about his return to Jerusalem. I do not think this is a previous return but this very trip. Paul was praying in the temple when the Lord appeared to him and told him to leave. Paul was trying to win over the Jews by letting them know that the Lord would send him to Gentiles but he was willing to stay for their sake. Paul argued with the Lord. Because he would not listen to the Spirit as he headed for Jerusalem, we should not be surprised that once in Jerusalem, he would even argue with the Lord, convinced the Jews would listen to him. His testimony backfired and Paul was nearly killed by the mob.

Acknowledging the Spirit's warning, Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that his life was not of value to him (20:24). He wished to finish his God-given course. Part of the ministry the Lord Jesus gave him was testifying the gospel of the grace from God. This gospel is for believers. It is the message that God plans for those who have believed in Christ to live by grace (cp Eph. 3:2; Rm. 6:14). Paul called this gospel a mystery (Eph. 6:19). The message of Christ's death for sins and resurrection was not a mystery. A mystery was a truth planned by God but kept hidden in history until the time God planned to reveal it (cp Eph. 3:5; Rom. 16:15; Col. 1:26). God used Paul to reveal several of these mystery truths. This good news was one such mystery. Paul also needed boldness to proclaim it. When in Jerusalem, confronted with the vast crowd of believing Jews who remained zealous for Law, Paul was not bold but entered into a law-ritual rather than announcing this good news to those believers.

Paul did not think he would see these elders again (Acts 20:25). When Paul had been heralding the kingdom, he was among the elders. The message of the kingdom is again about the life of believers in the present stage of God's kingdom. Paul had taught and trained many or all of these elders. They had learned about life in this kingdom. This lifestyle is not that Christ proclaimed in the sermon on the mount. That is a lifestyle involving law. Paul's message proclaimed God's grace and explained who believers are in Christ. He taught about a life lived in light of that life in Christ. He explained a life lived that cannot be lost or even put in jeopardy. They knew this well. Whether Paul thought he would die on this trip due to the Spirit's warnings or that he would spend the rest of his life bound, he did not expect to see them. However, when writing to Timothy, we learn he did revisit Ephesus and encouraged Timothy to remain behind as Paul traveled (1 Tim. 1:3). He also

Paul's warning 20:26-31

He testified that he was innocent regarding the Ephesians. He did not holdback any teaching regarding God's plan (20:27). Everything God had told Paul about His plan, Paul in-turn told the Ephesians. Whether the Spirit had Paul record all this for us, we do not know. We have everything God knows we need, but may have allowed Paul and the Ephesians to know more. Even if that is true, it is important for us remember that God did not think it necessary for us. Having more information does not always guarantee that we will do better. For example, the Spirit gave Paul much information and warnings about going to Jerusalem. How often do we want to know what God wants us to do, and are hesitant to act without remarkable proof. Yet, Paul had the revelation and persisted in doing what God did not want him to do. We have sufficient revelation for our lives as God has planned.

The whole counsel of God is God's plan. "Counsel" translates βουλή, which indicates what one has chosen or determined and arises from one's θελημα, one's desire or wish. The counsel or determination of God encompasses vast details. It would include how God planned for the physical universe with not only its creation but operation. It would include His plan for spirits. It includes his plans for us. Job and David both state that God determined how many days each person lives (Job 14:5; Ps. 139:16). Therefore, God's plan for us includes the length of our days. This and myriad's of other details make up God's plan. God has revealed to us only a small segment of all He has planned. Various Scriptures indicate the counsel was chosen by all three members of the Trinity. It is God's desirous will (1 Thess. 5:16-18). In this case "God" has no definite article and likely refers to all three persons. 2 Peter 3:9 speaks similarly using "Lord" but also uses the verb "determine" [βούλομαι] not "wish" which would translate [θελω]. The Word facing [προς] the God (Father) indicates communication and counsel (Jh. 1:1). An eternal covenant exists with the Father and the Son and being eternal indicates it was made by counsel in the past (Heb. 13: 20; cp 9:14). Knowing what God has determined versus what He has not chosen is vital if believers wish to rest secure in God's care.

Paul charged the elders to pay attention to themselves and to the flock among which the Holy Spirit has placed them as overseers (20:28). As shepherds they are to pay attention to the flock, this seems obvious but many shepherds loose sight of this. Second the Spirit placed them among the flock. This may refer to the Spirit's work of choosing the gift for each believer (1 Cor. 12:11). It may further refer to the Spirit's choice that these shepherds be among this flock, not just the gift but the location where they serve on earth. It is important for believers to not only recognize how they serve but where God has placed them. Shepherds are not over the flock but are among the flock. This provides a good perspective of the role of shepherds leading the flock from within rather than standing over them as lords, against which Peter warns elders (1 Pet. 5:3). Shepherds oversee the flock. Though we may wish to see in this a management idea, Peter uses it of Christ overseeing our souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Christ looks over our souls in care for believers due to pain and struggles within their souls. The verb occurs in Hebrews 12:15 as a charge to see that we do not come up lacking from the grace from God and a root of bitterness springs up. This again is a soul problem, allowing one's self to become embittered over circumstances and not relying upon God's provisions from His grace. Therefore, a shepherd acts as an overseer in watching for the needs and problems of the flock. This verse like the first verses of 1 Peter 5 connect all three titles for the same individuals: elder, shepherd and bishop. Elder describes one's maturity, a requirement to serve in the position of overseer or bishop ("bishop" is an English pronunciation of the the Greek word). Shepherd or pastor describes the spiritual gift necessary to serve in the position of overseer. The ESV translates the verb "shepherd" as "care for." Overseer is the "office" or position in which one may serve within an assembly of believers. On the requirements for an overseer, see 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus. 3:6-9. The list of requirements necessitate one be mature indicated by the title elder.

Paul refers to the flock as the assembly (church) of God. The Greek *ekklēsia* is an assembly of people. In the preceding context it referred to the assembly of unbelieving Ephesians who gathered against Paul (Acts 19:32, 39). The nature of an assembly must be determined by the context. In 20:28, it is the assembly belonging to God. Our English "church" comes from the German *kirche* from the Greek *kurikon* meaning "the Lord's," and does not mean assembly except by our current usage. God purchased this assembly. The word "purchase" or "obtained" translates *peripoieō*, which is the act of making something one's special possession. The subject of the verb is God.

The last phrase states that God made the church His special possession through His own blood. Interpreters handle “his own” in two ways: God’s own blood or the blood of God’s Own One, where in the latter case, interpreters distinguish between God the Father and Jesus Christ who is designated “His Own.” Interpreters take the latter option because they do not think Jesus is God, or because they do not think Paul would so boldly refer to Jesus as God. However, Paul refers to Jesus as God in several passages. “Who is Christ according to the flesh, over all, God, blessed into the age” (Rm. 9:5). In this statement, Christ, the One, God, being blessed are all in the nominative case in the Greek, so that none are the object of another’s action, such as God blessing Christ. Grammatically He is God. Paul states that as God He will bring with Him those who have died (1 Thess. 4:14). It was not robbery or a snatching for Him to be equal with God, therefore, He is legitimately equal with the Father (Php. 2:5-6). God the Father calls Him God (Heb. 1:8). He is our Great God and Savior (Tit. 2:13). The mystery of Godliness is about God becoming flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Other writers also refer to Him as God, the clearest being in John 1:1, “And the Word was God.” In this last statement, He must be the absolute one and only God along with the Father and Spirit because only one true and living God exists. The present statement by Paul to the Ephesian elders was no problem for Paul or the elders because during his extended teaching, Paul had clearly explained that Jesus is God. In fact, Paul’s preaching began with a call of repentance towards God and faith toward the Lord Jesus (see notes on verse 21).

One reason they were to pay attention to the flock involved others who did not care for the sheep (believers) (20:29). Paul knew as a fact (*oida*) that fierce or burdensome wolves would enter the assembly. They would not come while Paul was present. God had already demonstrated what He did with those who did not take Paul and God’s teaching seriously. The wolves would wait for Paul to leave. They would not spare the flock. The verb *pheidomai* meant to not abstain or relent. Because Paul described these wolves as “burdensome” (“fierce” ESV), they would not spare the flock but burden them. Presumably they did this by imposing law on believers. Paul left Timothy behind in Ephesus because some were teaching differently than Paul trying to put believers under law (1 Tim. 1:3, 7). Peter described the law as a yoke which neither the Jewish fathers nor men like Peter were able to carry (Acts 15:10). The designation as “wolves” distinguishes them from the sheep, meaning they are unbelievers. This perhaps says something about the naivety of some believers that they do not check what their teachers believe and so fall prey to not only wrong teaching, but teaching set forth by those who are not even believers in Jesus Christ.

Wolves were not their only concern. They were to pay attention to themselves because even some of them would stand up, speak things that are perverted. They appear to do this because they wish to draw away disciples after themselves. While wolves are unbelievers entering in from outside, this warning is about those who are part of the assembly, whether specifically about elders or others in the church. Being a believer does not guarantee that one will always speak truth or represent God’s Word accurately. Paul’s warning is that they will speak perverted [*diastrephō*] things. Jesus used this word of the unfaithful and perverted, referring to His disciples inability to cast out a demon (Mt. 17:17). The Jews accused Jesus of perverting the nation of Judah by forbidding them to pay taxes to Caesar (Lk. 32:2). It stands as a contrast to the “straight way of the Lord” from which Elymas was trying to turn the proconsul from (Acts 13:8-10). Perversion or distorting facts characterizes the unsaved (Php. 2:15). Similar to the wolves, it appears these will pervert to distort Paul’s teaching. Where as the wolves burden them with law, it is possible some of these men will distort Paul’s message of grace into a license to sin. Peter warned of unbelieving false teachers who do this but also of ignorant and unstable believers who twist [*streblōō*] (2 Pet. 3:16). These read what Paul taught about grace

and took it to mean that God's OK with anything we do, and is even OK with sin and immorality. Jude warned of false teachers who pervert or change [*metatithēmi*] the grace of God into lewd conduct (Jd. 4). Paul wrote Galatians because they were being turned away [*metatithēmi*] from the one who called them (i.e. the Holy Spirit; Gal. 1:6). Those who pressed the Galatians in this way were perverting [*metastrephō*] the good news about the Christ (Gal. 1:7). This leaves many areas in which believers might distort or misrepresent God's Word. Again, it seems that the teachers in 1 Timothy 1:3 and 7 are believers and distort God's teaching by misapplying law to Christians. 1 Timothy 6:3-5 parallels the problem at the beginning of the letter but adds the probable motivation for twisting truth: financial gain. Paul reminds Timothy to be content due to the problem of loving money and charges him to flee the love of money (6:6-11). Their purpose of perverting truth is to draw away [*apospaō*] the disciples after them. Like many of the churches the Ephesian church had multiple elders. Paul called for and was speaking with the elders. Paul's warning indicates that some of these elders would no longer wish to work together with others. They wish for their own personal following, a group to attend to them, whether for financial reasons or for the simple matter of pride and ego.

20:31 He reminds them to watch. The job of a shepherd is watch the flock, to pay attention to it and its needs. They were to be remembering how Paul devoted three years night and day warning them. *Noutheteō* was the activity of putting a person in mind of truth so they would see the danger in error whether of teaching or action. Vine distinguishes this word from *paideia/paideuō*, in that the first is training by word or verbal instruction and the latter instruction by act. Paul knew the likelihood that others would come after him not caring for the people, and warned them of just this. The seriousness of his concern was expressed as warning with tears.

Paul's parting charge 20:32-35

20:32 As Paul prepared to depart, he committed them to God and the word or teaching regarding God's grace. Only God could protect them. Only God could assure their safekeeping in truth. Because God does not presently operate through Law, only understanding His grace could keep them safe in truth. God and this word about His grace was able to edify the believers. Edification is a term for growth, or building up believers in the image of a structure. Further both could give the believers an inheritance among those who have been set apart to God. The question is not God's ability but whether he will. We might understand this phrase as though God is capable of giving believers and inheritance, but will He give them. If a believer may not live as God planned, does that believer get an inheritance?

God has given us the Spirit and He acts as the downpayment on our inheritance, assuring we get all God promised us (Eph. 1:14). Masters will [future tense] inherit from the Lord (Col. 3:24). The Spirit has caused us to be born afresh to an inheritance that does not corrupt and does not become defiled and does not fade away, being kept secure, presumably by God (1 Pet. 1:4).

Inheritance is not always in the distant future. Believers are right now inheriting the promises as they live by faith and longsuffering (Heb, 6:12). One of those promises is entering into rest now (Heb. 4:1). This tells us God has promises for our lives that we can inherit now. If believers fail to live by grace but like Esau, and sell out for some temporary relief, no amount of tears will get us this inheritance (Heb. 12:17). Enduring

suffering and persecution allows us to inherit a good word (1 Pet. 3:9). This is not the distant future but our present experience of a good word.

Paul warns believers against actions in which unbelievers live and for which reason they do not inherit with believers (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). We, however, are God's children. We are heirs because we are children, not because we live better (Rom. 8:17). We are joint-heirs with Christ as heirs of God (Rom. 8:17). The condition intensely assumes that all believers suffer. We are heirs because we are sons of God in Christ (Gal. 4:7). Paul connects our being heirs with God declaring us righteous (Tit. 3:7).

We are heirs, and God is able to give us an inheritance and God will.

20:33 Paul did not crave after anyone's silver, gold or clothing. Having charged the elders to watch themselves knowing that outsiders and even themselves may cause problems for the assembly, Paul addresses one potential motivation for some to come after the flock—money or support. Paul's statement encourages the elders also needed to avoid craving after other people's things. It also implies that those he has just warned to watch for would be craving other people's things. Paul states that those who proclaim the gospel live from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), and that those elders who organize believers well are worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17). Paul did not take this privilege for himself (1 Cor. 9:15; 1 Thess. 2:7). He did receive support from other churches while ministering in other locations (2 Cor. 12:13-17; Php. 4:10, 13). Paul's habit was to work with his own hands to provide for himself and the others who traveled with him (20:34). He did not work for what he wanted or craved after but for his needs. It is important to distinguish between what we need and what we want. While those who lead in the church can or should receive some support from the church, we must always be careful against allowing that support to be demanded or pressed or driven by our craving to have more or have what others have.

20:35 By operating in this manner to provide for himself by his own work, Paul left an example for the elders about how to labor and not burden in any way those they were helping. The verb ἀντιλαμβάνω meant to take on behalf, instead or in place of another, and hence to help by taking hold of one in need. In this case Paul designates the one in need as being weak. He does not mean weak physically but spiritually. Some believers are weak in the faith, not knowing or believing the promises God has made us regarding our Christian life (Rom. 14:1). The strong in the faith are to bear the weakness of the weak (Rom. 15:1). Peter warned that the coming false teachers would entice “unstable souls” and “those just escaping a little” the errors (2 Pet. 2:14, 18). Weak believers, unstable souls, those just escaping are easy targets for false teachers. They have found an easy untrained audience for their severe errors. These weak individuals are willing to give to these teachers who are eager to take. Paul is reminding the elders that we should not operate in this way. We should not ask for nor expect material support or help from these weak believers. It may interfere with their progress. It may give them a distorted view of the Church. Paul refers, perhaps to Matthew 10:8, that the disciples had received freely [δωρεαν gift] and were to give freely. Paul does not quote Jesus but interprets His words for the present situation.

20:36-38 Having said all this, it was time for Paul to leave. He knelt and worshipped [προσευχομαι *proseuchomai*] with them. This word for prayer refers largely to what we term

worship, the Old Testament word *proskuneō* for worship not occurring or used to encourage Christian practice. It is fitting that Paul would focus the elders' attention on God and in connection with God's character make any appropriate requests.

The elders were weeping. They embraced or fell on Paul's neck and kissed him. They were showing culturally appropriate affection for Paul. Their sorrow resulted from Paul's statement that they wouldn't see his face again. These men loved Paul and the work God had accomplished in them. It contrasts starkly to Paul's comment about ten years later that all those in Asia had abandoned him (2 Tim. 1:15).

This meeting provides key background to the letter to the Ephesians because Paul wrote Ephesians maybe four to five years after this meeting while under house-arrest in Rome.

Verse by verse study of Ephesians

1:1 Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus sent him on a mission, expressed by the noun apostle. Christ Jesus is the head of the body and as head, He directs the ministry within the body, the ministry of individuals using their gifts for one another. The Spirit gives the gifts as He determines (1 Cor. 12:10), but Christ is in charge of how that gift is to be used and in what settings. His apostleship is through means of God's desirous will. "God" has no definite article and likely includes all three persons of the Trinity desiring together for Paul's "mission."

Paul writes to the saints in Ephesus. They are set apart to God. In keeping with Christ's request in John 17:19, believers are set apart by Christ being set apart. Believers are in Him, and since He is set apart, we are by our place in Him. "In Christ Jesus," therefore, may also be the location where we are set apart. These are also faithful ones. "In Christ Jesus" indicates where they operate faithfully. This means that they have a reputation for viewing their lives and the world through the lens of being in Christ.

The words "in Ephesus" are omitted in three early manuscripts: $\mathfrak{P}46$ - 200, \aleph - 4th C, B - 4th C. From this evidence, some suggest this was a general letter circulated among a large group of churches rather than written to a specific church. Many of Paul's letters were soon circulated beyond the church to which he wrote. They were circulated as copies of the original. Because Ephesians lacks many of the personal references to local individuals present in some of Paul's other letters (e.g. Romans 16; 1 Cor. 16; Php. 4; Col. 4), some copies of this letter may have omitted the name of the locale accidentally or feeling it was unnecessary. All this is speculation. It is unusual to think that others would have chosen to attach the name of the Ephesians to a general letter. For this reason, I accept the traditional address to the Ephesians.

1:2 This verse is verbless, stating that God's grace and peace **are** the possession of the Ephesian saints. Grace is an expression of God's love and goodness to others without regard to merit (cf. Rom. 11:6). From God's grace, God extends benefits to others such as blessings, salvation, and the future completion of our salvation (Eph. 1:3, 2:6, 8; 1 Pet. 1:13). Peace can be the state resulting from the end of hostilities (Rom. 5:1) or the calm state of mind while under adversity or surrounded by anxiety (Jh. 16:33; Php. 4:6-7). Both God the Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ are the source of the grace and peace. The title "God" and "Lord" are often used to distinguish these two persons who are equally God (cp. Jh. 10:30). The title "God" is used also of the Spirit and Jesus Christ (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Thess. 4:14; Tit. 2:13), and the Father is called Lord

(Rom. 4:8; 12:19; 1 Thess. 4:6; Heb. 8:8). The Father has graced (verb) in Christ the Beloved one (Eph. 1:6; 3:2). The Father is the God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10). Christ treats believers with grace (Rom. 16:20) and exercised grace by becoming poor to provide us salvation (rich)(2 Cor. 8:9). The Father is the God of all peace (Rom. 16:20) and Christ promised His disciples that they would have peace in Him as opposed to trouble in the world (Jh. 16:33). Believers have grace in God's provisions of salvation and in its content. God also provides grace to the believer for daily life as opposed to a life under law, which would be a system of works ad merit. God's peace gives the believer a calm mind even under adversity.

1:3 Blessed is *eulogētos* [εὐλογητός]. It is an adjective of the participle "blessing" and the noun "blessings" that also occur in this verse. G. Abbott-Smith ties all three to the verb *eulogēō* and gives as its first definition, "to speak well of, praise" and suggests it is a synonym for the verb *aineō* "to praise." William Mounce suggests the same idea, "blessed, praised." This word family does not mean to impart material benefits or provisions. God the Father is blessed. Paul does not express a wish as expressed by the translation, "be blessed," but God is blessed. We can praise or say good things about God, and even if we do not, others do. About God's throne, four cherubs state night and day that God is holy (cp Isal. 6:3). The "physical" location of these blessings is in the heavenly places (AV heavenlies). Heavenly places is an adjective the describes something as having a heavenly quality or location. The adjective is used substantively as a place. Paul uses this adjective five times in this letter (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

God is also Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Son's human nature, God is His Father. He is also Father within the realm of deity. The Father - Son relationship does not communicate inequality such that one is superior and the other subordinate but equality (Jh. 10:30). A Granville Sharp construction equates both the noun God and Father by preceding the first with a definite article connecting the two with an "and" [καί]. This passage is important as this Granville Sharp construction applies the same union for Jesus Christ with the title God.

God has blessed [AAPt] us. He says good things about us, or praises us. The location of His saying these good things about us is "in Christ." The Spirit baptizes or places us believers into Christ, into the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12). Christ baptizes believers but does so by the Spirit, where the form of the noun Spirit indicates the means of accomplishing the baptism and not the substances with which or into which one is baptized (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:5). It is God the Father who says we are in Christ. Saying we are in Christ is what Paul means by God blessing us, or saying good things about us in Christ. The Father does not say one or two things about us, but all blessings (good things). These good things are "spiritual," meaning they are not tangible benefits or the provision of material things. Spiritual is an adjective that describes the blessings. It could mean simply non-material, but it could also indicate that we must relate to these blessings with our human spirit. Our soul, being the interpretive center of our senses and emotions cannot "feel" or "sense" these blessings. Our body cannot touch, smell, or look at these blessings. God says they are true of us in Christ. We read about them in Scripture. We then relate to them with our spirit. Finally, these blessings are in the heavens. This again reminds us they are not material benefits on earth, nor sensed here. For this reason, Paul wrote the Colossians to seek things above and then to set their minds on those things (Col. 3:1-3).

1:4 Paul begins with two of these blessings holy and blameless. The adverb *kathōs* [καθὼς] is built on the preposition *kata*, which indicates a standard, so we often have "according to." These two blessings demonstrate a standard that serves as a comparison for how God says

good things about us in Christ. God chose [AMI] us in Him (i.e. Christ). Paul does not say, “chose us **to be** in Him.” He chose us, but the infinitive “to be” ties our being holy and without blame. He chose us to be holy and without blame. Paul does not mean God chose us to be holy and without blame in our conduct, but that He chose this to be our standing in Christ before Him. God made this choice before the foundation of the world. Throughout Ephesians, Paul’s rests our present and future status on God’s plan, the plan the Trinity agreed to in Eternity before time. God chose us to be holy ones, those He has set apart to Himself (see 1:1). God also chose us to be without blame, without a fault or blemish at which someone might point and find guilt. Jesus Christ will bring this about not only as a good thing God says about us in Christ, but a real condition and then He will present us to Himself (5:27; Col. 1:22; Jd. 24). It describes Jesus as the blameless lamb who shed His blood for us (1 Pet. 1:19) Paul encouraged the Philippians to work together without verbally fighting that they might be blameless in conduct (Php. 2:15). God says both of these good things about us in Christ “before Him.” One day Jesus will take us to be present with Himself before the Father (Jh. 14:3; 1 Thess. 3:13). Before the Father, we will be holy and blameless, a related but different word.

Modern interpreters connect the final words of 1:4 “in love” with verse five, not verse four. Some argue that in the parallel thought of Colossians 1:22, “in love” is absent. However, some places add love to a set and others omit it. Some think that “in love” should be placed immediately following what God chose for us, and then state “before Him.” This is highly subjective, as emphasis is in the mind of the author, not by a strict grammatical style. Third, love should go with adoption, because that is the reason for adoption. But we might ask, why love isn’t the reason for God choosing us to be holy and blameless? Finally, and maybe this is a strong argument, an early translation -Syriac- and some of the church fathers connected love with the predestination. However, we’re still considering only how men interpreted what Paul wrote.

I would suggest that love can go both ways. We are holy and without blame by God’s love for us, and that is further accomplished by His predestining us to adoption. This can work because the aorist participle “predestine” can tell us how or by what means God applied His choice. This would be an instrumental use of the participle (it occurs in the nominative). The verb “predestine” (*prohorizō* occurring here as a participle) indicates a setting out of boundaries ahead of time. Those boundaries may indicate a predetermined finishing point or the boundaries within which God has chosen to deal with an individual. Paul uses a shorter form of this word [*horizō*] in Romans 1:4, stating that God set out the boundaries within which the Son of God operated, namely by power, according to a spirit of holiness, from a resurrection from dead ones. God chose us in love, predestining us to adoption.

Predestine refers to how God determined for the Son to be treated by all the men involved (Acts 4:28). It indicates that God set out an aspect of His wisdom that was a mystery and this was predestined for our glory, i.e. living by God’s grace allows us to live out the reputation God planned for us (1 Cor. 2:7). In 1:11 we are predestined to be Christ’s inheritance.

In the Hebrew and Roman worlds, adoption could refer to the act of taking a child that is not biologically yours and legally making them yours. The word was also used of the act of a father giving a higher status to his own biological male child. This is illustrated best in Galatians 4:1-5, as the child is heir (so he is the father’s child) but is not placed as a son until the time the father determines. A son is contrasted to a *napios* “child” or one unable to articulate. This does not mean the child is unable to speak in sentences, but that the child cannot articulate facts

sufficiently to represent the family. Paul also uses *napios* in Ephesians 4:14 as those susceptible to being tossed about by every wind of misappropriated doctrine. The child cannot distinguish between what is appropriate for his life and what is not appropriate. A son can and should distinguish these things. This is how Paul uses this noun *huiiothesia*, a word built on *huios* - son and *tithēmi* - to place. In the Hebrew and Romans world, a son had an elevated status within the family. A son could represent the family in business. This is very important for a proper understanding of God the Son's sonship. We are children of God by birth (1 Jh. 5:1-2). At the very same time we are born into God's family, we given this elevated status as a son in the family.

"Predestine" tells us that God has set our sonship as the boundaries within which He deals with us. He disciplines us because we are sons (Heb. 12:5-6), because as those given this status, He expects a conduct that matches that status, and we don't always live up to that status. Therefore, predestination is not as much about where we are going as how we are going.

Our status as sons is through Jesus Christ to Himself. "Through" [*dia*] indicates the avenue or channel through which God has placed us as sons. Jesus Christ is that channel. Paul uses this preposition with Christ (through Him) in 2:18 to express how we have access to the Father. Christ sits at the Father right hand (1:20). We sit in Christ (2:6). We approach the Father through Christ where we sit. Rather than speaking of us as "in Christ Jesus," Paul uses "through" because the focus of our access is to talk to God. So, the focus of our being a son is our ability to cry out, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6) and to live in freedom as we present our bodies to Him a living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). It does not stop in Christ. "To [*eis*] Himself" is the direction or intent of our being placed as His sons.

Ephesians emphasizes God's plan, perhaps reflecting Paul's comment in Acts 20 that he held nothing back in telling them all of God's plan (i.e. everything Paul knew about God's plan, Acts 20:27). Why has God chosen to place us as His sons? It pleased Him and it is what He wanted to do. "Good pleasure" [NKJV], "pleasure" [NIV], "purpose" [ESV], or "kind intention" [NASB] indicates what is of a good in God's opinion. God is the one who deems it to be good. The standard of that good opinion is His will. Two Greek words normally communicate the idea of will: *thelēma* - that which one desires, wishes for, or wants and *boulé* - that which one chooses or determines. God only determines what He desires. Being holy, God is never divided, wanting one thing but having to decide something contrary to it. Here, God desires that we be His sons in Christ.

1:6 All that God has given in Christ, all these blessings are by God's grace. Therefore, all this is to the praise of the glory or reputation of His grace. Praise names (confesses/agrees with) the character of God tied to a benefit He provides (Heb. 13:15). God has provides these many benefits in Christ and they all say something about God's grace. Glory [*dokeō*] is an opinion or reputation, in this case God's reputation characterized by His grace. Grace is an expression of God's love and goodness without regard to merit (cp 1:2; Rom. 4:4, 16; 11:6; Php. 2:9 - "bestowed" is a verb form of "grace"). Paul further emphasizes the extent of God's grace with an ablative (genitive) of source relative pronoun "from which" and the verb "graced" ("freely bestowed" NASB, NET, "blessed" ESV). God has graced us **in the One He has loved**. Everything in Christ, all the good things God says about us in Christ, He says because He has graced us. "In the one He has loved" translates a perfect tense, meaning God loved Christ with the result that He is still loved. Jesus Christ is the object of the Father's love (Mt. 3:17; 17:5) and He is the Son of His love (Col. 1:13).

1:7 In Whom (i.e. Christ) we have [PAI] the redemption. The New Testament uses several words translated redeem or redemption in the our English Bibles: *agoradzō*, *ekagoradzō*, *lutroō/-on*, *apolutrosis*, *peripoiēō/-sis*. Taking these in order we have the idea of purchasing in the market, or purchasing **out** of the market, of ransoming or paying the debt that allows freedom, the resulting freedom, the act of making something or someone one's possession. Paul uses *apolutrosis* of the freedom that results from paying the ransom *lutron* to secure release. In Christ we have this release. The specific issue from which we are released is our trespasses *parapatōma*. The AV has "sins" even though the Textus Receptus (a Greek text), from which the AV was translated, does not have the word "sins" [*hamartia*], though Paul uses "sins" in the parallel text Colossians 1:14. In 2:1, Paul will place trespasses and sins side by side each with a definite article: the trespasses and the sins. The Greek construction does not allow the two to be identical. They may share some commonality, but are not the same. Both are forms of unrighteousness. Sin is lawlessness or the refusal to recognize God's authority in these matters of life. Trespasses appear to be less defiant and more a human suggestion that our choice or action is OK. It does not mean a person is ignorant of what God wants, but convinces himself that his choice, though not being what God wants, is acceptable. In the context of Ephesians, the believers trespass by being of the opinion that it is OK to not look at each other properly in Christ, perhaps to even look down on certain believers based upon some earthly standard such as race or prior religion. Paul mentions sins only in 2:1 but mentions trespasses three times (1:7; 2:1, 5). Therefore, the forgiveness of trespasses is especially significant to this church. They don't appear to be acting defiantly as would be the case of sin, but rationalizing an attitude toward others that conflicts with what God says about us in Christ.

The redemption is applied in Christ (in whom), but accomplished through His blood. "Blood" refers to the physical aspect of Christ's death. Christ died spiritually while physically alive on the cross, therefore He needed to be made alive in the realm of His spirit at the same time He died in flesh (Rom. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:18). The physical aspect of His death was violent and blood demonstrates this. Most die non-violent deaths, but our Lord died as a result of bearing the punishment for our sins. Some aspect of His physical death is tied to all three of the works He accomplished upon the cross: redemption, satisfaction (propitiation), and reconciliation (change).

This redemption, or freeing us from the penalty for which we owed our lives, goes hand in hand with forgiveness of trespasses (see above). Forgiveness is *aphesis* meaning to be or send away. God forgives by sending away the very problem. Christ bore the penalty and God considers that penalty gone. In a few New Testament passages such as 4:32, "forgive" is used to translate a verb form of "grace," the same verb used in 1:6. While forgiveness is part of an act of grace, grace is bigger than forgiveness, and therefore such a translation limits Paul's intended meaning. However, "forgiveness" is a suitable translation for this present word.

The measure or standard of this redemption and forgiveness is God's rich grace. The genitive form of "grace" may be descriptive "riches consisting of His grace" or indicates the source, "riches coming from His grace." The descriptive sense is stronger and I think gives the flavor of this word. "Riches" does not refer to God owning the whole universe, though that is true. Paul intends for us to recognize God as being very generous and "riches" communicates this. Paul uses "riches" five times in Ephesians the same number of times he uses it in Romans, a book nearly three times the size. Here, in addition to God's grace (1:7; 2:7), Paul applies it to His glory or reputation (1:18; 3:16), and to the unsearchable riches which characterize the Christ (3:6). God does not mete out to believers a small bit of His grace, but, we might say, an

inexhaustible degree of grace. To claim grace can be exhausted would seem to contradict the very nature God's grace, that does not consider merit.

1:8 God has overflowed (abounded) [*perisseuō* AAI] this grace to us. This word communicates that which is over and above that which is sufficient, therefore, beyond sufficient. It originally had the sense of a liquid overflowing when a container or space was full. As if it was not enough to tell us that God was rich, this verb expands the idea, stating that God's grace overflowed to us. God's grace overflows to us by means of [instrumental *en*] wisdom and a frame of mind. Both wisdom and a frame of mind express how God's grace overflowed to us. They are both mental terms that involve a practical use of the mind. Wisdom is the knowing how to use what one knows. It also implies that one does apply that information in real life situations. Ephesians includes many areas of application [wisdom] of God's grace to the conflict between believers. In 2:5-6 we are made alive TOGETHER, raised up TOGETHER, and seated TOGETHER, three statements that unite believers. In 2:15 we are created together into one new man, which also unites believers. In 2:19-22 we are built together into one temple: unity. In 3:6 we are joint-heirs, joint-body parts, joint partakers, all three encouraging us to consider ourselves as equals. In 4:4-6, we have one, one, ..., all encouraging us that this is not a divided plan but a unified plan of God. Each of these demonstrates the practical application of who we are in Christ, and that by God's grace.

The noun "insight" or "understanding" represent the *phronēsis*, from the noun *phrēn* that referred to the diaphragm or muscle that separates the lower from the upper. As a mental term it described a fence or corral consisting of specific truths through which one mentally filters the events of life. It is a frame of mind. It may be akin to our idea of an attitude. Each of the above examples can serve as part of this fence through which the Ephesians needed to filter their relationship or interactions with the other Ephesians believers. If a Gentile held to hard feelings with a Jewish believer, bringing these truths to frame his thinking about that believer, will encourage the believer to adjust his attitude toward that believer. That is wisdom and a frame of mind/attitude.

1:9 God further overflowed His grace to us by making known to us a mystery. The participle "making known" [AAPT] being aorist looks back to God's work of revealing this mystery. The participle refers to knowing experientially, so this mystery has a bearing on our conduct, and is not only a future fact to be considered. Knowing this mystery also relates to the wisdom and frame of mind.

A mystery is truth that God planned but did not reveal until the time it mentioned in Scripture. A mystery was kept secret in time, but made visible now by Scriptures as God arranged it (Rom. 16:25-26). A mystery was hidden from ages and from generations, but is now made visible (Col. 1:26). "Ages" refers to spirit beings (including angels) and "generations" refers to mankind. A mystery was not made known to men, as it now made known (Eph. 3:5). Some take the comparison "as" [ὡς] to mean that it was made known some, but not as much as today, however, the other two passages that describe a mystery indicate a mystery was not revealed at all, therefore, the comparison is revelation of the mystery to no revelation of the mystery.

This mystery is about God's desirous will [*thelēma*]. God knows all things from all eternity, but before any creative act, the Trinity formally decided in council all things they will do (cf. 1:4). That council is God's formal determination expressed by the verb *boulomai* and the noun *boulé*. His determination rises from what God desires [*thelō*]. This mystery reveals something God

desired but did not reveal. This mystery is according to His good pleasure [*eudokia*]. *Eudokia* is built on *eu*-that which is good and *dokia*-God's opinion or reputation, related to the word "glory" [*doxa*]. This means that either God has a good opinion about this mystery or that mystery operates in keeping with the standard [*kata*] of God's reputation as the gracious God. The latter is more consistent in this context, though the former wouldn't contradict this. He purposed [AMI] this "good pleasure" in Himself. The relative pronoun "which" is feminine as is *eudokia*- "good pleasure." "Mystery" and "desirous will" are neuter nouns and are not the specific reference. The verb "purpose" means that God set out ahead of time this thing that was well pleasing to Him, or expressed well His reputation.

1:10 This mystery of what God desired is for [*eis*] an administration or dispensation of the fullness of the times. "Administration" or "dispensation" translates the noun *oikonomia* that describes the operating principle for a household. It indicates how the owner of a household makes available to his household certain benefits or provisions. Looked at from another perspective, it indicates how a household was to conduct itself in order to have or receive those benefits or provisions. Modern dispensationalism has clouded this fact by placing many other details under the rubric of dispensationalism. Those other details may be valid truth and are important in the form of distinctions, but do not specifically define the owner, the household, the manager, the provision/s, or the principle/rule of life for the household. Scripture identifies two dispensations specifically: grace and fullness of times, and a third dispensation that of law by contrast to the present grace.

"Fullness of times" characterizes the dispensation Paul is writing about. The noun "times" translates *kairos* not *chronos*. Both refer to time, the latter to chronology, while *kairos* may indicate seasons and conveys the idea of "time as significant events."¹ Paul is not speaking of our present dispensation but of one yet to come, one in which times, seasons, or significant events will be filled full (fullness). Popularly referred to as the millennium due to Revelation 20 stating six times that it is one thousand years, that dispensation will be the culmination of many of God's promises to Israel and to the nations. That significant event or season ends with the destruction of the present universe, the judgment of all the dead (a reference to the spiritually dead), and is followed by the creation of new heavens and a new earth in which death, sorrow, crying, and pain will no longer exist (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:4). In that new creation, righteousness will settle down (2 Pet. 3:13). In this text, the word "dwell" [*katoikeō*] communicates the idea of being at home. Since Adam's sin, righteousness has not been at home in this present universe. As only the righteous move into God's new creation, dispensations end. God will have not management of people groups, nor will He provide benefits based on a standard. God's purpose for dealing with people under these house rules will be concluded. It is, therefore, the dispensation when times will reach their fulfillment.

The mystery regarding that future dispensation involves heading up all things by the Christ. The infinitive *anakephaliaō* [*ἀνακεφαλαιῶ*] can refer to summing up (Rom. 13:9), but also to "gather up, unite."² Paul uses "all" fifty-two times in Ephesians referring to the saints, to parts of the body, to spirit beings, to blessings, to humility. Each occurrence requires interpretation in its context, unless, as in the present verse, the adjective had no immediate

¹ William Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) p. 732.

² F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, rev. Fredrick W. Danker, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) p. 12.

idea to which it plainly refers. Therefore, I understand “the all things” [*ta panta*] to include people groups and spirits. Spirits are not normally part of dispensations, for they are not receiving a benefit based on a house rule or principle.

That Jesus Christ would head up all things was not a mystery. “Christ” is a New Testament translation of the Hebrew Meshiach (Messiah), meaning “anointed one,” that is, anointed by the Spirit. The Old Testament prophesied the coming of this Anointed one would be installed as King, inherit the nations, would have a kingdom, be God, sit on a throne as both king and priest (Ps. 2:2-9; 45:1-7; Zech. 6:12-13). As King He would be over all things including Israel, Gentiles, and spirits.

The mystery regarding this future dispensation regards the identity of “the Christ” in 1:10. In 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul uses “the Christ” for the body of Christ, though He doesn’t think of the body as separate from Jesus Christ the head. “The Christ” is not an distinct entity or being from Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ sharing His identity and character with all those who make up His body the Church, viewed in a unity. That means that we also participate along with Christ in heading up these all things. This is pure grace, that Christ would grant us this status with Him. It further serves Paul’s purpose and point to encourage these believers to see all of them, Jews and Gentiles alike, sharing in the Christ and participating with Christ in His rule. We will jointly reign with Christ, because we endure (take patiently; 2 Tim. 2:12).³ Christ grants those who believe in Him (i.e. victors) authority over the nations and to rule/shepherd them with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:25-27). He also gives the victor to sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). This joint rule extends to judging the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Our sharing in Christ’s rule was unrevealed in the past, hence it was a mystery about God’s desirous will.

The things in the heavens and the things on the earth show that this rule extends to angels and people. In 3:15, the phrase is **in** [ἐν] heavens and **upon** [ἐπὶ] earth, while in 1:10 we have **upon** [ἐπὶ] **the** heavens and **upon** [ἐπὶ] **the** earth. In 3:15, plays places emphasis on the location of the families, i.e. the Church as heavenly and Israel as earthly. Both lack the article because their homes are not a definite earth or heaven. In eternity their homes will be in the new heavens and new earth. So Paul states that our citizenship is in heavens (Php. 3:20). 1:10 has the definite article because this rule is over the present heavens and earth, therefore, each is definite.

1:11 1:10 ends “by Him” [ἐν αὐτῷ] emphasizing Christ as the ruler, though we share in that rule. So 1:11 begins “in Whom” we have been made an inheritance or have been inherited. The verb *klēroō* means “appoint by lot” or in the passive, “be appointed by lot.”⁴ It occurs only here in the New Testament, the verb *klēronomeō* occurring seventeen times. The verb is an aorist **passive** form. The aorist tense emphasizes the act without reference to when this happens, has or will happen. In the indicative mood the aorist looks at the certainty of this inheritance. The passive indicates that we are what is inherited, not that we inherit. The ESV and NASB translate the verb “have obtained an inheritance” and the NIV has “were also chosen.” The former two translations appear to ignore the passive and the NIV represents inheriting as

³ Paul uses a first class condition in this verse, so he assumes all believers will take patiently circumstances. Paul does not state that we do this all the time, but that we do it at some point or points. Paul himself asked the Lord three times to have a problem removed. Such a request demonstrates a lack of patience.

⁴ Gingrich, op cit. 110.

choosing. The NET Bible has “have been claimed as God’s own possession.” While this may be closer, I believe “God” is not the one inheriting but Christ.

We are Christ’s inheritance, His lot. He is the good Shepherd. In covenant with the Father, He has sheep who share His life (Heb. 13:20). We are children given to Him by the Father (Heb. 2:13). Because we are flesh and blood, He became flesh and blood, though eternally being God (Heb. 2:14).

We have been [APPt] predestined according to His purpose. On the idea of predestine, see notes on 1:5. In keeping with 1:5, this predestination may also involve us being sons. Here these boundaries within which God deals with us are according to or function by the standard of [kata] God’s purpose, or that which He set out before or ahead of time [prothesis]. God intends something. He has a goal, so He sets out that goal at or even before the start. That goal or purpose operates as the standard for how God is dealing [predestine] with us today.

Paul does not use the noun “God” but describes God as “the one in-working the all things according to His determination.” “Working” is *energeō* [PAPt] and nearly always indicates a personal work by an individual as opposed to accomplishing a purpose through an intermediary. Therefore, God has not merely decreed and the decree rolls along automatically. God actively works to bring about His plan. He works “the all things.” His plan involves myriads of details at every step and He actively works in all those details assuring His plan happens.

This verse has both words that describe “will.” *Boulé*, translated “counsel” [ESV, NASB] or “purpose” [NIV], is that which has been determined. It comes from the verb *boulomai* meaning to determine or choose. *Thelēma* is result of desire, the *-ma* ending indicating a product or result. The verb *thelō* indicates to desire, to wish, or to want. *Thelēma* is in the ablative form and most likely an ablative of source. This means that God has determined what He first desired. We might say that God never determines or chooses what He does not first desire. God is free and not constrained by anything apart from His own nature. Therefore, God never has to choose something He does not desire or the lesser of two evils. Because God knows all, what may not make sense to us, can fall perfectly inline with His plan.

This verse puts several aspects of God’s purpose together. We can say that God desired certain things. He chose some of those things. What He chose is the standard of what He is working, and those things He is working are for the purpose of accomplishing His purpose. His purpose is the standard of how he chose ahead of time to deal (predestine) with us. This forms an order.

DESIRE → CHOICE → IN-WORKING → PURPOSE → PREDESTINE

1:12 The reason God has predestined us is that we should be [PInf] to *the* praise of God’s glory. On the meaning of praise, see 1:6. Our lives should draw attention to God’s character. “Glory” [*doxa*] has to related definition; it may refer to an opinion or to a reputation. A human opinion may be anywhere in a range between accurate and false. A reputation may also be true or inflated or inaccurate. However, with God, His opinion is always accurate and His reputation is always consistent with who He is. We may disagree with His opinion, thinking God should do this instead of that, and we may attribute a negative reputation to God because His actions or choices may conflict with how we think. When God expresses His reputation as in Exodus 34:6-7, His testimony about His character, His reputation is accurate.

God's work in our lives, determining to deal with us as sons is to announce His character. In 3:10, God is making known His multifaceted wisdom to spirit beings by what He is doing with us in this present dispensation of His grace. In coming ages, God will display how great are His riches consisting of grace expressed in kindness to us (2:7). That God will grant us to be Christ's inheritance and that we will share in Christ's rule, when Christ alone is worthy to rule is surpassing grace and will say much about God's character.

We are those who first hoped [PfAPt] in Christ. When we heard the good news of what Christ had done for us, specifically that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4), we heard or recognized the promise of forgiveness of our sins (Acts 10:43). That produced in us the hope that we could receive that forgiveness. That hope is then followed by faith. Hope has an expectation that a thing promised may happen. Faith makes that thing we hope for real so that we may respond in whatever action is appropriate. Regarding this gospel, we respond by no longer trusting in our works. The perfect tense of the participle "hope" reminds us that our hope is still in Christ. We no longer hope to be forgiven but hope in other promises of God related to who we are in Christ.

1:13 The verse begins with "in Whom" but the main verb occurs seventeen words later. The simple statement would be, "In whom you were sealed." Paul uses the verb "sealed" [API] again in 4:30. In both passages, the Spirit seals us. He seals in Christ stated here as "in Whom." Christ is the place where God says good things about us (1:3) and sealed in Him we cannot be removed nor will God every stop saying those good things about us (cp Rom. 8:38-39).

The Spirit sealed us in Christ after we heard [AAPt] the word about the Truth, the gospel of our salvation. The Truth began with Jesus Christ (Jh. 1:17). A form of the Truth existed in the past (Rom. 1:18-20). Scripture designates it the Truth because it reveals God to be the one True God (Jer. 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9). God alone can save. God alone can create. God alone can deliver. This is the Truth. The good news is one aspect of the Truth that tells us the only God can save us, we cannot save ourselves. It is good news about our salvation, that God has done all we need. We believed [AAPt] in Him (Christ). Faith/believing is almost always "in Christ" though 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, which delineates the specific gospel, states that we believed the gospel. This is not a contradiction for the gospel specifies exactly what we believe about Jesus Christ, namely that He came into this world, died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again.⁵

Paul attaches to "Spirit" the description "of promise." Paul applies this description to the Spirit in Galatians 3:14 and Peter spoke of receiving from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Christ told His disciples that He would ask the Father to give them the Holy Spirit (Jh. 14:16-17). He even said that He would send the Spirit (Jh. 15:25; 16:7). Prior to ascending, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise from the Father (Acts 1:4). This is a new relationship to the Spirit. Jesus distinguished the Old Testament relationship of the Spirit as being alongside or with by the preposition *para* to His present relationship to us designated as "in" by the preposition *en*. The Old Testament nearly always refers to the Spirit as coming "upon" people. This is true even when the Hebrew preposition *beth* [ב] is used because it too can mean "on" or "upon" or "with." New Testament believers have a new and

⁵ Scripture reveals many truths about God the Son, but we do not have to believe all those truths in order to be saved.

unique relationship to the Spirit. Among the several works the Spirit does for the believer, this sentence reveals His work of sealing us in Christ.

1:14 The Holy Spirit not only seals us in Christ but also is our downpayment for our inheritance. Paul describes the Spirit in this way in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5. The noun “downpayment” or “pledge” [*arrabōn*] is a loan word from the Hebrew *ērūbāh*, which meant a pledge that assured the later full payment (cp Gen. 38:17). The Greek likewise was considered the first payment that assured further and full payment would be made. The Spirit assures that we will receive all God has promised us. Paul also refers to the Spirit as “first fruits” (Rom. 8:23). First fruits is not the same as a downpayment but a first sample of what is to come. Both descriptions not only look to the future reception of our completed salvation but also hold out the promise that we can experience some of that in the present. This is part of the Spirit’s ministry today, giving us the ability to live now as we will be in the future.

Our inheritance is multifaceted. In the future, we will inherit the kingdom of God (Jas. 2:5), the promise of rest, maturity, and freedom from fear (Heb. 6:12; 4:1, 16; 6:1), the ability to manifest God’s life in activity, designated “light” (Col. 1:12, 27). We inherit this in keeping with our hope that comes from eternal life, namely that we can live out that life (Tit. 3:7). Our inheritance does not decay or fade (1 Pet. 1:4). We will inherit a blessing or good word about us from God (1 Pet. 3:9). It has an eternal quality to it (Heb. 9:15). We are also joint-heirs with Christ of all things (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:2). We will receive some of our inheritance in the future and some of our inheritance we receive now (cp Heb. 6:12).

Paul looks at our present inheritance in the next phrase “to redemption of the purchased possession.” Redemption here is *apolutrōsis*, which chiefly indicates “release” resulting from payment of a ransom.⁶ [See notes on this noun in 1:7] God has secured our release by the payment of His Son’s violent death indicated by “blood” in 1:7. Here the object of the redemption is the purchased possession [*peripoiēsis*]. This noun describes that which someone has purchased so that it is especially or uniquely theirs.⁷ Paul told the Ephesian elders that God (Christ) has made the Church specially His by means of His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The downpayment on our inheritance is for the redemption of of the purchased possession or just “possession” which is the Church. God’s purpose is not just to acquire us, but to free or release us. The Spirit works in believers to produce real freedom in this present time and that freedom is the release of God’s special possession. All this works to the praise of God’s reputation (glory). In the same way that God’s grace to us in the Beloved is to His praise, so the practical freedom that results from the application of that gracious standing is also to His praise (cp Rom. 6:11-12). It draws attention to how kind and gracious He is to us.

1:15 Our freedom as believers is not just from the law or from our flesh/sin nature. Our freedom is so we may serve God and one another (Gal. 5:13; Rom. 6:18-22). The Ephesians’ faith and love about which Paul had heard [AAPT] was not related to initial salvation (justification) but part of their Christian living. Paul spent three years with the Ephesians. He knew they were believers in Jesus Christ. But we not only were saved by faith in the past at the moment we believed the good news, but we also live by faith in the present (2 Cor. 5:7). We are living

⁶ Gingrich, op cit. p. 23.

⁷ “to keep or save for oneself...to acquire, gain possession of.” Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) p. 56.

with the expectation of righteousness (in conduct) from faith and faith works through love (Gal. 5:5-6). Paul received word that the Ephesians were continuing to live by faith and the result was love to all the saints.

The faith is in the Lord Jesus. He is the master of the body and directs its service, so Paul wrote that we have a diversity of ministries (areas of service but there is one Lord (1 Cor. 12:5). Faith indicates that we have a promise from God that we can do service to others in the body. Paul indicates this in 2:10 where He tells us that God has planned works for us to do. He also tells us that He gave four gifts specifically to equip everyone else for their ministry (4:11-12). If they have a ministry by grace, then God promises opportunities to minister.

That ministry when done properly will be an act of love to others. We love others by serving them, and the exercise of our gift is paramount as an act of service. Christ left us the new command to love in the manner He loved, that is laying down our life in service to others (Jh. 13:34).

Saints describes believers as those who are set apart to God. Saint describes the individual who is holy and holy (1:4) indicates the condition of such a one. All New Testament believers are set apart in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). By using “saints” Paul is distinguishing the special object of the believers acts of faith and love. We may do good to all men (Gal. 6:10), but our love is to be especially directed to believers, to those who like us are set apart to God in Christ.

1:16 Paul did not cease [PAI] thanking God when made [PMPT] mention of the Ephesians. To make mention is to make a remembrance, so we sometimes use the expression “remember you before the Lord.” So Paul remembered the Ephesian saints. “For you” is *huper humōn*, where *huper* is “on behalf of.” Paul thought of the Ephesians and that resulted in thanks to God.

The timing of this thanks is “**upon** [*epi*] my prayer.” In this context, the preposition *epi* indicates time, so that while Paul was doing one thing, namely praying, that on top of that, he thanked God. In the letters to the churches, the apostles take the word “pray” [*proseuchomai*] and use it for worship, as the Greek word for worship [*proskuneō*] occurring only three times in the letters, one of them being an unbeliever or new believer (1 Cor. 14:25), once of angels worshipping the Son (Heb. 1:6), and Jacob worshipping while leaning on his staff (Heb. 11:21). None of these refer to growing believers worshipping. “Prayer”

Excursus on prayer and worship

The noun “worship” though nearly always rendered “prayer” described communication that was exclusively directed to a god.⁸ It becomes the word for worship in the Epistles, as *proskuneō* involved physical posture, physical activities such as offerings and sacrifices, and a physical location. Jesus indicated a coming change, “the hour is coming,” when worship would no longer focus on these physical necessities but would be done in spirit (the human spirit) and in genuineness as opposed to mere motions (Jh. 4:22-24). Jesus used *proskuneō* when speaking with the woman in John four because she would not have otherwise understood what He meant.

⁸ On the verb *proseuchomai*, Abbott-Smith says, “to pray (always of prayer to God, or in cl., to gods).” Cl. is his abbreviation for classical Greek. Unbelieving Greeks did not pray to God but to their false gods. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1948) pp. 384-385.

However, as early as Acts 16:25 Luke writes, “Praying, they hymnized” where “praying” translates a present middle participle that describes Paul and Silas and the their praying was expressed by the imperfect tense verb “hymnize.” A hymn was an act of speaking or singing to rehearse the character and work of a deity. So these men prayed by singing or speaking about God. It brings a new sense to this word. *Proseuchomai* is fitting as it was only directed to a deity in this case God. Secondly, it is best because it has not notion of a physical posture or physical activity being an activity of the mind perhaps expressed vocally.

Proseuché occurs second in a list of communication terms in 1 Timothy 2:1 “supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving”, so that “prayer” is not the overall term, and this can also be seen where the noun “prayer” is attached sometimes first and sometimes second to other communication terms, as “prayer and ___”, so we have “prayers and supplications” (6:18), “the prayers and the supplications” (Php. 4:6), “the supplications and the prayers” (1 Tim. 5:5),⁹ “praying and asking” (Col. 1:9).

Understanding *proseuché* and *proseuchomai* as the terms for worship clarifies several texts. When believers are struggling with pain and suffering, they often know what to **ask** but may be unable to know what to say about God (Rom. 8:26), and in this way the Spirit helps and Paul attempts to point them to some areas in which to worship God in suffering. While talking about the role of various gifts in the assembly, Paul questions the value of “prayer” (worship) in a foreign tongue if no one can understand it (1 Cor. 14:13-17). No one can give a “True” (amen) if they have no idea what you said about God, and even you can appreciate that you said something about God but you don’t know what it is and so the value is limited. In verse sixteen the individual has said something good about God, where the verb “bless” [NASB], “thanks” [ESV], or “praise” [HCSB, NIV] is *eulogeō* - to say something good about. Regarding God, saying something good about Him is worship.

1:17 Paul’s request while worshipping is that God might give to them a spirit of wisdom and revelation. The God who gives these provisions is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the realm of His human nature, the Son (Lord Jesus Christ) relates to the Father as His God. At the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, He was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Matt. 3:16; Jh. 1:32-33). Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit of the Lord God would be upon Him so that He would be anointed (Isa. 61:1; 11:2). The Spirit caused the Son in the realm of His human nature to have unique wisdom, understanding, determination, power, knowledge, and fear of God.

New Testament believers already have the Holy Spirit. We have the Spirit at the moment we believe (1:13) and if we do not have the Spirit, we are not Christ’s (Rom. 8:9). Paul is not asking that God give the Holy Spirit to the Ephesians, because they already have Him. He asks for their human spirit to be characterized by wisdom and understanding. We have wisdom and revelation because we have the Spirit from God not the Spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:6-12). The Spirit gives this wisdom and revelation to us in the realm of our spirit. This is why only the spiritual man is able to see the value in God’s planned truths for us (1 Cor. 2:14-15). Wisdom

⁹ Ray Summers notes that, “When two nouns are joined by the conjunction καί: if both nouns have a definite article they refer to different persons.” (*Essentials of New Testament Greek*, rev. Thomas Sawyer, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995) p. 152). when two nouns (in Philippians 4:6 we have nouns and in 1 Timothy 5:5 we have participles). In our case, the nouns are activities not persons, but the rule still applies.

(see 1:8) is the ability to know how to use what one knows, putting truth into action. Paul wants the Ephesian believers to now how to use what they have been taught. They also need revelation. As only about eight of the New Testament books have been written, they needed more revelation regarding what God is doing and how they were to live. This would include the nature of the body of Christ, a truth which involve a mystery (3:5-6).

This wisdom and knowledge come by means of [*en* with the instrumental case] a full experiential knowledge of Him (i.e. God). A limited view of God affects how we see others in the body of Christ. If we understand that God is gracious and richly so, then we can more easily extend grace to ourselves and others (cp 4:32). If we understand that God considers all of us as forming His dwelling place, we can appreciate a love for the whole structure, not just those who are most like us. Recognizing that everything we have in Christ is because God says so and is totally by His grace encourages us to treat others as those graced by God just as we. Paul knows their really getting to know God will affect their Christian life.

1:18 This experiential knowledge involves the eyes of their heart being enlightened. The heart is where decisions are made (the Decider) (Matt. 15:18-19; 13:15; Jh. 12:40; Acts 2:37; Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 9:7). As the Ephesians make decisions in their conduct and their interaction with other believers in their assembly, they need to have light shed upon the situations so they think and respond properly. “Being enlightened” is a perfect tense, so that the light has been shed and remains in effect when they decide. “Eyes” is a metaphor for how they see as they make decisions.

The point of seeing in decision making is that they may know (*oida* - objectively know) the hope of His calling. Paul uses “calling” two more times in this letter (4:1, 4). Their walk should be worthy of the calling. That calling involves the hope of a practical unity that matches who believers all are together in Christ (4:2-3). We were called (verb) in one body (Col. 3:15). The hope of living in unity is what they need to objectively know, so they can move on to experience.

They further need to know the riches of His glory (reputation) that consists of the inheritance of saints. In 1:11, we are made an inheritance. Christ inherits the Church. We are the children God has given to Christ (Heb. 2:13). The whole body of Christ is His inheritance. God’s rich reputation involves this inheritance of all the saints who make up the body of Christ. The suggestion that some are less than others demeans this inheritance. It places the end product in our hands more than God’s and demeans God’s reputation (glory).

1:19 They also need to know the surpassing greatness of God’s power in us. The translations “unmeasurable” [ESV] and “surpassing” [NASB] capture the idea of the Greek *hyperballō* to throw above, so that which is beyond, surpasses, or is immeasurable. Power translates *dunamis* that indicates an individual’s ability, therefore, inherent ability.¹⁰ Paul means God’s innate power. The purpose of this Divine power operates only in believers. God may exercise power in many situations but Paul focuses on what He does in believers. Paul does not single out certain believers of a specific racial background, or who are acting better than others, only that they are believing. The standard [*kata*] of God’s power is the “inworking” [*energia*] of the might [*kratos*] from His endowed power [*ischuos*]. Paul employs all three key words for power, each with its distinct emphasis, to emphasize God’s work with believers as opposed to our work. The

¹⁰ “**δύναμις** ... inherent power, might ...**ἰσχυς** strength as an endowment...**κράτος** strength as exerted, “force.” S.G. Green, *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, nd) p. 384.

first word *energia* indicates an individual's personal work in a situation as opposed to working through an intermediary. Therefore, God personally works in each believer. The second term refers to a display of God's power or might. God does not merely possess power but exercises it in a visible display. We are the location of God's work and the display of His power. What God is doing in us is a magnificent display of His power.

1:20 The same power that works in us worked in [*energeō* AAI] Christ when God raised Him from the dead. In this last phrase is *ek nekron*, *nekron* is not "death" but the plural form of *nekros* a dead person (cp Lk. 7:15). The phrase refers with a verb for resurrection means to be raised "out from among dead people." When Jesus died, He went to the location where the dead await resurrection. Upon His resurrection, He came out from that location.

God exercised this power by raising Christ and He also exercised this power when He seated Him in His right hand. In the earthly tent then the temple, there was no seat for the priests. Their work was never complete. Christ's work is complete and so the Father seated Him. The right hand is the place of privilege. God throne is in heavenly places. "Heaven" is a plural noun with a prefixed preposition that indicates . It is not always plural but often plural. This may represent Paul's Hebrew background, as Hebrew sometimes expressed the idea of an expanse or large area with a plural. 2 Corinthians 12:2 speaks of a "third heaven" and Solomon spoke of a heaven of heavens (1 Ki. 8:27). Earth's atmosphere is the first heaven, the starry spaces the second, and the location of God's throne the third. We have no evidence of any more heavens. Yet all three heavens are part of creation. While God raised Christ and seated Him in heavenly places...

1:21 He seated Him far above all rule, authorities, powers, and lordships and every name being named. The first four listed: rule, authorities, powers, and lordships describe ranks of angels. The first two "the rulers and the authorities" are learning about God's multifaceted wisdom through means of the Church (3:10). They are part of the spiritual evil in the heavenly places (6:12). Christ stripped them of their power through His death and resurrection (Col. 2:15). Christ applied these two terms of the religious leaders before whom the disciples might be taken (Lk. 12:11; 20:20). Therefore, when Christ arose and was seated with the Father, He was far above all the ranks of angels. Christ is the Creator of all things including angels (Col. 1:15). He is not, nor ever has been an angel (Heb. 1:13-14). "Every name being named" may include specific angels identified by name, or fallen spirits who emphasize their name to others. This applies to the present age as well as the coming age. Spirits now and spirits who will still be active in the coming age are all beneath Christ. None of them are or will be elevated to a status greater than the Christ. He is the One who is eternally God and now man forevermore. He has the name above every name (Php. 2:9). An age is a period of time during which God reveals a specific aspect of His character to His intelligent creation. Age can be distinguished from generations because angels who appear to be more the objects of God's age revelation do not generate, but people do (Col. 1:26). The connection of spirits with age is significant as they are learning about God's character. They are even learning something about His wisdom by how our lives are lived in this present dispensation. Remember a dispensation is a rule of life that applies to a group of people. A dispensation does not govern angels.

Christ's status is not for a single age. When praying to the Father, Jesus asked to share again the glory that He had alongside the Father before the world existed (Jh. 17:1, 5). During His life on earth, He became a little lower than the angels by becoming man, but has returned to His exalted status above the angels and will continue in that status in the coming age.

1:22 The Father placed all things under His feet. Does “all things” refer to those spirits or more? God plans to head up “all things” [πάντα] by the Christ (1:10). He is the one who works “all things” according to His purpose (1:11). Christ is head above [*huper*] “all things” for the Church (1:22). Christ fills “the all things” by all means (1:23). God created “the all things” (3:9). God is able to do above “all things” (3:20). The Father is over all things, through all, and in all (4:6). Christ ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill the all things (4:10). We grow into Him the all things (4:15). These uses of “all things” are varied. While all things may refer generally to all creation (cf 3:9), and all creation comes under His headship or leadership in the future dispensation (1:11), it seems that “all things” sometimes refers to all the members of the body of Christ. So when He fills all things, it refers to all the members and He fills them by all *means* or by all *the members*. The three all’s in 4:6 may refer to the believers who make up the body. The Father is over all believers, referring to His authority, through, in the sense of accomplishing His work through all believers, and is in all believers. It would serve as a reminder that God relates to all believers not just to those of a special background or supposed status in the body. When Christ fills “all things” in 4:10, He’s filling all the members. He is giving them the character. This filling is worked out by the Holy Spirit in practice. When believers grow properly, we do not grow individually and alone, but we grow together into Him. We become the all things that He intends for us as the Head (4:13). Therefore, this is for the benefit [dative of advantage] the Church. Here “the Church” is not a local assembly, but all believers from Acts 2 until Christ returns for us. It is all believers wherever they may be. Each local church is a sample of this larger assembly.

1:23 Though some interpret “the Church” to be a local assembly, the Church is His body [τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ] and there is only “one body” (4:4). Christ is not an aberration of a single head with multiple bodies, but the head with a single body. Reference to “the body” reminds these divided believers of their oneness.

The body is also the fullness of the One filling all things by all means or all members. The noun “fullness” [πλήρωμα] describes the state of that which has been filled. In 1:10 it is when all time comes to its full point, its conclusion. In 3:19 it refers to a state of fullness that comes from God. In 4:13 it describes the full-grown stature of the Christ when all the members are in the body and mature. From God’s point of view, the body is full. He sees it as full-grown even though some parts of the body may not have been born and believed in Christ.

As previously noted, Christ fills all the parts of the body. He does this by means of all the parts of the body. No member of the body is more important, nor is any part less important. Though we may not all cooperate in His plan, He can and does use us all for the benefit of all.

2:1 Though chapter breaks can interrupt a thought or train of reasoning, this chapter break fits well a change in Paul’s argument to promote unity. He takes up a different line of reasoning regarding our past state.

Paul’s opening encouragement for unity between believers involved details of God’s plan for believers, to bless, place as sons, redeem, forgive and seal them in Christ. The opening sentence of chapter two (2:1-7) points believers to a common need and God’s common salvation. In addition to racial origins people may divide over how needy they see themselves. When Paul addressed the Jews in Romans 2:17-24, he asked them that while they considered themselves to be teachers of the blind, whether they taught themselves the same laws. Paul’s goal in Romans was to promote stability in believers. One necessary truth for that goal is that

we were all equally lost and in need of salvation. Ephesians 2 enters with a similar objective, but Paul's purpose is to help the believers see that they all had the same need. No one was better off than any other and both groups would be equally saved, in fact they would be saved together.

The subject of this sentence is "the God" in 2:4 and the main verbs are "made jointly-alive", "jointly-raised" and "jointly-seated." in 2:5-6. 2:1-3 lays the background with the participles "being" (2:1), "the one empowering" (2:2), and "doing" (2:3) and relative clauses "in which you then walked" (2:2), "in which ... we conducted" (2:3), "we were" (2:3). Modern translations break this sentence into smaller sentences and represent the participles as main nouns. While this may make the text more readable, we should not miss the continuity that Paul formed.

All believers in the body of Christ were first "dead in your trespasses and the sins." The believers' state of death was due to the sin nature and goes back to Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12). Therefore, the Ephesians lived physically in their trespasses and sins. They were no better than anyone else. The exact nature of their trespasses and sins may have differed, but they God views them as unrighteousness and does not grade sins as minor or serious.

The trespasses and the sins may be similar but are not identical. Grammatically, both have a definite article and joined by the conjunction *kai* are distinct. While a sin is overt rebellion refusing to acknowledge God's authority over one's life (1 Jh. 3:4), with a trespass, one often reasons that while an act is not right, it should be acceptable. Thinking that it is acceptable to be angry and preceding to be angry may be a trespass (4:26). With this, worthless speech, perhaps making inappropriate comments about others due to their background, is not a sin but a trespass. Paul's use of "trespasses" in 1:7 tells us that the Ephesians may not have been sinning overtly but were guilty of trespassing. Cremer points out that secular Greek treated *parapatōma* as a disguising the gravity of one's thoughts or actions.¹¹ However, he rejects this meaning in the context of Scripture. I think that a version of the secular definition applies in Scripture. One is still responsible for such a thought or decision, and it is no less unrighteous. Sin, as noted, is an overt act that refuses God's authority or boundaries. While anger is not sin, it may lead to an act of sin. These attitudes and actions form the realm or world where all of us lived at one time.

2:2 While we lived, being dead, in trespasses and sins, we walked or lived our lives in them. We walked by the standard of the age that is characterized by this world. Our English Bibles translate "age" [*aiōn*] by "way", "course", "path," none of which, in my opinion, represent Paul's point. Even in modern usage, people speak of an age of enlightenment, which is a time when better education and understanding caused people to shed superstitions, including accepting the Bible as God's infallible Word. This mentality permeated much of society and so affected how people thought and lived. Some speak of the age of innovation, or a time when new ideas and inventions change the way we live. No longer do we wait for the postman to hopefully deliver the long awaited letter, but we text someone, perhaps around the world, almost instantly. We don't go to the library and research to find some piece of information. We instantly access a quick answer on our phones or computers. An age is a period of time with a distinct character that defines it. Paul speaks of an age that bears the character of this world. The age of enlightenment expected people to live in light of that and the age of innovation expects people to use modern inventions and technology. When people do not, the world looks

¹¹ Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962) p. 498. In Cremer's article, he uses "imply palliation" but does not think this sense is used in the New Testament.

at them as strange and asks, “Why?” So, the present age presses a certain lifestyle upon all people and before salvation, we willingly lived by its standards.

The last part of Genesis 4 depicts the world that characterizes this age. As Enoch went out from God’s presence, his actions and those of his descendants formed the framework for this world. Cities, as opposed to a garden, became the norm (Gen. 4:17). In this environment, man, not God, introduced polygamy (4:19). We find that even then, some chose to live apart from the city, living in tents, and kept livestock, presumably as a living (4:20). Man introduces music, which to this day serves powerfully to advance certain ideas within the world (4:20). Man begins the business of teaching others and manufacturing tools to lessen the effects of the curse (4:22). Women are valued for their beauty (Naamah), perhaps as opposed to their character (4:22). We find that in this environment, senseless violence erupts stemming from personal pride and rage (4:23-24). Jesus indicates that men directed some of this violence at God’s prophets in opposition to God and His revelation (Lk. 11:50-51). He also connects the foundation of the world with the shedding of Abel’s blood, which event resulted in Cain departing from God and setting the world in motion. John tells us that the world involves things appeal to our flesh, perhaps the pursuit of comfort or fleshly fulfillment, things that appeal to the eyes, which may relate to the beauty over substance idea, and the empty bragging boast of this life, for people want to brag on themselves and the things they have acquired (1 Jh. 2:15-17).

This age was structured according to the standard set by the ruler of the air. Air indicates that his sphere of authority is upon this earth. Jesus spoke of the “ruler of this world” (Jh. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). While some Bible students hesitate to identify this ruler with Satan or the Devil, even questioning whether such titles refer to a person, many still acknowledge this identification. In this letter, Paul warns of giving the Devil an opportunity and speaks of the Devil’s methods (4:27; 6:11). Paul refers to the Devil as the god of this age (2 Cor.4:4). The Devil is the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9). The Devil organized this system to control and distract people apart from God. This age set the standard for life indicated by the preposition *kata*. Before salvation, we walked by this standard. We opposed God. We valued what the world told us we should value. All of this characterized our pre-salvation lives.

Paul further describes Satan as the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. “Works in” or “energizes” translates *energeō* and indicates a work immediately in a person, thing, or situation as opposed to a work through an intermediary. “Sons” may have the typical emphasis to designate those who are mature and privileged, or it may refer to all unsaved men. It probably refers to the former, those mature ones who lead the mass of humanity, such as political and territorial rulers or religious leaders. Daniel tells of a conflict between an angel sent from God and a “prince” of Persia and soon a prince of Greece (Dan. 10:13, 20). Many accept that the “king of Babylon” and “prince of Tyre” refer to Satan himself (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:12-19). Paul wrote of the rulers of this age who did not understand that they were accomplishing God’s plan when they crucified Jesus (1 Cor. 2:7-8). These rulers include spirits as well as men. Paul also refers to Satan’s religious ministers as those who teach righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-15). These Scriptures testify that Satan himself and his angels work through leaders. Therefore, Satan and his minions personally operate in these sons of disobedience to control their leadership in achieving Satan’s ends. Before salvation all people were subject to Satan’s leadership through these human leaders.

2:3 Before salvation, we conducted ourselves among these sons of disobedience. “Conduct” refers to everyday activity, the verb *anastrephō* indicating repeated activity, hence daily.

Among those individuals, we lived daily in the cravings (lusts) of our flesh doing the desirous will of the flesh and of the thoughts. “Lust” is an intense craving and may be good or bad. Rising from the flesh, it is unrighteous. “Flesh” describes our physical nature and in this case, our fallen physical nature. When Adam chose to disobey God, he bent his good nature. Unlike Satan, who is a spirit and not a physical being, Adam had a physical nature with God-given cravings for sex, for God, for personal integrity, for accomplishing something, for eating, for companionship/camaraderie. All these were twisted from God’s original design and still crave fulfillment but in ways that God does not desire for us. When this fallen nature is viewed as acting in rebellion against God, the New Testament writers called it **the sin**. We often refer to it as the sin nature. The flesh is the source of twisted cravings and the sin *nature* of hostile refusal to obey God.

As unbelievers, we had only the flesh as a source of cravings. Those cravings permeated our lifestyle so that we did the desirous will of the flesh and of the thoughts. *Dianoia* are thoughts or what passes through our minds. We not only did what our flesh desired but also what we thought. Our thinking, like every other part of our being, was then saturated with these bent cravings. In Romans 2:6-10 Paul demonstrates why God will bring His wrath against people. They receive what they have done. People are self-seeking and do not obey the truth (Rom. 2:8). He would reward those who do good while seeking God’s glory, honor, and incorruptibility, but in Romans one, Paul already established that man does not do this. Therefore, even when people’s actions appear to be good and righteous, their thoughts are selfish and taint their works. This characterized all, so we too were included. As a result, we were by our nature children of wrath just as the rest of humanity. As pointed out in Romans 2:5, “children of wrath” meant we were the objects of God’s wrath. We were children due to our nature. As David said, “Look, I was brought forth in perversity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” (Ps. 51:5). David knew that even from the moment of conception, he was perverse and a sinner.

2:4 “But God.” Have any words been so encouraging in the face of dismal situations? Confronted with our willful lostness, we are reminded, “But God.” He alone can act to change our situation. God is rich in mercy. As noted previously, “rich” emphasizes both God generosity and that He has vast unlimited provisions. When God has acted toward us in mercy or grace or any other quality, He has not exhausted what He willingly provides.

Mercy expresses God’s goodness and love to those who are suffering due to unrighteousness. It may be their unrighteousness, so they are suffering for their own actions, or it may be due to another’s act against them. Mercy seeks to alleviate that suffering. The Old Testament word *racham* indicated a softness in response to suffering. The New Testament word family *eleos* responds to help and comfort one who suffers. The form *eleomosunē*, often translated “alms” indicates a gift to provide relief to one in desperate need. God expresses His mercy to us because of His great love of which He loved us. “Great” is “much” [*polus*] love, therefore, not a little love but a great deal of love.

2:5 He showed this mercy to us while we were being dead ones by means of our trespasses. In 2:1 Paul added sins, but due to the Ephesians’ attitudes towards each other, their trespasses were more pronounced, and so to these Paul calls attention. Our trespasses were the means of our state of death.

God in mercy made us jointly-alive with Christ. Paul prefixed the preposition *sūn* “closely with” to the verb “made alive.” Does the *sūn* preposition join them with Christ or with another

object? Certainly the statement ends with “with Christ.” However, Paul’s use of this preposition in Ephesians demonstrates a union of believers. We are made alive with Christ, but not as individuals but all believers together. The preposition unites us with Christ and with each other. It further’s Paul’s goal of uniting these believers.

This union with Christ and one another elicits the declaration that we stand as those having been saved by grace. Paul used a Greek grammatical construction that joins the present indicative verb “you are” with the perfect participle “being saved” to emphasize our present condition due to what He has done in the past. This is a powerful way to not only point to what God did but to our current state.

2:6 Paul prefixes the preposition *sūn* to two more verbs: jointly-raised and jointly seated. These three verbs focus on the end of Christ’s earthly work, for after dying and being buried, He was made alive, raised, and sat down after ascending to heaven. Paul just referred to God’s power raising and seating Christ (1:20). Now, He reminds us that together we share in what is true of Christ. Christ was seated at the Father’s right hand in the heavenlies (1:20). Now, we too are seated in Christ Jesus at the Father’s right hand. In Colossians 3:1-2, Paul calls believers to seek these things because this is true and to set our minds to these truths.

2:7 God’s purpose in granting us such a grand position extends to the future. He might display the riches of His grace to us. The verb “display” is subjunctive and is not a might or might not, but subjunctive as to the uncertain time from our perspective. We know it will be in the coming ages. Note, not an age but ages for God will display this through multiple ages. This display is certainly to us but it may also extend to others, even God’s angels. He did not extend this seated status to Israel and He did not to angels. In 3:10, Paul writes that angels are learning something about God’s wisdom by watching what He is doing with us now. That God can do this into future ages should not surprise us. We are granted to reign with Christ and so the mystery of His will is that He will head up all things by the Christ, where Christ reigns with His body over all things. To which angel has He ever extended such a privilege?

Having referred to God’s riches, Paul now adds, “exceeding” a participle that means “to throw over” or “beyond.” This extends the riches or God’s generosity of grace beyond the limits common in human minds. He has shown us this grace by means of kindness. Kindness puts others at ease. The God of the universe deserves that we should cower and lie prostrate before Him for all eternity. However, God, so rich in grace, demonstrates His grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus. God puts us at ease before Him. In Hebrews 4:16, Paul calls us to approach with boldness or freedom of speech because we approach a throne of God’s grace. “Freedom of speech” is certainly a result of God’ kindness to us.

2:8 The “for” makes this an explanation of God’s kindness to us also in the future. We are in a state of having been saved by grace. On our part, we are saved through faith. God presents us with the good news of what His Son has done for us and we believe that good news. Faith is not a work (cp Rom. 4:5). It is an attitude that takes God’s promises to be true so that we may respond accordingly (Heb. 11:1).

“This is not from you.” “This” is a neuter pronoun. The words grace and faith are both feminine and the participle “having been saved” is masculine. In Greek when a pronoun refers to a mix of ideas or mixed genders, the neuter is used. Therefore, “this” refers to the whole matter, God’s grace, our being saved, and faith. It is all a gift from God.

2:9 Unless anyone should have missed the significance of God's grace and that this is a gift, Paul asserts that none of this results from works, that is, our works. We have done and do nothing to deserve that God should save us. If we could do something to earn salvation, even a little, we might have cause to boast. Boasting is shut out by faith (Rom. 3:7). If one were declared righteous from his works, He would have something to boast about, but he could not boast about it before God (Rom. 4:2). Therefore, salvation by grace excludes any boast.

2:10 Furthermore, God's grace and kindness are emphasized because we are the product of God's work, His workmanship. We are what we are, only because of Him, not because of ourselves. We have been created in Christ Jesus. This creation in 2:15 will involve our being made one body together in Christ Jesus. He created us upon the opportunity of good works. He has already prepared those good works for us to do. As He determined our form and our days, so He has prewritten the works we may perform, not generally but specific opportunities. We should be mindful that daily He has works for us. We meet those works, though we may not choose to do them in that moment and therefore, we do not do what He has provided for us. God has planned for us to live our lives [walk] in these works He has prepared. Since, Paul relates these works to being in Christ where we are created, serving our gift to the needs in the body of Christ are certainly some of those good works.

History of conflict between Jew and Gentile

2:11 Paul takes up a reason for conflict between Jew and Gentile believers. It rests in their past. It rests in how they saw each other in the past. He starts by remind the Gentiles of their past. "In flesh" focuses not on their relationship to God but how they existed apart from God. It focuses on an earthly status, a status that Paul will remind them is gone, a status they should have known to be gone. These Gentile believers were once called uncircumcised by those that called themselves circumcised. Both participles "circumcised" are middle/passive voice. Probably though they share the same form, in the first case the Gentiles were passive in being called uncircumcised by those who called themselves circumcised, which would be an emphasis of the middle voice. The circumcisions was a mark in the male flesh that acted as a sign of a covenant between God and the family of Abraham (Gen. 17:11). It was not a sign that marked a spiritual relationship but a physical sign as it was made in flesh and performed by human hands [a noun "handmade"]. This mark made a great distinction between Jew and Gentile and Jews made much of it. Apparently even in this church, some had pointed out the distinction, perhaps suggesting that they were better because of it. It is amazing that having been subjected to Paul's instruction regarding God's grace, these people would so easily resort to a physical distinction related to a thing of the past.

2:12 These uncircumcised Gentiles were, at that time, without Christ. Christ was promised to Israel. He was to come from their race as regards His humanity (according to the flesh)(Rom. 9:5). God promised to Abraham a seed that would possess the gates of His enemies (Gen. 22:17). Only in this promise does God use the singular pronoun (prefixed in Hebrew to "enemies") and Paul makes much of this singular in Galatians 3:16 stating that the seed is Christ. While Christ would bring all nations under His reign, His origins were clearly Israeli.

Furthermore, the Gentiles were alienated from the politics of Israel. The participle "alienated" is perfect tense, emphasizing that they were not part of Israel's politics and that remains true. They still are not part of God's work and promises to Israel. God gave the Law to Israel alone (Deut. 4:8). In fact the Law made Israel different so they were set apart from the other nations (Lev. 11:44-45). Similar to the Law, Gentiles were strangers from the covenants of promise. God

did not make covenants with Gentiles. He made four covenants with Abraham. He made the covenant of the Law with Israel at Sinai. He made a covenant regarding the land and law with the second generation of Israelis just before they entered the land. He made a covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah that promised them regeneration in their future when they are in the land. None of these covenants were for the nations. In these covenants, God made promises to Israel not to Gentiles. Without promises from God, the Gentiles were without hope. Biblical hope rises from divine promises not from human desire or imagination. God was the God of the Israelis and therefore, the Gentiles were without God. They served false gods-idols and not the true and living God (cp Jer. 14:22; 10:10; 16:20; Gal. 4:8). The Gentiles were in the world. Israel too was in the world. However, as both Jesus and Paul teach, the Church exists in the world but is not part of this world (Jh. 15:19).

2:13 “But now.” Like “But God” in 2:4, so here, Paul brings in a strong contrast between what was and what now exists. This alienated and sad state of these Gentiles is changed. God has introduced a new work that unites both Jew and Gentile into a new entity known as the body of Christ or the Church. This new relationship exists “in Christ Jesus.” He constitutes our new relationship to God and our new identity.

In Christ Jesus, we are no longer far off from God. We are no longer Christ-less, Godless, or promise-less. We have no been made near. The verb “made” being passive, so that the work is God’s not ours. We did come near. God caused us to become near to Him. We have become near by Christ’s blood. Israel approached God by blood. A priest could not come near without blood (Lev. 16:11-14; Heb. 9:7). Blood reminds us not only of Christ’s death, but that His death was violent, that it took a violent death to secure our freedom, to pay our debt.

2:14 Due to Christ’s violent death, He is our peace. He is the means by which we are at peace with God having ended our conflict with Him (cf. Rom. 5:1). That peace also extends to the relationship between believers in Jesus Christ. He formed the basis of this peace by making both one. The both are the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the Jew and the Gentile. This is not a oneness of Gentiles with Israel prior to the cross. This is a oneness of those who are “in Him” (2:15). Therefore, this oneness exists for believers from Acts 2 to the present, what we commonly call the Church or the body of Christ. This is one way in which Christ is our peace.

He accomplished the peace by destroying the middle wall that divided or fragmented. Paul explains this wall as the hostility or better, that which formed the basis of hostility between the Jew and the Gentile. He further reveals that this middle wall, this basis of hostility is the law made up of commands (2:15). Paul says “the law” because he means the law God gave Israel through Moses and not a manmade law or any other law system. Further, the commands that made up this law were in the form of “ordinances” or *dogmas*. This word derives from the idea of an opinion. It referred to decrees of kings. In the LXX it never describes any part of the law but is used one time of Darius’ decree (Dan. 6:12). Darius’ decree was not built on moral law, but was a decision of the king. Eadie says of *dogma*, “It was not a moral law, having its origin and basis in the Divine nature, and therefore unchanged and unchangeable, binding the loftiest creatures and most distant worlds; but a positive law, having its foundation simply in the Divine will, established for a period among one people, and then, its purpose being served among them to be set aside.”¹² Some have used this distinction to claim that the ceremonial law was done away but the moral law remains in effect. This view contradicts both Paul’s

¹² John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977 reprint) p. 177.

present statement and His claims elsewhere such as Romans 7:7, where the law that is done away is identified by the tenth command. However, many commands in the law were given because it was God's pleasure [*dokēō*]. As noted in 2:12 (see above), God made Israel different from the Gentiles by commands that made them different, commands about their food, the washings, and numerous other rituals. All these created animosity between Jews and Gentiles. Christ rendered this idle or ineffective [*katargeō*]. "Dividing" is *phragmos* meaning to fragment. The law fragmented humanity into those under law and those not under law. Removing the law was necessary in order to create the oneness of the body in Himself. Removing the Law that divided humanity is another way in which Christ is our peace.

Christ destroyed this dividing wall by His flesh. In His physical nature, He suffered. In His physical nature, He bore the curse of the law, so that the law could be removed (Gal. 3:13). He died to the law so that we too might die to the Law by being part of His body (Rom. 7:4).

Having made the law inactive, He creates in Himself one new man (2:15). "New" is *kainos* meaning new in kind as compared to recent (a new variety contrasted to this year's crop of the same variety). He creates the two, Jew and Gentile into this one new man. He is not joining Gentiles to Jews, for that would just be an addition to what has already existed. He is forming something new in kind. This is not only the body of Christ but the Christ. It exists "in Him." The Christ is Jesus Christ the head sharing His identity with all those in Him. The body of Christ is not the Christ. The new man only exists in Christ. Like the Church, local expressions exist on earth as believers gather and work together under the headship of Christ.

Christ made peace by joining believers together into one new man. The law divided mankind by commanding activities to do or avoid that distinguished Israel from the Gentiles. That law has been removed. Believers in Jesus Christ are joined as one. This union along with the removal of the law has made peace between believers. Believers are at peace with God because in Christ we have been declared righteous. Christ bore the offense, sins, and hostility so that in Him we are at peace with God. He has also made a basis for our peace with each other.

2:16 By uniting believers in Himself into one new man, He has reconciled us both to God in this one body. The verb "reconcile" [*apokatalassō*] means, "to transfer from a certain state to another which is quite different; hence, to reconcile, restore to favor."¹³ While we often think reconcile means to make peace, the idea is that of changing something or restoring it. The body of Christ, the new man accomplishes this change. He ends this alienation from one another and even more so, the alienation from God by placing all New Testament believers in Himself. He places believers in Himself by sending the Holy Spirit, who "baptizes" or immerses believers into Christ. God did not need to be reconciled. We needed to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18). God needs no change in His character. We needed a change in our status. Changing our relationship to God and each other is how He made peace (2:15).

He effected this change through the cross, by killing the hostility by that cross. In 2:14-15, Paul explained that the hostility is the law in the form of commands. Christ had to kill that hostility. He brought the law to an end of us (Rom. 10:4). Christ became the curse of the law for us (Gal. 3:13). He bore the curse that the Law required of those who did not obey all the Law. In this way He killed the hostility. God reconciled (changed) the world to Himself-again God Himself needs no change (2 Cor. 5:19). He reconciled the world by not logically counting or keeping a record of the world's trespasses (2 Cor. 5:19).

¹³ Mounce, op cit., G639

God gave to Paul and his companions the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). Paul announced this message to both Jews and Gentiles, to both believers and unbelievers. He said, “You be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20). The unbelieving Jew or Gentile needed to know that Christ had become everything they were so we could become God’s kind of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). In the context of 2 Corinthians five, Paul also announced this to reconciliation to believers.

2:17 Having dealt with the Law, having put believers in one body, having changed us so we could have peace, He came and announced peace as good news. The announcement went with news of peace to those who were far, who would be Gentiles, and peace to those who were near, who would be Jews. Both were in need of peace with God and peace with each other.

Is He announcing peace to unbelievers in these groups or to believers? The nature of this peace is for believers. It exists in the body of Christ, in this new man, therefore, He announced peace to believers in both groups by pointing them to this unity. Christ presented this peace as good news. He did not personally do this, but as in 4:21 they heard Him speak through those apostles and prophets He gifted and sent to speak to His Church.

The matter of peace involved both groups. Though God established the people of Israel with the call of Abraham and established them as a nation by giving them the Law, Israel had been at war with God through much of their history. Their history was dominated by rebellion broken by moments of turning to God. Likewise, the Gentiles had lived in rebellion. God allowed the Gentiles to go their own way during the years that He focused attention on Israel. For this reason, both groups needed to be at peace with God. When Paul was sent out, part of His message was a call to peace with God, to be reconciled or changed towards God (2 Cor. 5:20). He described this to the Ephesians as “repentance towards God” as they needed to change the minds about what they thought about God and their relationship to Him (Acts 20:21).

Paul also called believers to be reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20). The context of this statement involves Paul’s urging the Corinthians to see each other as one in the new creation (5:16-17). Believers love God by loving one another (cp 1 Jh. 4:20-21). In a similar way, to be at odds with another believer is often to be at odds with God. Therefore, to be reconciled to God is a call to be reconciled in interpersonal relationships. Paul continues in various ways to stress this practical change and practical peace among believers in the rest of this letter.

2:18 This sentence begins with *oti* [ὅτι] which can express further or specific explanation “that...” or cause “because.” Paul is explaining further the nature of this peace not the cause of this peace. Through the apostles and prophets, He announced good news of peace, specifically that we both have access to God. Paul ties peace and access in Romans 5:1-2. Our access to God is unprecedented. Israel had access to the God at the tent and then in the temple. However, they had to meet many qualifications to enter God’s presence. First, priests had the closest approach to God with non-priests (layman) not being able to approach under threat of death (Ex. 28:1; Nu. 1:51; 3:10). Further, when Israelis approached the tent or temple, they had to meet specific qualifications such as keeping themselves clean from the unclean (Lev. 11:1-43), being unclean for a time after childbirth (Lev. 12:1-8), or unclean due to various diseases (Lev. 13-14). Therefore, this new access based on peace established in Christ was new and good news to both Jew and Gentile.

Our access is through him (Christ) [δι' αὐτοῦ]. After rising from the dead, Christ ascended and sat down at the Father's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). As Paul reminded the Ephesians beginning 1:3, God counts us (says) we are in Christ. Therefore, as Christ sits at His right hand, so we sit at His right hand (2:6). We now have boldness to enter the holy place by Jesus' blood (Heb. 10:19). Christ is our new and living way into God's presence (Heb. 10:20). Because He sits in a real human nature at God's right hand, His flesh, His physical nature is like the curtain the separated the holy place from the most holy place. We come through Him. But we do not stop in Christ and talk to Christ. Being in Him, we pull back the curtain and speak to the Father, hence through Him to the Father.

Our access is by one Spirit. Paul may speak of "one Spirit" to address the notion among some believers that the Gentiles received a different Spirit than the Jews. When the household of Cornelius responded to the good news in faith, the Spirit came upon them (Acts 10:44). Peter described the situations, "who have received the Holy Spirit as we *did*." (Acts 10:47). When Peter explained the event to those from Jerusalem, he spoke in stronger terms, "just as also upon us in *the* beginning." (Acts 11:15). Luke's record helps us understand that the same Spirit in the same way was given to the Gentiles as He had been given to the Jews. Therefore, the same Spirit is our means of access. The instrumental case of "Spirit" tells us that the Spirit is the one who enacts our access to God at the moment we move to approach Him.

Our access is to or before [πρὸς] the Father. As Jesus told His disciples in the upstairs room, they would not ask Him, but they would ask the Father (Jh. 16:23-24, 26). They would not have to ask Jesus to talk to the Father on their behalf. Christ does intercede for believers but that is a distinct work and not part of our access. We have the privilege of speaking directly to the Father because we sit in Christ.

We can say that we approach the Father, through the Son because we are in the Son. When we do this, the Spirit is the one who affects that access by working out our communication to the Father in time. Though many commentators take ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι as locative rather than instrumental, arguing the Christ is the means expressed by δι' αὐτοῦ, I have interpreted this expression to indicate the means or channel quite literally, i.e. "through Him." Therefore, as in many situations in our Christian lives, the Spirit is the one who puts the pieces together, such as producing the fruit from the use of eternal life and the Father's nature, of filling the believer with the qualities necessary to function in the body, of giving us understanding, etc.. Similar to how the Spirit leads the believer to our life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:18), so He guides us into the Father's presence through our place in Christ where we sit.

2:19 This leads Paul to conclude that "you" (the Gentile component of the Ephesian church) are no longer strangers and aliens. "Strangers" describes us as those who are not home, and aliens as those who live someplace that is not their home, think immigrants. Peter states that with reference to the world, we are aliens and refugees (1 Pet. 2:11). He introduces the next clause with the strong adversative "but" [ἀλλά]. We are joint-citizens of the saints. Paul applies "saints" to the believing individual of Israel. Furthermore, we are *a kind of* household of God. "Joint-citizens" and "household" are nominative nouns describing who we are. Several versions represent this as "members of His/God's household." Paul does not use the word "members of" but simply states that we are a household of God. The noun as no definite article. We are not the only household of God as though God has but one people from the beginning of time. Hebrews 3:2-6 refers to two households: one in which Moses served as a household servant, and one over which Christ is a Son. We are part of Christ's household (Heb.

3:6). Even this reference in Hebrews does not define all the households but only two. Because God has more than one household, Paul omits the definite article in Ephesians 2:19. This agrees with the preceding verses that Christ created us into one new kind of man. He did not add the Gentiles to the nation Israel, and here, He did not add Gentile believers to the household of Israel. So, Paul simply says “a household” rather than “the household.”

2:20 This household has been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone. The aorist passive participle “having been built” is an ingressive aorist indicating the beginning of the process. With the aorist, Paul steps back to see that foundation laid. The chief cornerstone established the squareness and plumb of a structure. In this way, Christ Jesus functions to give character to the whole structure which is the Church. In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul described himself and the other apostles as those who laid the foundation who is Christ. Here he also describes the apostles and prophets as part of the foundation. They were already in place.

2:21 Seeing the foundation as built (2:20), Paul now looks at the whole building as being harmoniously joined and growing into a holy temple in *the* Lord. Temple translates *naos* not *hieron*.¹⁴ The *naos* could refer to the inner part of the temple, that part of the temple to which access was limited to the priests. The body of Christ is never described as the *heiron*, only the *naos* because this term indicated the inner part where God dwelled and made His presence known. Believers individually are a temple of the God (1 Cor. 6:19) and together as the body we are a temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). In both instances Paul uses *naos* because we are the location where God dwells. This temple, another way of looking at being in the body, exists in “Whom,” -in Christ Jesus. This adds to Paul’s “list” of the good things God says about us in Christ. He says that together we are a temple of God. Peter sees us similarly as living stones being built into a spiritual house, which corresponds to Paul’s “fitted together.” It pictures each believer as fitting us all together to make up this holy temple in the Lord. While Paul described himself as a master builder (1 Cor. 3:10), it is the Spirit not Paul who places each believer into the body with precision. “In *the* Lord” reminds us that Christ is in charge of the body and its organization. The preposition ἐν is probably instrumental, meaning the Lord is the means by which we are placed into the body. Lord has no article and may refer to the Spirit as Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians 3:17. This would agree with his identification of the Spirit at the end of 2:22. This also agrees in part with the Spirit’s role of giving to each a gift as He determines. (βούλομαι)(1 Cor. 12:11). The gift is associated with the individual’s location in the body, therefore the Spirit places believers in the body where He chooses.

2:22 “In whom” again refers to Christ, as He is the location where the temple is being formed. The present indicative verb “built together” [NASB] reminds us that this is still a project. 1:22-23 views the body as complete or full. In function, the body or temple is still being formed. It will not be complete until the last believer is fitted into their specific location. Rather than call it a temple or *naos* Pauls calls it a dwelling place of the God. Dwelling place is *kataikētērion*. The verb form *katoikeō* means to settle down at home. The *-tērion* ending indicates manner or place. Place better fits this context. The body is the place where God is

¹⁴ ναός not ἱερόν. “*Naos* refers primarily to the inner sanctuary (i.e., the holy place) of the temple complex. It also denotes the structure as a whole.” *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, ed. Stephen FD. Renn, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) p. 964. This is illustrated in Matt. 27:51 where the veil that divided the holy place from the most holy place was torn from top to bottom. Paul only uses *hieron* one time and it is a clear reference to the physical building in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 9:13).

settled down at home. As indicated in the comments on 2:21, “by *the Spirit*” views the Spirit’s work of placing believers into the body of Christ or as Paul sees it here, into the temple in which God dwells. Like a stone mason, the Spirit fits each believer into the master temple and the Father dwells within it.

3:1 “For this reason” ties the following section to the union in one body and in one structure. Paul will rest the unity on two mysteries: the mystery of the Christ and the mystery of the house rule of grace. Both mysteries contribute to better understanding this unity in Christ and its foundational principle.

Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles. Paul was living under house-arrest in Rome because he appealed to Caesar when he was in jeopardy of being turned over to a group of Jews who intended to kill him (Acts 25:11). During his trip to Jerusalem Paul had been seized at the temple. Some Jews from Asia recognized Paul and having previously seen him in company with a Gentile believer from Ephesus accused him of defiling the temple and teaching contrary to the law (Acts 21:28-29). While in route to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit had used many believers to warn Paul against going to Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:4, 11-14). He persisted and upon being pressed to affirm that he did not teach Jews to live like the Gentile believers, he compromised, even though he had taught that circumcision gave no strength or edge to those who practiced it (Gal. 5:6). Upon hearing this, a Jew would wonder why he should continue to practice circumcision. Paul refused the Lord’s instruction to not go and continued to Jerusalem. He got himself in to trouble and spent two relatively quiet years in prison on the coast. After a treacherous sea voyage to Rome, Paul met with the Jews in Jerusalem. When they rejected him, he recognizes his God-given responsibility, to go to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28). It took this imprisonment due to compromise for Paul to realize he needed to be about the work with the Gentiles. In this way, Paul was a prisoner “for [*hyper*] you.” Learning to focus on his ministry chiefly to the Gentiles helped Paul to maintain focus on what matters and not to show preferential treatment to believers of Jewish extraction. To do so would violate this union about which he has just spoken and about which he is about to explain more.

3:2 Paul assumes they know about the house-rule of God’s grace. The opening words εἴ γε ἠκούσατε form the first part of an assumed fulfilled condition (first class). When Paul writes this, he has not been to Ephesus for over three years. He assumes that though new believers may have come into the church, they too have heard of this rule of God’s grace. He assumes that others, perhaps the teachers, have explained this truth to all.

The Greek word I render “house-rule” is οἰκονομία, a compound word from “house” [οἶκος] and “law” or “rule” [νομός]. Our English Bibles render it “dispensation” [AV, NKJV], “administration” [CSB, NASB, NIV] “stewardship” [ESV, NET], “commission” [NRSV]. The word indicated a principle that a master or homeowner established for his household to receive his planned or promised provisions. “Administration” may make it sound as though Paul was administering God’s grace, as though the laity or people receive God’s grace as Paul or clergy determine to administer it. Rather, Paul was charged to explain how God planned to provide certain benefits. Grace is the principle God has established. All benefits He extends to those who are part of this household are extended on the principle of His grace. The household is “you” referring to believers in the body of Christ in general and so including the Ephesians believers. In 3:9, Paul states that this principle was a mystery, or a truth planned by God but

hidden and unrevealed prior the time God determined for Paul to explain it. Paul was a minister or servant of the body of Christ and this house-rule was the standard of that service (Col. 1:24-25). Paul's job was to explain to believers, not unbelievers, how God's grace works and how God is providing us benefits by His grace today. Paul again called this dispensation or house-rule a mystery (Col. 1:26).

This house-rule of God's grace means that believers can neither earn more nor lose any part of God's provisions. It not only involves the security of salvation but also security and stability in our daily relationship to God. Grace excludes works as providing any merit (Rom. 11:6). Paul contrasts grace to working as the source of righteousness from God (Rom. 4:4-5). This was a redefinition of grace from the Old Testament to the New. In the Old, grace or favor could be earned at least in part. Works are commonly the result of living by grace, but those works do not gain us a better salvation, now or in the future. John tells us that the grace came into existence through the agency of Jesus Christ and John contrasts it the law being given through Moses (Jh. 1:16). The difference is that the law was given [δίδωμι] while the grace came into existence [γίνομαι]. God has shown grace prior to Jesus Christ, but grace as a way of life was a new thing for humanity.

This house-rule of God's grace is not about how people get into God's family. Some misapply this idea of the dispensation to how people come to initial salvation. It is true that we are saved by God's grace, but that has always been true. Romans four demonstrates salvation by grace and faith for Abraham before the Law, David under the Law, and us after the Law (Rom. 4:5, 6-8, 24). The house-rule is about how we live in the household after we have believed. It is about how God provides us these benefits on a faithful continuous basis.

Paul mentions a dispensation or house-rule here, in 3:9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4. In the last passage our attitude in this present dispensation is faith. In Ephesians 1:10 Paul writes of a dispensation that yet to come, that will exist in the fullness of times. Therefore, the Scriptures identify but two dispensations with the word dispensation. However, John 1:17 contrasts Israel's rule of life consisting of law to our way of life by grace. Paul expresses this in Romans 6:14 where he contrasts law to grace as principles under which we live. In addition to statements that use the word dispensation, Peter says that we are to grow by means of grace (2 Pet. 3:18). The believer stands in God's grace (Rom. 5:2).

For this reason, the rule of life of God's grace is "for you" (Eph. 3:2). It is intended for us as believers in Jesus Christ. It is not for unbelievers. The believer's way of life by grace means that God's benefits to us are by grace (Eph. 1:6). We do not earn those benefits or keep them secure by our efforts. God then appeals to us to live in keeping with what He has given to us. The letter of Ephesians serves as a good example of this. Paul devotes the first half of this letter to showing what God has given us and what He is doing for us, and what He will do for us. In the second half, beginning in 4:1, Paul begins to appeal for us to live in keeping with these God-given benefits. Our God-given benefits are so certain that Paul assures that when our sin nature abounds, God's grace abounds even more (Rom. 5:20-21). We believers glorify God in keeping with the grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:12). We are empowered by the Holy Spirit but He empowers us by God's grace, that is we do not earn the right to be empowered (1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1). God shows us grace by showing kindness to us (Eph. 2:7). His grace then trains us to say no (deny) to those things which are inconsistent with His grace and to live in a manner consistent with His grace (Tit. 2:11-13). This life by grace forms a background for the revelation of a mystery about us in Christ.

3:3 The mystery was made known to Paul by revelation. “By revelation” [κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν] reiterates the idea that this truth was new. It is a mystery, meaning it is previously unknown to people, but it has to be revealed. Revelation is the unveiling of that which had previously been veiled. The mystery may refer to the house-rule of God’s grace as indicated in 3:9 or to the relationship of Jewish and Gentile believers as indicated in 3:6. Paul had previously written a little or briefly about this mystery. He is not thinking about a previous letter to the Ephesians or another letter that the Ephesians may have read. It is more probable that if he means God’s grace, he means that 2:8-9 briefly mentioned this salvation by God’s grace that extends into our present life or state, communicated by the grammar of a perfect periphrastic (see comments on 2:8). If he is referring to the mystery about the union of Jews and Gentiles that he is about to mention in 3:6, then he briefly mentioned this in 2:10-16. The second mystery seems more likely in view his following comments.

3:4 The Ephesians can read what Paul wrote and be mindful [νοῆσαι] of His understanding in the mystery of the Christ. Paul wrote more about the union of believers in the previous section than he has written about our way of life by God’s grace. The union of believers in Christ is foundational to our way of life by God’s grace. Every aspect of that union is based on God’s grace to us in the Beloved (Christ) (1:6).

3:5 The mystery of the Christ was not made known [aorist passive indicative] in other generations. This is the nature of a mystery, a truth not revealed in the past. The sons of man describes all of us as human beings. The comparative ὡς indicates the past lack of revelation to the present revelation. It does not mean that it was partially revealed but now more fully revealed. In Paul’s other statements a mystery is kept secret and silent, it is not partially revealed or glimpsed at. God the Spirit has revealed this mystery to His (Christ’s) holy apostles and prophets. The two nouns apostles and prophets share one definite article and are joined by the conjunction καὶ to indicate that they share something in common, namely they have been entrusted with the revelation of this mystery. “By the Spirit” [ἐν πνεύματι] refers to the Spirit as the instrument of this revelation.

3:6 The mystery of the Christ is not about the person of Jesus Christ but about the status and identity that Jesus Christ shares with those who make up His body. The mystery reveals three key areas of truth, three key areas of identity for believers in Christ: their identity as heirs, their identity in the body, their identity as partakers of the promise.

Paul emphasizes that place of the Gentiles in this identity. This may tip us off, as did 2:11-13, that the Gentiles are feeling marginalized as believers, probably by the Jewish believers. In the previous two dispensation from Abraham to Sinai and from Sinai to Acts 2, Israel was the heir. They did not share their inheritance with the Gentiles. While the Gentiles had a place in God’s plan, they were not treated as equals. In the future form of the kingdom, not the eternal form, God will take Gentiles (foreigners) to build up the walls of Israel and Jerusalem. Their kings will minister to Israel (Isa. 60:10-14). The place of Gentiles in the body of Christ is quite distinct from the role of Gentiles within Israel’s promised kingdom.

Gentiles are joint-heirs. Paul expresses this union with the noun συγκληρονόμα. Paul used the prefixed preposition σύν in 2:5-6 to express our union in Christ’s life, resurrection, and seated position. That union expresses our union not only with Christ but with each other as believers. This idea of being a joint-heir means we all share equally in the inheritance. No one receives more and no one receives less. Those from a Gentile background inherit the same as

those from a Jewish background. This very promise is endangered by those who teach or suggest that present believers of a Jewish background inherit more or other promises. Instead of standing on the fact that there are no Jews or Gentiles in the body of Christ, for we have all been created together into one new man, some choose to focus on one's earthly status or ancestry as though the race of Israel provides people something better from Gentiles, even in the body of Christ. This is an error. Our identity before God has changed, and therefore, our relationship to God's promises have changed. This inheritance is not part of Israel's inheritance, but consists of the several promises God has made to the body of Christ. These are distinct promises and distinct inheritance/s.

The New Testament believer's inheritance

It is a joint-inheritance.

Rom. 8:17 & 21 - We jointly inherit with Christ. We inherit freedom.

Rom. 6:9 - We can inherit freedom from death's dominion.

Rom. 6:14 - We can inherit freedom from sin's dominion.

Col. 1:12, 27 - We inherit light-the use of eternal life (Jh. 1:4), because Christ is in us.

Tit. 3:7 - We have an inheritance related to eternal life; we can use it (1 Tim. 6:12).

Heb. 6:12; 2:15 - We inherit freedom from fear.

Heb. 4:1, 15 - We inherit rest.

Gentiles are also a joint-body. In 4:4 states there is one body, not many, and not even two: a Jewish and a Gentile. The body of Christ joins Jews and Gentiles into one union in one body. Moses used the metaphor of an animal to picture the two possible relationships of Jews and Gentiles to each other: head or tails. If Israel obeyed God's law, they would be the head and the Gentiles would be the tail (Dt. 28:13). However, if they disobeyed, Israel would be the tail and the Gentiles would be the head (Dt. 28:44). This metaphor demonstrates that Israel and the Gentiles would not share equal status under the Law. They would not be equals. Today, under grace and in Christ, we are all equal members in the body.

Gentiles are joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. "Partakers" [*metochos*] indicates one who is a partner or has a part in some matter. In our passage, Paul uses *summetocha* prefixing the preposition for emphasis that the Gentiles do not share a bit of this, but share equally in the promise. Paul uses this same form in 5:7 where he warns against taking part in the conduct and character of unbelievers. Luke uses the short form to describe Peter, Andrew, John, and James as partners in a fishing business (Lk. 5:7). The word occurs four times in Hebrews to indicate that believers share in a heavenly calling, of Christ, the heavenly gift, and child-training (Heb. 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8). In 2:12, Paul stated that the Gentiles had been alienated from the covenants of promise. It is important to notice the distinction between the plural covenants God had made to Israel versus the singular promise in 3:6. Paul mentions this single promise in 2:17-18, that both Jew and Gentile have access to God through Christ. We are at peace facing God as a basis for this bold access (cp Rom. 5:1-2). Paul repeats this promise in 3:12 that we have boldness and access in Christ "in Whom." This access relates to our being under God's house-rule of His grace (3:2, 9). Christ alone is the foundation of this access. We have access to God because Christ sits at God's right hand and we sit in Him (2:6; Heb. 10:12, 20-21).

The gospel may refer to the gospel for initial salvation but it is more likely the mystery gospel to which Paul refers in 6:19. The good news of Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection

was not a mystery. The Old Testament referred to the death of Christ (e.g. Ps. 2:2, 22:1-21; Isa. 53:10). It predicted His resurrection (Ps. 16:8-11; 2:6; Isa. 53:10-12). Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection (Lk. 18:31-33; Mt. 16:21; 20:18-19). If it was spoken of before, then Paul could not have called it a mystery. The mystery gospel combines the mystery of the Christ and the mystery of the present administration (dispensation). When Gentiles learn that they are equal with Jewish believers today and that both are alike under grace and not under law, the Gentiles learn that we share equally in this status and promises. This is a gospel for believers alone.

3:7 Paul was made a servant of this good news. Paul referred to this same idea in Colossians 1:24-25. “Servant” or “minister” translates *diakonos* which focused on the work or task to be completed, compared to *doulos* “slave” which focuses on the person to whom one serves. So, Paul meant he had a God-given task to serve this good news to others. He served according to the standard of the gift of God’s grace that He gave to Paul. God’s gifts to believers, gifts for service are identified as the product of God’s grace (4:7). God gave Paul the gift of apostle. Paul was not gifted as an apostle to serve in general, but specifically as an apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 1 Tim. 2:7). He was to serve up this good news so the Gentiles would know of their equal standing in the body of Christ. Furthermore, God worked [*energia*] His power [*dunamis*] in Paul. It is important to know that our service, regardless of our specific gift, is to be done by God’s power, not our own (1 Pet. 4:10-11). In this way, Paul asserts that his work as an apostle and specifically announcing this good news about the Christ is by the standard of God’s power. That means this is exactly what God wanted.

3:8 Paul viewed himself as the least of saints and therefore, he was the least deserving to receive the ability and opportunity to proclaim this good news. Paul considered himself least in several ways: the least deserving among the apostles, the chiefest of sinner (1 Cor. 15:8-10; 1 Tim. 1:12-15). “This grace” refers to not only Paul’s gift but God’s specific purpose for Paul’s gift. The purpose of living by grace was illustrated well by a man who was well advanced in the law and its teachings, and who in his arrogance was the most hostile to Christ. If by His grace God could change the life of a man like this, His grace could accomplish much in every individual under grace. Paul was commissioned to teach believing Gentiles this good news which details the unsearchable riches of the Christ. “The Christ” (we’ve seen this before) refers to Jesus Christ sharing aspects of His work and identity with His body. The riches remind us that God has given us extensive provisions from His grace to us in Christ. Everything God says about us together in Christ is a result of grace and a demonstration of just how generous He has been with us. The adjective “unsearchable” [*anexichniastos*] described that which could not be traced out so as to discover it. It had to be divinely revealed.

3:9 Paul’s mission was also to bring to light what this present dispensation/house-rule is. Paul designates this present dispensation a mystery, meaning it was hidden [perfect passive participle of ἀποκρύπτω]. The perfect tense emphasizes that it was hidden in the past with the result that it remained hidden. It was hidden from the ages in/with God. Ages probably points to spirit beings, whom Paul mentions in 3:10 as “rulers and authorities.” Even the spirit beings who include angels did not know about God’s plan for us to live our lives by His grace. However, since Paul was to bring it to light [aorist active infinitive φωτίζω, -ίζω is a causative verbal ending], it is no longer a mystery, it is no longer hidden. God, who planned this way of life, is the creator of all things. By emphasizing that God is the creator of all, it reminds us that He is the one who decides how all these things are to operate. Hebrews 3:4 states that God is the builder of every house or household and in that context the two households with which Paul is concerned are Israel and the Church. The Son is the the Word who spoke creation into

existence (Jh. 1:3). Part of God's creative work involves revealing Himself to His creation. He has done this in what Scripture designates "ages." In coming ages, God will make visible the riches of His grace to us by means of us (Eph. 2:7). We are an instrument through which God shows His creation something about His inexhaustible grace. Through the Son, He made the ages (Heb. 1:2). In this text "ages" [αἰών] is often translated "world." However, the issue in Hebrews involves the age in which they were living not the world in which they were living. The ages were prepared or adjusted [καταρτίζω] by a word of God (Heb. 11:3). The present age does not derive from things that are seen, to be specific, it does not derive from the visible rituals of the former age, rituals associated with the Law. Jesus promised that in the coming age, the age in which we now exist, His disciples would inherit eternal life (Mk. 10:30). Paul calls this age the present evil age (Gal. 1:4). In this age we possess eternal life. Our life stands out in contrast to the lack of life among Satan's sons of disobedience (cp Eph. 2:2; 5:6). Paul states that our lives stand out in contrast to this crooked and perverse race (Php. 2:14). In this passage Paul refers to us as "children," a designation tied to regeneration and so in turn tied to this present age. The Old Testament עולם communicates the idea of age in some texts. Solomon built a temple that would be God's resting place on earth for ages (1 Ki. 8:13). Israel anticipated a salvation for ages and their shame would not last for ages (Isa. 45:17). Under God's covenant promises, Israel could anticipate a righteousness of ages (Dan. 9:24). So, while God revealed promises for others in past ages, and gave promises intended for future ages, during those ages, God did not reveal His plan for us, the body of Christ.

3:10 God's purpose for Paul was that God would bring to light, or cause to come to light, this present dispensation, that [ἴνα] God's many faceted wisdom might be made known [APS] to spirit beings (angels). Paul mentions two specific groups or ranks of angels: the rulers and the authorities (AV principalities and powers). These spirit beings exist in the heavenly places. Whether these beings are righteous or unrighteous is not stated. I would suggest that they are righteous, for they are learning something about God, by watching what God is doing with us today.

God is making His wisdom known through the agency of the Church. Paul has equated the Church with the body (1:22-23). The body of Christ, the union of Jewish and Gentiles into one new man is the agent through which God is presently working. This reminder or revelation encourages believers to consider what our actions or how we treat each other communicates to these spirit beings.

God is using us to make known His multifaceted wisdom. Wisdom is the prudence or understanding of how to use what one knows. So the six men chosen to serve in the Jerusalem church needed wisdom, so they could discern how to properly distribute material items to the varied needs and situations of believers, especially widows (Acts 6:3). God does not have only one way in which He uses His infinite knowledge. His wisdom is multifaceted. He has employed His knowledge to work with Adam, with Noah, with Israel, and now with us. What He is doing with us is not just the latest version of the same work He did in the past. God has made Christ wisdom for us (1 Cor. 1:30). We find in Christ a place where God says we righteous, holy, and redeemed. Wisdom involves relating to these so that we live out righteousness, live out holiness (sanctification), and live out redemption as freedom. Wisdom takes the realities God says about us in Christ and sees how they can affect our practical living. Paul asked the Father to give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom so they might not only know who God is but allow that knowledge of God to affect our daily living (Eph. 1:17). We can see that God is gracious, but do we then relate to that grace so that affects our thinking and daily living?

God's multifaceted wisdom directly involves how He governs the household which is the Church by His grace (3:2, 9). God set law as a house rule for Israel from the time of Moses until the beginning of the Church in Acts 2. In the sermon on the mount, Christ revealed a legal house rule for those who will exist in the first thousand years of His kingdom (Mt. 5-7). God gave some rules to Noah when He left the ark. They witnessed God judge Adam for eating the fruit. They know of God's judgment of fallen spirits (Mt. 8:29). They witnessed God judge the world for their respect for the progeny of fallen angels and women in the days of Noah. They witnessed God's judgment on the world at Babel. They witnessed God judge Israel many times during their history. Now, they witness God exercising grace to us. We sin and we may continue living. We act against God and God does not inflict judgment on us. We malign God's character before the world and God gives us time to correct our thinking. All these are demonstrations of God's grace. It is different from what God has done with angels and what He has done many times with people who live before the time of the Church. They are learning that God can accomplish His purpose by a different means, specifically His grace.

3:11 God is doing this according to His purpose from all eternity or from all ages. God made His purpose a long time ago. He made this purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord. In 1:4 He stated that before the foundation of the world, He chose us to be holy and without blame in Christ. God's purpose was "in Christ Jesus our Lord." God says all good things about us in Christ (1:3). He says these good things about us by grace in Christ (1:6). This is the foundation of living by grace. Everything God has given us is by His grace. He now desires that we live by that grace. He desires us to live because nothing is gained or lost in our relationship to Him. We may not always enjoy our circumstances when we are trying to earn things or are living in fear of losing things. This is His purpose: will we live in love for others though we have nothing to gain or lose?

3:12 In Whom (Christ), we have the boldness and access in/with confidence through faith concerning Him (Christ). Paul has already revealed that we have access to the Father through Jesus Christ (2:18). Paul ties the two nouns "boldness and access" together with a variation of the Granville Sharp rule of two nouns joined by the conjunction *kai* and preceded by a single definite article. Granville Sharp states that his rule of equating the two nouns (e.g. the God even Savior) does not apply to impersonal things. However, when impersonal things are joined in this way, the Greek indicates they share something closely in that context. Here the boldness is directly tied to the access. This boldness does not exist outside of who we are in Christ and exists in relationship to our access to Him. Because of the nature of God and His rule of grace in our lives, we have this boldness in coming to God and talking to God. We should never underestimate what great and gracious privilege this is. Furthermore, this access and boldness is in confidence. "Confidence" is a noun built on the perfect tense of the verb *peithō* meaning to be persuaded. The perfect tense emphasizes something accomplished with an abiding result. As a result "confidence" is this settled persuasion regarding a matter. In the present text, it is a settled persuasion that we have this access and boldness. This access and boldness is through faith concerning Him. We have to believe that because of who Christ is at the Father's right hand, and because of who God says we are in Christ, we have this unprecedented access to God.

3:13 In light of this way of life by grace with all its attending benefits, Paul asked the Ephesian believers to not lose heart due to Paul's problems. The verb "lose heart" [ἐγκακέω *engkakeō*] means to be evil within, to be weary in. It describes an inner lack, an inner shortcoming. It then came to mean losing heart or becoming weary. Paul is concerned that the

Ephesians will become weary due what he is suffering, not something they are suffering. Remember that Paul skipped past Ephesus and only met with the elders for an evening in order to make it to Jerusalem for Jewish festival. Paul's actions seem to have undermined what he taught the Ephesians about the new man and the believer's changed identity in Christ. Paul's problems or pressures seem to have affected the Ephesians so that some or all wanted to give up. Rather, his problems were for the Ephesians glory, their reputation. They could look at what Paul was enduring and realize that it was planned to keep the Ephesians on the correct path and thinking accurately about the body of Christ and the absolute unity of Jews and Gentiles in this body. Hence it was "for" [ὑπὲρ] them.

3:14 For the purpose of the Ephesians not giving up, Paul bowed his knee to the Father. This is physical posture that Paul is using figuratively of his attitude when talking to God about the Ephesian saints. He may have taken the physical posture out of fear/respect for God and concern for the Ephesians.

3:15 From God the Father, every family in heavens and on the earth gets its name. The family in heaven is the body of Christ. It exists in Christ in heaven at God's right hand. The family on earth is Israel to whom God promised land and a world. Both are households established by God. Both derive their identity from God. This same idea is stated in Hebrews 3:2-6 with two households both built by God. Within the first house, Moses was a slave. Over the second house, Christ is a Son. We are a member of the second house. This also demonstrates the validity of the distinction between God's earthly people Israel and His heavenly people the Body.¹⁵ Paul's statement reminds us that God has more than one people and we are part of those in heaven. We should not wish to denigrate either group as they are both God's households. What we are to make of those who lived before the call of Abraham, Scripture does not state.

3:16 As he bows his knee to God, Paul asks God that He would give the Ephesians to be visibly mighty by His power. "To give" is a subjunctive verb, meaning Paul is not certain when God will give this might. He might give it now, or it might be at some future time. The measure of giving this power is "according to the riches of His glory or reputation." God's reputation is that He is a gracious God and also the all powerful God. Riches again emphasizes both God's vast or infinite resources and His generosity to us with those resources. Power is the part of God's character that He is using. "To be visibly mighty" [κραταιόω] is a passive infinitive. The passive means God is the agent of this empowerment and it does not derive from the Ephesians believers themselves. The verb expresses a visible display or act of might. The remainder of the Paul's request is not for a visible display of physical power but of spiritual might. This empowerment is through [διὰ] His (God's) Spirit. The empowerment is in the believer's inner man. Paul uses "inner man" for that part of himself that could appreciate the principle [law] by which God works in believers (Rom. 7:22). The believer's inner man is renewed daily while our outer man is breaking down or corrupting (2 Cor. 4:16). The believer's inner man includes his spirit, which has experienced regeneration and therefore, due to constant connection with God, is daily renewed. In this inner man, Paul desires a display of might empowered by God.

3:17 His request for visible might is that the Christ might settle down at home [κατοικέω] through the faith in our hearts. As in 3:5 "the Christ" refers to the one new man, Jesus Christ

¹⁵ This distinction is ignored and argued against by many modern dispensationalists. Some teach that we all become one people of God in the future.

united with His body and sharing His identity with His body. As was expressed in the mystery about the Christ in 3:6, Jewish and Gentile believers stand equally as part of the Christ. While believers may know these facts, the reality of it, the impact of it may elude us in practice. This truth settling down at home means the truth has a comfortable home in the believer. A comfortable home in the believer means the individual is in agreement in thinking, feeling, action, and attitude regarding believers. “Through the faith” means the believer sees God’s promise that believers can see each other as He does and live together as He has planned. God has promised believers that we can live in a practical unity that reflects what He says we are in Christ. “In the heart” means this truth settles down at home in that part of our being where we make decisions. “In love” is how it affects our decisions. This truth can affect believers so we have roots sunk deep maintaining a stability in our conduct. Likewise we can rest firmly on this truth as an immovable foundation. Both “rooted” and “grounded” are perfect middle participles that describe the believers. The perfect indicates the past act that continues in its effect. The middle voice means there is a personal interest or benefit for the believer when experiencing this truth.

3:18 All This leads to the goal that as believers we are strong enough or able to comprehend with all the saints what are the full dimensions of the love for the Christ.

καταλαμβάνω means to apprehend or lay hold of, either physically or mentally. In this context, it is mental comprehension (Jh. 1:5; 12:35). Paul lists four dimensions: length, width, height, and depth. These dimensions refer back to the temple at the end of chapter two. The temple has dimensions. However, a failure to appreciate the absolute equality between all believers who make up the body is akin to missing dimensions in the temple. The temple becomes one wall, or only a floor. It loses the size and scope God planned and designed for this entity.

3:19 To know the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge is Paul’s desire. He does not wish for them to know a little or just intellectually, but to know in their experience. The word “surpassing” [**ὑπερβάλλω**] is a participle that describes the love goes beyond knowing things well. When Christ addressed the Ephesian church through John, He praised them for their knowledge and strong doctrinal stance, however He criticized them for leaving their first love (Rev. 2:4). The believer’s first love should be God and we love God by loving other believers. So, here, failing to appreciate in their inner being all who are included in the Christ, is a failure to love as Christ loved.

Paul’s prayer, in simple terms, is that the Ephesian believers might fully appreciate in thinking, feelings, and conduct the extent of the body and to experience a genuine and full love for all those individuals. To this end, Paul wants them to be filled [aorist passive subjunctive] to all the fullness from God. At the end of chapter one, Paul referred to the body as the fullness. He refers to the fullness as the full grown man (Eph. 4:13). He will reference the “be filled” again in 5:18, where the Spirit is the means of that filling. Together, these passages help us see that the filling is about God giving believers the ability to function as part of the whole body of Christ.

3:20 Paul closes this section with worship acknowledging God to be capable of doing beyond all things we might ask or or are even of that we might consider with our minds. The present middle participle “being able” acts as a noun being the recipient of Paul’s worship. He is capable to do [AAInf], that which is far beyond what we ask [PMI]. “Far beyond” is

hyperperisseuō from *perisseuō* meaning “to exceed a fixed number or measure”¹⁶ and the prefixed preposition *hyper* that adds an even more exceeding idea. αἰτέω is asking communication that is to be done in the name or character of Christ, a privilege Christ indicated was new for believers following His ascension (Jh. 16:23-24). This type of communication with God is quite large though it should function within God’s will (1 Jh. 5:14). It should not be done for those things we selfishly want merely to spend on our cravings (Jas. 4:2-3). Even, with these boundaries, asking communication is big. However, when we think we have asked for something extremely big, we haven’t reached the limit of what He can do. We may be mindful of certain things but do not ask for them. “Mindful” or “think” translate *noeō* to exercise the experiential mind, to rest one’s mind on a situation or idea. We rest our minds on various situations and interests about which we would never ask, thinking that it is too much to ask for, but we choose to think about that possibility. He can do far more than even those musings of our mind.

God’s ability is according to or by the standard of His inherent power [*dunamis*]. This is God’s attribute of power or omnipotence (all-power). The only limit to God’s power is His character. God never violates His character; this is part of His holiness. He is set apart to Himself and so He never acts in conflict with His nature.

The exercise of His power that Paul focuses upon is that which works in us. The verb *energeō* refers to a direct work of one in another rather than a work through an intermediary. God has worked through angels, through a donkey, through people, and all these are acceptable means of accomplishing His plan. However, *energeō* means God is personally active in the matter at hand. Paul expressed His desire for God to strengthen the Ephesians in 3:16. He knew that God the Spirit could personally accomplish this in the Ephesians’ inner man. God would not strengthen them through another. He used Paul and Barnabas to strengthen the souls of the disciples (Acts 14:22). The Ephesians’ present need required the Spirit to strengthen them.

Paul’s worship to God in this verse reflects on his request for strength for the Ephesians. That inner strength comes from God. When we have asked for what seems like a great deal of strength, we have not begun to tap God’s power. He is capable of so much more than we can even dream.

3:21 As God is capable of so much more, He will accomplish Paul’s request in the future. Glory or His reputation is seen by the Church and by Christ Jesus into all the coming generations of the ages from ages. God will complete His work in His Church. There is a time coming when Christ’s request will be answered and the world will know that God sent the Son and loved us as He loved the Son (Jh. 17:23). Paul desired a practical unity among the Ephesians believers. He desired that they come to appreciate and love each others as the genuine members of the body of Christ that they are. That unity is experienced at times when believers relate to each other as those united in Christ. In those coming ages, God’s reputation as the kind and gracious God, the One who is faithful to finish in us what He began, that will be seen. The Church will be united in every facet of our beings.

This verse also demonstrates that a plurality of ages will come in the future. Further, one age generates other ages. What God’ intelligent creation learns about Him is not forgotten in the next age, but may be expanded upon or even new aspects of His character demonstrate.

¹⁶ Thayer, entry 4052

4:1 Having expressed his request to God for the Ephesians' unity, Paul now turns to call the Ephesians to unity. He encourages [PAI] them as the prisoner in the Lord. He is a prisoner, as indicated in 3:1 for the sake of the Gentiles. He wanted the Ephesians to know that he was bound in a chain because he did not listen to his own charges regarding all differences being erased in Christ.

En Kuriō [ἐν κυρίῳ] may indicate location or means. If it is location, Paul may be revealing where he is the prisoner. It may also refer to where he calls them to walk. If it is means or instrumental, it likely indicates the means by which they are to walk. While Paul could be viewing himself as a prisoner in the Lord, it seems more consistent in this context that he is calling them to walk in their position in the Lord. Further, he calls them to walk, where “walk” is a metaphor for how one lives life. It is not just any walk of lifestyle but one that is worthy of the calling with which they have been called. The adverb “worthy” [αξιῶς] means in balance to the worth or value. The standard is our calling. We have been called to God’s eternal glory **in Christ** (1 Pet. 5:10). He called us by the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6). Believers are “called ones”¹⁷ (1 Cor. 1:2). We have a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). We have a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). This call in Christ as a heavenly calling is “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Php. 3:14). We have been called into a position in Christ where God counts to us what Christ has accomplished as well as His standing as He sits at the Father’s right hand.

4:2 Our walk should be accompanied with [μετὰ] all humility of mind. The noun **ταπεινοφροσύνης** is a humble attitude where the noun **φροσύνη** refers to our frame of mind or attitude. Paul contrasts this humble attitude to acting from selfish ambition or empty glory/reputation. Paul lists it among character traits that contribute to a great relationship between believers in Colossians 3:12. Colossians 2:18 and 23 also demonstrate that one can have a humble attitude that is self-produced as part of a humanly devised religious copy of the Christian life. This is also the attitude of younger pastors towards the elders, especially when the elders are not attending to their job. The issue of unity the Paul is driving to demands that we have an attitude of humility. A proud or high attitude does not treat others with a proper attitude.

“Meekness” [AV] or “gentleness” [πραΰτης] is a controlled attitude or power. It is a gentle animal rather than a fierce or aggressive one though it has immense power. Therefore, unity is promoted by being gentle as opposed to aggressiveness towards others. A teacher is to be gentle in how he teaches, especially with those who are opposing themselves by holding to teaching that negatively impacts their Christian life (2 Tim. 2:25). We are to use a gentle attitude in helping a believer who has gotten themselves caught in a trespass (Gal. 6:1).

“Patience” in most modern translations represents **μακροθυμία** or a long temper, by which Greek speakers meant that it takes a long time to get angry. The word occurs with **ὑπομονή**, in Colossians 1:11. Older English translations represented this word by “patience” but modern translations have “endurance.” It means that one remains at ease under something negative. Whereas the former is used chiefly with people, endurance is chiefly circumstances, though circumstances often include troublesome people. Paul knew that Christ Jesus showed much patience to Paul as he so arrogantly persecuted the Church (1 Tim. 1:16). The use of **μακροθυμία** in Hebrews 6:12 indicates that the Hebrews’ problem chiefly involved pressure

¹⁷ Paul uses the adjectives **κλητοῖς** “called ones” and **ἁγίοις** “holy ones.” Most translations treat the first adjective as though it were verb “called saints.” However, they are better treated as two separate adjectives.

or rude treatment from other people, mostly unbelieving Jews who did not appreciate these Hebrews moving to faith in Christ.

“Showing tolerance” [NASB, ἀνέχω] for one another [ἀλλήλος]. Tolerance is to put up with something without lashing out. Paul was persecuted but tolerated it (1 Cor. 4:12). Because the Corinthians were tolerating false teachers, Paul obliged them to put up with him acting imprudently (2 Cor. 11:1). The Hebrew saints were encouraged to put up with a word of encouragement in the form of the Hebrew letter (Heb. 13:22). Paul warned Timothy of a coming time when people would no longer put up with healthy teaching that does not govern our practice (2 Tim. 4:3). God has put up with the unpunished sins of people prior to the cross, knowing that the future death of Christ would address those sins. Tolerance or the ability to put up with others is invaluable to promoting unity. Matters that cause divisions are not always doctrinal but sometimes practical issues. Paul is not encouraging the Ephesians to tolerate each other’s sins but their cold shoulders and harsh attitudes. Their tolerance is to be exercised in love desiring the best for one another. Tolerance and love work well together as love can be tripped up by becoming easily offended at the attitude of others.

4:3 Further, they are to be ones who are diligent or act with speed due to eagerness to guard the unity of the Spirit. The infinitive verb “to guard” or “keep” means to keep something or someone safe. To keep the unity does not only mean that we be at peace but that we also encourage or act to help others be at peace. We cannot make them be at peace. So Paul told the Romans, “as far as it is with you, be at peace with all” (Rom. 12:8). The unity or oneness is that formed by the Spirit. The Spirit placed each believer into Christ and in this way formed one body (1 Cor. 12:13). He not only placed each of us into this one body but He leads us (Gal. 5:18). He leads us to our life in Christ Jesus as He calls us upward in Christ (Rom. 8:2; Php. 3:14). For those who follow His lead, He produces fruit that includes love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness all traits that affect how we relate to other saints (Gal. 5:22-23). The “bond of peace” refers back to Paul as a prisoner. Under house-arrest, Paul is likely chained to a Roman soldier. The word “bond” refers to such a chain. “Bond” [*desmos*] has the prefixed preposition *sūn* that emphasizes a closeness. Peace is not just a chain, but a chain that links us to other believers. To move, it demands that we cooperate with one another. We can see ourselves as part of one body, one new man, one new temple, or as here, bound together with a chain of peace.

4:4 Paul begins to list a series of singular realities for us as believers. Where is might be easy to focus on differences, those are earthly. These are part of our salvation. There is **one body**. There are not two bodies such as a Jewish body and a Gentile body. There is only the body of Christ. There is **one Spirit**. God does not have multiple Spirits¹⁸ so that He might give the Jewish believers one Spirit and Gentiles a different One. We were called in **one hope of our calling**. We were called to God’s own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12). That kingdom of God is the sphere of salvation in which all members of the body of Christ (New Testament believers) share. Our calling is heavenly for we are called upward to who we are in Christ (Heb. 3:1; Php. 3:14). We are also called in one body (Col. 3:15). That one hope is that we can live out our salvation as members together of this one body.

4:5 We have **one Lord**. He is Lord over all believers in Christ regardless of ethnicity, social standing, or gender. We have **one faith**. We all believed the same message. Jewish Christians

¹⁸ The reference to seven Spirits in Revelation 4-5 likely refer to differing ministries of the Spirit among the churches.

and Gentiles Christians all believed the same gospel to be saved. Jewish Christians do not have a distinct gospel that is acceptable for them. Paul states that God declares the Jews righteous **out** [ek] of faith and the uncircumcision (Gentiles) **through** [dia] faith (Rom. 3:30). The Jews who were being placed into the body of Christ may have believed in Jesus as God and their anointed King. That is not what they must believe today. So they come out of that faith into the faith in Christ's death for sins, His burial, and His resurrection (cp 1 Cor. 15:1-5). The Gentiles who have not believed for they did not have a good news proclaimed to them, still need to come through faith. In the end, both groups share one common faith in Christ. We also have **one baptism**. If this refers to water baptism, this is incorrect because Christians have practiced a variety of "baptisms" and some even reject water baptism altogether. However, only one baptism, that enacted by the Spirit places all of us into one body in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Finally, we all have **one God even Father**. There is not a God of the Jews and another of the Gentiles for this but one true God (1 Thess. 1:9). Further, Jewish and Gentile believers share this one God as our one Father. He is the Father of all of us. He is over [epi] all things, through [through] all things, and in [en] all. This can be understood in one of two senses. It may mean that God is transcendent over [epi] all things (creation). He is also present in all places, even to the point that He is through [dia] all His creation. We popularly refer to this as omnipresence of God's immanence. Finally, the last phrase may refer to His personal presence in believers. Some Greek texts follow the last "in" with "you all." So, while He is present through all creation, He is only present with us in a personal way. The second alternative for understanding these three phrases is that Paul is reminding the Ephesians that God is working through all of them. He is over all these believers. None of them is truly in charge. God is. Second, He is through all these believers, meaning He is working through them all. If they disregard this, they can justify refusing the ministry of believers they deem less worthy. Finally, He is in all these believers. The Jews have no more of God in them than the Gentiles. I have held previously to the first interpretation. I am inclined to think that the second fits better the context in which Paul is promoting unity of believers.

4:7 Paul moves to another reason for unity in the body, namely each has a God-given ability to serve others. If we do not live properly with other believers, we will miss out on the their service to us. The ability to serve is not native ability, but God-given, specifically given as a thing of grace. This grace is given as a measure of the gift of the Christ. "The Christ" in this context includes believers in Christ who serve one another as members with gifts. The New Testament writers refer to gifts as *charismata* or products of grace, as *pneumatika* or things characterized by the Spirit, and here as *dōrea* simply "a gift" or thing given.

4:8 Paul paraphrases and alters Psalm 68:18 into a statement that describes a work of Christ on behalf of His body. The Hebrew text refers to the Son's ascension and leading an army of captives, presumably after having defeated them. David's readers would not likely have understood the identities of the captives. The Hebrew term *sābāh* [שְׁבַח] does refer to captives taken in battle (Isa. 14:2) but also refers to the captives to whom Christ would proclaim liberty (Isa. 61:1; cp Jer. 13:17). Many modern interpreters understand these captives to be the ranks of spirit beings designated "rulers and authorities" whom Jesus defeated by His death and resurrection (Col. 2:15). The early church fathers understood Paul to be speaking of the "underworld" and to captive believers. New Testament revelation explains that when Jesus ascended He took those believers who waited in hope in the paradise of Sheol-Hades and moved them along with paradise to the edge of the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:4). At death, Old Testament saints went to Sheol-Hades waiting for Christ to die, rise, and open the way into the heavens that was not yet open (Heb. 9:8). In the Hebrew text, Jesus took or received gifts from

men while Paul alters the text to state that He gave gifts. This was not written by the psalmist because it had to do with the Church, the body of Christ that did not then exist, nor had it been revealed. By quoting this Psalm with alterations, Paul is reminding the Jewish believers that they have something tied to a prophesied event that was not revealed in that Old Testament prophecy. Like his mention of mysteries, Paul pushes them to recognize something better that they have now.

4:9-10 Paul moves from the phrase “ascended” to indicate that Christ descended prior. Upon His physical death, Christ spent three days and nights in the heart of the earth (Mt. 12:40). He descended into Hades (OT Sheol) and made a proclamation to the spirits imprisoned there, spirits who were disobedient at the time of Noah (1 Pet. 3:19-20). Peter does not tell us the nature of the proclamation but we may assume it was one of victory. Having taught the Ephesians daily for two years, he did not have to tell them what he told the Colossians, that Christ disarmed spirit beings and made a public display by triumphing over them (Col. 2:15). In light of the Colossian text, the emphasis of spirits and worship of angels distinguished the supposedly superior believers to the lesser believers. When Christ ascended, He went far above all the heavens. Heavens are part of God’s creation. God exists beyond His creation. To go far beyond all the heavens emphasizes Christ’s deity

One purpose of ascending far above all the heavens was that Christ might fill the all things. The adjective “all” [πᾶς] occurs 52 times in Ephesians. Of these, seven times is occurs with the definite article. Of concern to us are the occurrences where “all” is not modifying something else such as “blessings” in 1:3, but seems to refer to something specific that the Ephesians would understand.

All and All things in Ephesians

1:10 The Christ will head up **the** all things.

1:11 God in-works **the** all things.

1:22 Christ is head over all things for the Church.

1:23 Christ is the one filling **the** all things by all *parts* (?) or *means* (?).

3:9 God created **the** all things.

4:6 God is the Father of all, over all, and through all, and in all.

4:10 Christ might fill **the** all things.

4:13 Until we **the all** arrive.

4:15 We might grow into Him **the** all things, Who is the head, Christ.

5:13 **The** all things being reprovved by the light are made visible.

6:21 Tychicus will make known all things to you.

In most of these “all” statements, especially where it is “the all” (though “the” is not usually translated), it appears the “all” refers to all the parts of the body of Christ. 1:10 seems to refer to all things in His creation. In 1:22, is Christ the head over all parts of the body for the Church or over all creation or over all the spirit beings? While Christ may be head over spirit beings, it makes more sense that the “all things” in 1:22 refers to all the members of the body as He fills all *the members* (?) by *all means or members* (?). All the members are equally filled by Christ. On one hand, He fills us by the work of the Spirit. But He also fills or supplies through all the members in all the members (Eph. 4:16). That “all things” refers to the all the members of the

body of Christ is further supported by the context of giving gifts to the body and the following statement that gave four gifts to help equip all the other members for their work of service (ministry).

4:11 Christ gave gifts to men. Paul now singles out the four gifts designed to equip the body. Some debate whether Paul means that Christ as given gifted men or given these four gifts. “The point is not that some men received the apostleship, others prophecy, etc., but that these men themselves constitute the gift of Christ to the whole *una Sancta*, yea, “to every single one of us” (v. 7).”¹⁹ The context speaks of gifts but those gifts are given to people. The noun forms apostle, prophet, evangelist, and shepherd-teachers are masculine where as at least “apostles” and “prophets” occur in a feminine form when referring to the gift or the office, *ἀποστόλος* compared to *ἀποστολή*. While it is true that Christ has given these people to the body, it is not the person of themselves but the person with the gift. It is important to remember that the recognized exercise of these gifts involve qualifications such a maturity and faithfulness. Paul gives a list of qualifications for overseers (pastors) in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. An individual with a gift may exercise that gift at any time but to be appointed by a local assembly for the use of that gift must demonstrate spiritual growth. Every member of the body of Christ is given to the body with a gift. Christ gave the following four gifts for the specific purpose of helping the other gifts.

The gifts of apostle and prophet no longer operate. They have ceased. Paul stated that prophecy as a gift would cease (1 Cor. 13:8ff). Paul has already told us that apostles and prophets served to lay the foundation for the Church which is Christ (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). They laid that foundation largely through God-given revelation. Both groups spoke. Paul, Peter, John, and James are designated “apostles” (Gal. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:1; Mt. 10:2). Prophets gave revelation from God. Their revelation could be oral or written. Luke and Jude as writers of New Testament books may have been prophets. Peter calls his readers to remember the words that the prophets and the command from the apostles of our Lord and Savior (2 Pet. 3:2). We rely on what they wrote to know what God has done for us and how He has designed for us to live.

Apostles have the gift of apostle or one sent for a task. They could do signs, miracles, and wonders to authenticate their work (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:43; 5:12). God gifted apostles to evangelize, teach, and ground new churches. They were like all the gifts rolled into one for the purpose of establishing churches when gifts were scarce. The original apostles were chosen by the Lord (Lk. 6:13). The apostles introduced the teaching²⁰ which the new group of believers practiced. The apostles are distinguished from the elders or those with the gift of shepherd-teacher (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:4). Paul was gifted as an apostle (Rom. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1). He was set apart as an apostle to the Gentiles by which he not only evangelized Gentiles but more importantly introduced Gentiles to God’s plans for living in Christ by His grace (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8; 1 Tim. 2:7). As previously stated, the apostles laid the foundation for living in Christ.

¹⁹ R.C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians to the Philippians*, (Columbus, OH., Lutheran Book Concern, 1937) p. 526.

²⁰ The Greek word for “teaching” in this text is *didacké* [διδαχή] which emphasized conduct. A. Naismith quotes from W. E. Vine that *didaskalia* emphasized objective truth while *didacké* emphasized subjective truth “and implies application of truth and principles to the heart and life by the act of teaching.” *The Faith: A Symposium*, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1952) p. 309.

Prophets are those who reveal truth. We often think of prophets as speaking about the future. However, a prophet can speak about truth that they are just beginning to reveal. They are the source of truth about the Christ (3:6). They are involved in laying the foundation for the Church, the foundation that is Christ (2:20-22). A prophet often revealed what would happen. So in the Old Testament, Ahab hated Micaiah because he prophesied accurately about Ahab's demise rather than assuring Ahab that he would be safe (1 Ki. 22:8). Aaron was God's prophet who spoke what God was going to do (Ex. 7:1). In our present time, two prophets encouraged and strengthened the believers with many words (Acts 15:27, 32). They apparently revealed the good God would accomplish by not binding Gentile believers under the Law. Prophets were used to help start the Church with new revelation from. Paul states that their job would cease with the coming of a complete thing, that is a complete prophecy (1 Cor. 13:8-10). When God had spoken through His prophets all that He chose to say to the Church, prophets would be unnecessary. So prophecy as a gift would end. There are not prophets today. Peter did not warn of false prophets for the Church but of false teachers because anyone claiming to be a prophet today is false (2 Pet. 2:1). We benefit from their revelation.

Evangelists are related to good news. The Greek evangelist [*euangelistēs*] is a noun related to the words gospel and good news which are both translations of the Greek *euangelion*. An evangelist is one who announces good news. When we think of evangelism we think of presenting to the unsaved the good news of Jesus Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection (1:13). However, the New Testament includes more than one good news. In 6:15 Paul references a good news of peace, a message explained in 2:15-16. In 6:19 he speaks of a good news that was a mystery and for which he needed boldness. The gospel of Christ's death and resurrection was revealed in the Old Testament and foretold by Christ. That gospel was no mystery. These examples of other gospels that are not contrary to the gospel for initial salvation should cause us to consider if the work of an evangelist is limited to announcing the gospel for initial salvation or may it also include the presentation of other messages designated good news. In 4:12, Paul states that these four gifts are given to equip other believers for a work of ministry. The evangelist may simply equip believers by helping them learn to articulate good news, a problem many believers have. They may also equip believers by presenting these other messages designated good news. Luke reveals that Philip, one chosen to serve in the Jerusalem church, traveled to Samaria to proclaim Christ to those who had not yet heard and believed (Acts 8:5,6, 12). The Spirit later directed Philip to go the road from Jerusalem to Gaza to explain Christ to a traveler returning to Ethiopia (8:26, 29ff). He was then caught by the Spirit to a city up the coast and evangelized in cities until he arrived in Caesarea (8:40). Later, Luke designates Philip "the evangelist" (21:8). Luke's account may limit the work of an evangelist chiefly to the unsaved. Either interpretation of the evangelist's task may be acceptable though chiefly to the unsaved seems more likely. They carry on the work of the apostles and prophets by presenting the good news to the lost as well as presenting other messages identified as good news to believers.

Shepherds (pastors) and teachers are listed together by Paul. The grammatical construction of this verse begins each group with a definite article.

τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας,

the on one hand apostles, the on the next prophets

τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους.

the on the next evangelists, the on the next shepherd and teachers

Note that in this situation, shepherds and teachers share one article. Second, these groups are joined by a $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \dots \delta\grave{\epsilon}$ construction “one on the one hand...on the other.” In the last case no $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$ occurs before $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ but rather the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$. The last two groups are set off together. This last situation has been called a Granville Sharp construction in which two nouns are joined with the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$ and share single definite article. This construction treats both nouns as referring to the same person (e.g. Tit. 2:13 **the God and our Savior Jesus Christ**). This is a genuine construction, but Mr. Sharp noted that it does not apply to plural nouns. However, while both nouns do not identify the same persons in the plural it shows that the group of persons share something in common in that context. So the Scribes and Pharisees are not the same group but in Matthew 5:20 they share the same inadequate righteousness and those who replied to Jesus were from this combined group (Mt. 12:38). So, in our text, the shepherds and teachers share something in common. I would suggest that may be a teacher without being a shepherd but one cannot shepherd without being a teacher. For this reason, Paul primarily refers to those who are also shepherds. Part of the role of the shepherd is to see that the sheep (Church) is fed God’s Word. However, a teacher may not be leading a group by His example which is also part of the shepherd’s task. While apostles and evangelists gave revelation and taught the churches, shepherds and teachers teach what the apostles and prophets left behind in God’s inscripturated word. They not only teach but attend to the flock’s need of guidance in the exercise of that truth. They do this in part by being an example of how to live that teaching (1 Pet. 5:1-3). The shepherds also tend to the flock by watching for spiritual dangers such as false teachers and selfish believers who want the loyal attention of others when they teach and do not wish to share that attention with other teachers (Acts 20:28-30). These groups carry on the instruction in God’s Word with the Shepherds focusing on the practice or conduct of the people with that truth.

Shepherd-teachers are mentioned together in two other contexts. In Acts 20:17, Paul called for the elders of the Ephesian Church. He refers to them as overseers (bishops)²¹ with the responsibility to shepherd (as a verb) the Church of God (20:28). The noun elder does not describe physical age but spiritual maturity. One does not place a novice in a place to lead God’s people (1 Tim. 3:6). As overseers they shepherd God’s flock by leading them to the food of God’s Word, hence they must be a competent teacher (Acts 20:28). They also watch for the spiritual dangers from among the believers as well as unbelievers outside, this latter group Paul designates “savage wolves” (20:29-30). Such people do not care for the wellbeing of God’s people but wish only to take followers for themselves. Peter charged the elders (the mature leaders) to shepherd (as a verb) God’s flock (1 Pet. 5:1). In addition to leading God’s people to the food of His Word as a teacher, they are called to oversee the flock. Peter says they must have pure motives and not do their task because they have been pressured to do so nor simply to acquire gain (5:2). They do not oversee God’s people as lords or masters, a charge too often forgotten by many leaders. Rather they are to lead God’s people by example (5:3). A shepherd does not drive sheep but leads them. A shepherd not only teaches God’s Word to His people but demonstrates that truth by how he lives. Peter encourages them that Chief Shepherd rewards those who properly exercise their gift for the benefit of God’s people (5:4). The reference to Christ as the Chief Shepherd reminds the elders that they are not ultimately in charge but the Lord is. They must answer to Him (cp Heb. 13:17).

4:12 While all the gifts are vital to the health of the body, these four gifts play a special role in the growth of the body. Christ gave (4:11) these four gifts for the adjustment of the saints so

²¹ “Bishop” is a poor pronunciation of the Greek *episkopos* [ἐπίσκοπος].

they can better serve others. The noun adjustment [*katartismos*] indicates “a perfectly adjusted adaptation”²² or “a strengthening, a making fit.”²³ The word occurs only here but the related form *katartisis* occurs in 2 Corinthians 13:9 where Paul expresses his prayer for the believers to “be made complete.” The verb form *katartizō* is used for the **mending** of nets (Mt. 4:21), of a student being **trained** to be like his teacher (Lk. 6:40), of the **restoring** of a believer caught in a trespass (Gal. 6:1), and of the **completing** or **adjusting** of instruction that believers lack (1 Th. 3:10). Each example demonstrates something that is not as it should be: a torn net, an immature student, a trapped believer, incomplete instruction. The verb is the act of doing what is necessary to mend the problem. So these four gifts are given so others may be adjusted for their God-given task. They need the revelation from the apostles and prophets. They need the charge of those who point them to God’s good news. They need the instruction and example of shepherd-teachers. If people avail themselves of those who exercise these gifts, they will be better equipped or adjusted to serve.

Christ gave these gifts to adjust the saints. All believers are saints, set apart in Christ (see notes on 1:1). All believers have a work of service. “Work” has no definite article. Translating this “the work of ministry” [NASB] or “the work of the ministry” [AV] may give the impression that there is one work. However, the anarthrous “work” and “ministry” helps us recognize that each believer has received a gift of God’s grace. The work or ministry of mercy may not be the same as the work of giving or exhortation.

Believers yielding their gifts need adjusting. The person with the gift of giving may need to learn that God loves a cheerful giver and desires they give as they purpose in their heart but not to give from grief or compulsion (2 Cor. 9:7). Many believer are unaware of this. One with the gift of mercy also needs to show mercy in a manner that cheers those who are suffering and can point the one who is suffering to God’s promises (Rom. 12:8). They need to learn how to function as part of the body of Christ so they can be used in the lives of other believers and not use their gift for self-gratification (1 Cor. 12:7).

The following context demonstrates the problem of error and those who teach error on believers.

“Ministry” has become a more impressive word than service but *diakonia* is common service, *Diakonia* refers to common service that may be rendered to many people as opposed to one master. Believers using their gifts serve many other believers not just one individual. They serve to build up the body of Christ. They seek the body’s benefit and growth.

4:13 The exercise and lasting effect of such gifts goes on until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith. These gifts cannot function until we all arrive because the gifts of apostle and prophet ceased with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures. Those two gifts laid the foundation for the Church. Once that foundation was completed, the purpose of those gifts ended. So Paul wrote that prophecy would be rendered unnecessary by something that is “perfect” or “complete” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). “Done away” in the NASB is supposed to translate a passive Greek verb meaning “to make idle or inactive.”²⁴ When God had prophets write all the

²² Mounce, op cit, entry G2938.

²³ Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 238.

²⁴ Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 238

prophecy we need for today-this is not to say there is not more prophecy in the future-the body of Christ no longer needed that gift. While these two gifts have ceased operating, we still benefit from them through the written word the Spirit led them to record.

“The Faith” is not all Christian doctrine. Faith rests on God’s promises to us. The Faith is the collection of those promises that make up our spiritual or Christian life. Not all Christians know God’s promises and they do not all agree as to what promises are for us. Many Christians misappropriate promises from parts of Scripture that were not addressed to our conduct. God has made many promises to people at other times before the Church and for those who will live after the Church is no longer on earth. The oneness of the faith is the recognition of His promises for us and how He intends those promises to affect our daily living.

The work and effects of the gifts also continue until we arrive at the full experiential knowledge of the Son of God. *Epignosis* is not just head knowledge but knowledge in practice and conduct. What we learn about the Son through teaching, we can then recognize in our practice as God works out that teaching in our lives. We have eternal life because we have the Son dwelling in us (1 Jh. 5:11-12). Eternal life involves experientially knowing the Father and Jesus (Jh. 17:3). Paul wrote Timothy to “lay hold of eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12). This is a charge to make use of that life. When we use eternal life, we experientially get to know the Son of God. We are not just learning facts about Him, but we are getting to know Him in our conduct. Eternal life is often lived out as acts of love, so as believers use love for one another, believers gain experiential knowledge of the Son and continuing to do so moves experiential knowledge to a fuller experiential knowledge.

“To a mature man” combined with the phrase “to the stature of the fulness of the Christ” view the Christ as a full-grown man. This is a reference of the Christ to Jesus Christ as the head of the body united with His body. When all believers are in the body, the Christ will be full-grown. We presume this will happen near the time of the Rapture of the Church. The Church, the body of Christ will be complete and her time on earth will shortly end.

4:14 The NASB has “as a result,” which may give the impression that Paul is looking at a distant result. The Greek *hina* clause certainly can indicate result but looks at God’s goal for these gifts. These four gifts are intended to make believers stable so they are not like babbling children who are being tossed about and blown by every wind of doctrine. The noun *napios* for children refers to those who are not considered old enough to articulate clearly and so cannot be trusted to represent the family. In the New Testament, the word only describes people negatively as those who are not yet sufficiently mature. Paul described the Corinthians in this way, indicating that they should have been mature but were acting as babbling children.

Such immature, babbling children are carried away by any misuse of Scripture. “Teaching” or “doctrine” is *didaskalia* a word that indicated teaching that is not intended for our conduct distinct from *didakē* that teaches what one is to do. For instance, much of the Old Testament does not reveal how God wishes for New Testament Christians to live. Not even the gospels reveal much of this. God reveals His plans for our lifestyle in the epistles written to the Churches. We do not practice the *didaskalia* or teaching about God but what impact of what we say about God should be reflected in our conduct (Tit. 2:10). Teaching that does not govern our practice can still encourage us (Rom. 15:4) and we should pay attention to it for it has value (1 Tim. 4:13, 16). All Scripture is profitable but it is not all profitable for the same thing (2 Tim. 3:16). Some of it is profitable for *didaskalia* or teaching while others parts are profitable for teaching us righteous living. Paul certainly distinguished between these two categories. Paul

was concerned that people use *didaskalia* properly or in a healthy manner (1 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:9; 2:1). It is healthy by not applying as the standard for our lifestyle. Paul warns of a time when people would not want healthy *didaskalia* but would want to apply the Old Testament to themselves (2 Tim. 4:3; cp 1 Tim. 6:3). So the Law can get the attention of someone who is living in sin but it cannot tell them how to correct the problem or how to live righteously (1 Tim. 1:8-10). One of the qualifications for a bishop (pastor) is that he holds foremost to the words measured by *didakē* or teaching that governs our conduct (Tit. 1:9). By doing this, he can use healthy *didaskalia* to correct those people who oppose, who in that context were teaching the law for Christian living. The Titus 1:9 passage is crucial because it uses both terms and how they relate. In this context, people are misleading the Ephesian believers by misusing Scriptures not intended for them. It blows them about so they are unsteady in their Christian life.

These men use cunning and craftiness with methods of error. “Cunning” [*kubeia*] referred originally to playing dice and then to “trickery and sleight” in the playing of this game.²⁵ Of “Craftiness” [*panourgia*] Cremer says it originally meant “capable of anything” and “wily animals” and could mean skill but when used of humans “their use of it has evil results.”²⁶ Therefore, their use of Old Testament Scriptures, or teaching that does not govern one’s conduct is a wily trick to mislead believers. It can also be viewed as people using anything available to them to mislead, even using Scripture that does not tell us how to live. In the larger context, by focusing on the Old Testament and Gospels, people can mislead believers to make unwarranted distinctions between believers of Jewish or Gentile descent. Those distinctions rested on Old Testament revelation. Even Jesus told His disciples to not go to the Gentile because He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:6; 15:24). Much of the matters of conduct addressed in the Old Testament was intended to make Israel different from the Gentiles. Continuing to focus on behavior that made them different would continue to drive a wedge between believers from these two backgrounds. To avoid being misled by these misappropriated Scriptures or doctrines, believers need to pay careful attention to the instruction of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors even teachers.

4:15 Rather than following the errors taught by false teachers, they should grow into Him. Our English Bibles often start this verse with some translation as “speaking the truth in love.” This translates a present participle “truthing.” “Speaking” is an interpretation of this participle and may indeed be part of the intended meaning, but Paul could just as easily used one of several speaking words. By using a participle that simply means “truthing” Paul expands the intended meaning to perhaps include conduct. Paul addressed conduct in 4:13 with *epignosis*. As opposed to the methods of error and misappropriating Scriptures to believers today, which is a form of lying, they should truth in love. To be clear, this means to speak truth and live truth. The need to live truth with one another. Only by living truth can they grow into Christ the Head. Believers do not need to grow independent of Christ but into Him. He is the Head He is the source of what all the parts need (4:16).

4:16 All the parts of the body need each other. The body grows being harmoniously united and knit together. This happens as the members of the body see all the members and the Head in truth and then live that truth out together. In this way, the supply that comes from Christ the head is transmitted through each member to the other members. This idea is important to

²⁵ W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, [McLean, VA: Macdonald Publishing, nd] p. 1063.

²⁶ Cremer, op cit. p. 770.

get straight. We should not think that a member can get what it needs directly from Christ in this matter. Christ supplies to another member to then serve or supply to the next. If a believer does not wish to recognize the New Testament truth of all these members united regardless of background, that member will likely not welcome the supply from certain members. Truthing requires that we relate to all the members as God's sees us. The lie is when we think that we don't need others, or that we don't need certain others, perhaps because of their racial background. Truthing is not our warped perspective but God's proper perspective. With that attitude, we can then receive from them what Christ determines to supply to us. The result is that the body grows and it builds itself up in love. We are truthing in love and we build up the body in love. We genuinely care for one another and desire the best for the whole body. We then act in truth to that end. Love is our motivation.

4:17 In light of how God has planned for the body to function and to work together, Paul calls or witnesses in/by *the* Lord for the believers to no longer walk like the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds. He says [*legō*] and testifies [*marutreoō*]. Hoehner rightly states that Paul is calling them to action as he is in the Lord [Hoehner: 582]. I would add that he means they too should walk in the Lord and not as the Gentiles. Romans 8:4-5 explains that walking as a metaphor for how one lives involves how or one what one frames or sets his or her mind. The Gentiles live their lives in the empty results [*matiaotēti*] of their mind. Three Greek adjectives express vanity or emptiness in the New Testament: *eikē* is empty of goal or object, *kenos* is empty of content, *mataios* is empty of result. No matter how the Gentiles may plan, the outcome of their efforts is nothing of substance as regards God's plans.

4:18 The Gentiles do not arrive at proper results due to several factors and choices on their part. Three of these are expressed in the participles darkened, alienated, and being passed feeling. First, when they think the mental light is off. *Dianoia* [*dia-* through and *nous*-mind] are the thoughts or what passes through the mind. This does not mean that Gentiles do not think or draw any correct conclusions regarding others matters. Rather, Paul is concerned with mental activity that considers God, God's purposes, and one's behavior in light of each. So, Gentiles cannot think properly about God or their own life-choices. By contrast, believers have Christ's kind of mind and have been renewed in the mind (1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2). Second, unbelievers are alienated from God's life. Apart from faith in Christ, they do not have eternal life (Jh. 3:17-18; 1 Jh. 5:11-12). Without eternal life they have no spiritual energy to even accomplish anything worthy if their minds could process God's truth. In 1:11-12, the Jewish believers viewed the Gentiles as alienated from Israel's politics. Believers have eternal life and are called to lay hold of it (1 Tim. 6:12). Their state of alienation is due to the hardness of their heart. They don't care. They do not wish to change, or to be saved, or to know God. Third, they are passed feeling. What goes with their hard heart, can also be true of this state. This word is from *apo* - away, and *algeō* - to be pained (*algos*-pain). Perhaps at one time they felt guilt or pain over their responses and choices but they do no longer. Their conscience has been seared with a hot iron by refusing to listen to it (1 Tim. 4:2) or they have acted in a manner for so long that their conscience is now defiled (Tit. 1:15). So, their minds cannot draw a proper conclusion because nothing sheds light on their thinking and this because they are cut off from God's life and they have no experience with God. We would think this would bother them, but they are hard in their heart making no positive choice toward God and they do not care.

The result of such spiritual alienation and hardness is to treat others the objects of their passions (4:19). They do not just experience some interest in these unrighteous activities but have given themselves over [*paradidomi* - same word for betrayal or to hand over to] to lewdness. *Aselgeia* describes sexual activity that is paraded without shame before others.

Marital bliss is blessed by God but is not meant to be done in a public setting. These people then work uncleanness in that context. Uncleanness is the attitude that sullies all thinking and activity including sex. Sex in marriage is appropriate but to consider others as the objects of our desire is unclean. Further, they do this in all covetousness or greed. Rather than being content with what God has for an individual either being single or faithful in marriage, these people want more. They look at others as a means to gratify their sexual cravings and having had one, greed drives them to want another and another... This kind of activity is considered “love” in some sense within the world. It is not the love that builds up other believers in the body of Christ (4:16).

Living one’s life like the unsaved does not promote the unity in the body of Christ that God intends and desires. The unsaved mind in its darkened state views others as objects to fulfill one’s sexual cravings. It does not look at others with a genuine love and care for their wellbeing apart from one’s personal interest. Further more, living with such an attitude, one is never satisfied. This is true in so many aspects of life. It is why leaders desire to conquer more land, rule more people. It is why businesses always wish to expand and drive out competition. It is why people are driven to be better than others, more, and more, and more. None of this has anything to do with God’s design. God does not wish for us to be lazy but neither are we to be driven by that which drives the unsaved.

4:20 You have not learned the Christ in this way. The Christ is Jesus Christ as the head sharing His identity with all believers in the body. The Christ does not treat each other as the rest of the Gentiles do. The Christ looks out for each other. It does not look at others as objects to fulfill individual cravings. It considers what is best for others not what one wants from others. Learning the Christ is basic Christianity. Paul first taught believers who God says we are in Christ and this is foundational to all else. We can only abide in Christ if we know who we are in Christ. Christ abides in us as we abide in Him (Jh. 15:4).

4:21 Paul assumes that if these believers have learned the Christ, they have heard Him and been taught by Him. When? The Ephesians were believers in Asia Minor (Turkey) and not from Israel. None were likely present in Galilee or Judea when Jesus walked the earth. How did they hear Him and how were they taught by Him? They heard the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers. As these men communicated God’s truth accurately, they were hearing what Jesus has to say to us. The oral teaching and the written, inscripturated revelation we call the epistles (letters) were and are Jesus’ teaching to His Church. Some teachers understand this to be “heard about Christ” and were “taught in Him.”²⁷ However, having just mentioned the foundational gifts that equip others, as well as lay the foundation that is Christ, it seems fitting to take this of hearing Jesus through these teachers. Jesus revealed some basic truths for our lives in John 13-17. However, He also stated that He had many things to say to them that they were not yet able to bear at that time (Jh. 16:12). These things He has spoken through the Spirit through these individuals. For us His words to us are recorded in the Scriptures, specifically the letters to the churches and to church believers. Jesus knew that we would believe through their word (Jh. 17:20). He began to speak about our great salvation in the upper room but He began to speak it for our benefit by [*hupo*] those who heard Him and for whom the Spirit brought confirmation by extraordinary works (Heb. 2:3-4). Jesus’ instruction that with the coming of the Spirit we would be in Christ and He in us (Jh. 14:20), we have a foundation for Christian life in Christ Himself.

²⁷ See Hoehner, op cit.. pp. 594-595.

They also knew truth to be in Jesus. Jesus was never deceived as He ministered. He knew all men and knew what was in all men (cp Jh. 2:25). John's account of Jesus meeting with Nicodemus in John three illustrates this well. Jesus addresses the real questions that Nicodemus has but appears afraid to ask. When men reason, Jesus knew what they were reasoning in their hearts, not what they said with their mouths (Mt. 9:4; 12:25; Lk. 9:47). As a result He spoke truth. Being God in flesh, He did not call on His own divine power but often relied upon the Spirit (cp Isa. 61:1) and did the Father's will (Jh. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 17:4). In so doing, He demonstrated that we too are to accomplish God's purposes by relying on Him and doing His will not our own. This would include seeing other believers as God does without our earthly prejudices and so we serve other believers regardless of their background and we accept their service to us. This is God's present plan. To operate otherwise would not be operating in truth.

4:22 They were taught to put off, be renewed, and put on each an infinitive expressing purpose in this context. The infinitives "put off" [*apotithēmi*] and "put on" [*enduō*] are both aorists connected to the verbs "you learned" and "were taught." The aorist emphasizes a "once for all" attitude when doing each. One does not put off thinking that he is doing so for a period of time but plans to put it back on later. The same is true of "put on." The believer should see himself as divested of his old standing and clothed in new. First, we are to put off the old man. The old man is not our sin nature as some might suggest. Some understand "old man" in Romans 6:6 to mean the old nature or sin nature. The problem with this is that the old man died and the very issue in Romans 5-8 is that the sin nature is alive. We are the ones who died to it. Therefore, the old man is who we were before salvation, who we were enslaved to our sin nature. That one has been put off. We have died to the sin nature (Rom. 6:11) and are no longer enslaved to it. It is no longer our master (Rom. 6:14).

The old man was measured by the standard of our former conduct. The old man was corrupt, decaying, breaking down. That corruption can be measured by our lusts or cravings that are deceitful [*apatēs*]. This type of deceit gives a false impression about something, perhaps a benefit, the outcome, or cost to us. No craving from our flesh will result in anything good, will not provide the satisfaction we seek, and will cost us more than we can imagine. These deceitful cravings characterized our conduct prior to salvation. For this reason, we were taught to put off what we were.

4:23 We were also taught to be renewed by the spirit of our mind. Regeneration or the birth from above was affected by the Spirit (Jh. 3:3-6). Regeneration has caused a change in our spirit. Our human spirit is part of our mind [*noos*]. That change has renewed our mind. Regeneration is not only a new birth but a renewal [*anakainōsis*] (Tit. 3:5). That renewal has affected our minds as Paul indicates to the Ephesians but also see Romans 12:2. Here in Ephesians "renewed" is an infinitive of *ananeoō* where the base is *noeō* not *kainoō*. The former means new as fresh while the latter is new in kind such as a new variety. Because we have already been renewed, *ananeoō* emphasizes a fresh experience from our renewed spirit. *Tō pneumati* is a dative, locative, or instrumental form of the Greek *pneuma*-spirit. Most translations handle the word as an locative "in the spirit..." This in turn is understood to mean "renew your mind." Teachers then suggest many means by which they think we are to renew our minds. However, since the our spirit has been regenerated, it is better to understand the form as an instrumental "by the spirit..." We are to use the regenerated spirit part of our mind to be renewed. As already stated, God has regenerated us and now we are called to allow that regeneration to change how we function. This ideas stands in contrast to the unsaved who have not been regenerated and so are cut off from God in the realm of their spirit. They cannot

do what Paul calls us to do. We can. The idea is that of allowing the results of regeneration to be manifest in our conduct. It requires the use of our minds relating to God's truth regarding Christ, our identity in Christ, and the unity of all believers in the body.

4:24 We are also to put on [middle infinitive] the new man. "New" is the same adjective *kainos* that Paul used in 2:15, where he also wrote about the "one new man." The translation or interpretation of "man" as "self" (e.g. NASB) is wrong. In 2:15, the new man is all believers who make up the body of Christ created in Christ to form this single entity. We're comfortable seeing "the body of Christ" language as corporate but that is what also Paul means with this terminology. Paul is not calling us to put on the new self, the new me, but the new us. It is putting on as though we were dressing ourselves our new identity as part of this new man, this new creation. Just as in 2:10 and 2:15, the verb "create" refers to what Christ has made all of us together "in Christ Jesus" or "in Himself." This new man was created in righteousness. All those in Christ have been made God's kind of righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30). Only as believers in the new creation exercise proper love towards one another do we exercise proper righteousness of love (cf. 1 Jh. 3:10). The new man was also created in a condition fitting for our God-given service [Trench]. This noun *hosiotēs* refers to the great care of doing that duty, of fulfilling God's demands upon us [Rienecker], or a character fit for the temple. This last definition fits the idea of the body of Christ as the temple in which God dwells (2:21). The new man has been created fit not only for the temple but to be God's temple.

The Greek case form of "the Truth," may be a genitive of description or ablative of means. If it is a genitive of description, then this holiness and fitting character are characterized by the Truth, by this absolute recognition of our need to depend upon God. If it is an ablative (or genitive) of means, then the Truth is the means by which these two qualities exist in the new man and points to the means by which they are both worked out in the practice of individual believers who make up the whole. It is most likely tied to both "righteousness" and "fitting character." The Truth is the teaching that God alone is God and that God alone can accomplish His purpose. The creature can but cooperate with God's purpose. God desires us to have freedom from our sinful nature. Jesus promised that His disciples would know the Truth so they might experience this freedom (Jh. 8:32). Being freed from the sin nature in experience, the believer can then experience God doing His work through us (Jh. 3:21). This righteousness and fittingness are both characterized by the Truth. The new man is counted righteous and fit by God. Those who make up the new man can only live out righteousness and this fitting character by means of the Truth, by means of absolute dependence upon God. It is not by mere acknowledgement of our need of God but of depending upon God by using the means God has provided. We are to be at ease in Christ and He is at ease in us (Jh. 15:4). Apart from Him, apart from being at ease in who we are in Christ and He then living out His life through us, we can do nothing (Jh. 15:5).

4:25 In addition to putting off the conduct that was characteristic of who we all were in Adam, Paul also calls us to put off the Lie and to speak truth with our neighbor. "Falsehood" or "lying" in many translations misses the nature or significance of the Lie. The Lie is the opposite of the Truth. It may deny all or one of several aspects of this truth. It may deny the one true God. It may deny that we can do nothing of value apart from Him. It nearly always suggests that God can be replaced and that we can do great things by our own efforts, by fierce self-discipline. Lucifer first spoke the Lie when he claimed that he would be like the Most High. He told it to Eve, telling her that by eating her eyes would be opened to know for herself good and disaster rather than depending on God for that information. In the context of this letter, the Lie can include any thought or word that suggests that one believer or group of believers

does/do not need another believer or believers. The idea that one believer is superior to another believer and is therefore above serving him or being taught or encouraged by him is a form of the Lie. Since God has determined to supply to each believer through other believers and to bring about the growth of the body through His work with individual believers, to deny this, even with one other believer, is to hold to the Lie. We are to put this off.

We are to speak truth with our neighbor. Truth is not specific here as it was in 5:24. This is the general quality of speaking what is truth with other believers. It is acknowledge our need of them and their need of us. It is anything that communicates God's design for our cooperative work and growth with one another. Neighbor in a New Testament context is another believer. The reason, the "because" [*hoti*], is that we are members of one another. This carries on the image of the body and its members. If we are indeed members of one another, why would we not speak honestly with each other? Why would we wish to think for ourselves or openly towards others that we don't need each other? In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds the Corinthians that one member of the body cannot say to another member of the body that they do not need the other member (1 Cor. 12:21). In the Corinthian text, the reasoning is that one gift is superior to another gift. In Ephesians, the reasoning is that one's racial background is superior to another's.

4:26 "You be angry and do not sin." The verb is an imperative. Does this mean that Paul is telling the believers to get angry? Not a few have used this statement as a basis for "righteous indignation." If that is his meaning, then what are we to make of his imperative in 4:31 to let all anger (wrath in some translations) be put away. The verb *be angry* and the noun *anger* are part of the same word family *orgidzō* and *orgē*. If Paul is charging the Ephesians to become angry, he appears to be contradicting himself. James also reminds us that man's anger [*orgē*] does not produce God's righteousness (Jas. 1:20). This is contrary to the notion of righteous indignation. God can have righteous anger, and indeed both *orgē* and *thumos* are used of God's anger. But God does not have a twisted, fallen nature as we do. Our anger quickly devolves into unrighteousness. Further, no idea of anger is found in the fruit from the Spirit. Many argue to legitimize this anger, claiming it is proper to be angry with a believer engaged in idolatry, or with one believer mistreating another. Some, however, argue to understand this as a permissive imperative "go ahead and be angry" or conditional imperative "if you happen to be angry."²⁸ Hoehner understands Paul to say, "They can be angry but not act out their anger sinfully."²⁹ The phrase is supposed to be a quotation from the Greek translation of Psalm 4:4, where the Hebrew imperative verb *ragaz* is translated by our Greek verb. However, the Hebrew verb does not particularly mean "be angry" but to tremble.³⁰ The NET Bible translates the verb "Tremble with fear." While Paul may have referenced the Psalm, he may also be making a point about the inappropriate nature of anger between believers that is not a trembling but a presumption regarding what is appropriate.

It seems best to understand that Paul is allowing the Ephesians anger but charging them to not sin, which is another imperative verb. This makes it clear that anger is not itself sin but can lead to sin. With the mistreatment between believers, with the poor attitudes towards

²⁸ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians, a Study Guide Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) p. 103.

²⁹ Hoehner, *op cit*, p. 620.

³⁰ Alexander Harkway, *A Student's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary to the Old Testament*, (N.Y.: Hebrew Publishing, 1914) p. 656f.

different groups, it would be easy to respond to each other in anger. Paul calls them to not sin in that state of mind. He then calls them to not let the sun go down (another imperative verb) on something provoking them to anger. The noun provocation or sometimes imply anger [*parorgismos*] is built on the noun *orgē*. The provocation may be the claims that the Gentiles remain inferior to the Jews even in the body of Christ. Such provocations could easily lead one to sin in response. For this reason, in 4:31, Paul will call them to let go of anger altogether.

4:27 In this same vein of thinking, Paul charges them not to give (imperative) a place to the devil. All unrighteousness and sin is not due to temptations from Satan. Anger is a work of the flesh not Satan. However, Satan may take advantage of our anger as a basis for acting in doubt or disappointment (Job 1 & 2; Rom. 14:22-23), for lying (Acts 5:4-6), for bitterness (, for pride (1 Tim. 3:6), for stealing (Eph. 4:27-28), for acting without God (Jas. 4:13-17), for being ungracious (2 Cor. 2:10-11), for being lazy in God's work (1 Tim. 5:11-15), for justifying hurtful words (Eph. 4:29). Satan and his forces of spiritual wickedness in the world oppose God. He stands before God accusing the brothers (Rev. 12:10). By taking advantage of our circumstances, seeing that we are hurt by the treatment from others and that we allow anger to remain and fester within, Satan tempts us, suggesting alternatives to God's design.

4:28 One such alternative with which Satan tempts us is to steal. At the heart of Satan's motivation is pride and lying. Both stand behind the temptation to steal, pride in thinking we deserve something that belongs to another and lying about the same. When other believers mistreat us, it can be easy to justify stealing from them. We can think that we are entitled to their property because their negative actions towards us do not justify their possession of that property.

Rather than stealing, Paul calls believers to labor [*kopiaō* imperative] working with their hands for the good thing that they can give to the one who has a need. Satan thinks of himself alone. He does not encourage us to think of others either. Christ is the one who laid down His life sacrificially for others. We should recognize that others have a need and look for a means to meet that need. We do not do so by stealing but by working hard. Paul does not call us to work hard to just take care of ourselves but to provide for others. Again, the idea of unity and others and other's needs rings loud in this letter.

4:29 Paul calls believers to stop any rotten words from going out of their mouth. "Rotten" ["foul" CSB, "corrupting" ESV, NKJV, "unwholesome" NASB, NET, NIV] translates the Greek adjective *sapros* that describes something as "decayed, rotten."³¹ Jesus used it of a rotten tree producing rotten fruit to describe rotten teachers (Mt. 7:17-18). Therefore, Paul is warning against language that may have a good appearance but is rotten in its content or intent. We can hurt people's feelings by words that others may not perceive as hurtful. Perhaps we take a truth and use it to beat a believer, that would be a rotten word. Perhaps we misuse a truth not intended for us, perhaps one that distinguished Jews and Gentiles and apply it to believers.

Rather than corrupt words, we should seek to speak good words that edify the need. The Spirit can help us recognize the needs of other believers. Our words should help them with those needs. Our words should reflect truth that aids them in their need. Our words should help them grow through their needs rather than their needs overwhelming them. Our words should give grace to those who hear. Our words give grace by pointing them to God's grace and the benefits of His grace. Our words should reflect the effect of God's grace in our lives. In

³¹ Gingrich and Danker, op cit. p. 179.

verse 32, Paul asks us to show compassion and kindness to one another while we are also extending grace to ourselves.

4:30 Paul charges believers to not or stop grieving [imperative verb] the Spirit. In 4:3-4 we learn that the Spirit is producing unity of believers. Acting with disregard to believers, not submitting to the use of their spiritual gift, speaking the lie that we do not need them, stealing, and other attitudes and actions about which Paul has warned the Ephesians grieves the Spirit. By acting against His purpose, we cause Him grief. God is the epitome of goodness (sense of wellbeing) and happiness (1 Tim. 1:11; 6:15), therefore, grief is Paul's way of communicating to us the effect of our actions on the Spirit's work. He is the Spirit "of God" where "of God" may be a genitive of description "the Spirit who is God" or an ablative of source "the Spirit sent from God." I'm inclined to think that the first is best, as the Spirit is God and therefore, our actions are contrary to the divine nature and purpose for the body.

The Spirit is the one who seals us until the day of complete redemption. As in 1:14, the sealing of the Spirit is "in Christ." The Spirit places us into Christ and then like a lid on a jar, He seals us in Him. He guarantees that Christ will get His complete inheritance that consists of the whole body of Christ, and guarantees that we will get our complete salvation. This statement says much about eternal security. Paul does not warn them to stop grieving the Spirit unless He should leave us. Rather stop leaving the Spirit who guarantees that we reach the day when we are completely redeemed [*apolutrōsis*]. This noun refers to the freedom that results from a ransoming redemption.

4:31 While in verse 26 we may have thought that Paul was encouraging anger, the present verse clears away such a notion. Paul calls the Ephesians to let be put away [aorist passive imperative] all bitterness, anger, fury, outcrying, and blasphemy. Bitterness is a poisonous, hurt attitude that infects everything we do and can spread to others. Peter warned Simon of the gall of bitterness (Acts 8:23). Gall referred bitter tasting bile, as well as other material that made water taste bad. Simon was hurt and jealous that he was no longer receiving the attention he once did and Peter identified this as bitterness. The Hebrew believers are warned away from bitterness (Heb. 12:15). That bitterness results from lacking grace, or not availing one's self of God's grace. James warned believers against cursing other believers and spoke of it as bitter water (Jas. 3:10-11). Bitter water was either poisonous or would make one ill. So bitterness against some in the church based upon their racial-religious background would poison that individual and perhaps spread to others in the assembly. Anger is the inner heat [*thumos*] the anger that has not yet erupted into words or actions. Paul lists it among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). The people in the synagogue of Nazareth were filled with anger and acted upon it by throwing Jesus out of the synagogue and attempted to throw Him off a cliff (Lk. 4:28-27). The people of Ephesus were moved to this inner anger and shouted about the greatness of their false god for two hours (Acts 19:28). The third word "fury" or "wrath" [*orgé*] refers most often to displays of fury. It refers to God's actions from fury. So people recognize the judgments in Revelation 6 as evidence that the fury of the Lamb and God has arrived (Rev. 6:16-17). The king was furious and sent his soldiers to destroy those who treated harshly and killed his slaves (Mt. 22:6-7). God's fury, not just an inner burning but actions, comes on people because of stubbornly continuing to do acts that are contrary to God's righteousness (Eph. 5:3-6). Believers are not avenge themselves-that would be an action-but are to leave a place for God's fury to act against those who have wronged them (Rev. 12:19). This word "fury" is the base of the verb translated "be angry" in 26 [*orgizō*]. Often *thumos* and *orgé* occur together, as an inner anger boils up to an outward burst of fury, so that one comes to characterize the

other, so God's anger is expressed in severe judgment of fury against Babylon (Rev. 16:19; 19:15).

Bitterness, anger, and fury often give rise to outcries and blasphemy. Though the Greek *kraugé* can simply be a cry for help, or a cry to announce an approaching bridegroom, in the present context it appears to be a harsh and violent cry. With it is the word *blasphemy*, which is an English pronunciation of the Greek word. The Greek word meant to defame, to make a false statement about someone or something. So claiming that Jesus cast out demons by the prince of demons was blasphemy for they were attributing a work by the Spirit of God to a created rebellious spirit (Mt. 12:24, 31). This claim defamed the Spirit. The Jewish leadership considered Jesus' claim to be the Christ the Son of God, meaning that He is God, to be blasphemy (Mt. 26:63-65). They considered that a false claim that defamed God. The leaders also identified Jesus' statement that He could forgive sins to be blasphemy (Lk. 5:20-21). They did not consider Jesus to be God and knew that only God can forgive sins.

Finally, Paul calls believers to put away all evil. The adjective *kakos*, often translated "evil" or "wicked" refers to that which is bad as in bad fruit. So the rich man received good things that made for a sense of wellbeing while Lazarus received bad (*kakos*) eating crumbs from the rich man's table and having dogs lick his wounds (Lk. 16:25, 21). When the jailer saw the prison doors open, he was going to harm himself or "do evil to himself." (Acts 16:28). Therefore, this evil is anything that is not as it should be. Any attitude or action that does not align with God's design and plan for the body of Christ is evil and believers should put it away.

4:32 Paul calls the Ephesians to become [present middle imperative] towards (*eis*) one another kind ones, compassionate ones, one's being gracious with themselves. The imperative verb stresses the urgency of Paul's call. The adjectives kind ones and compassionate ones are set off by the expression "being gracious ones" being a participle. The two adjectives are directed to one another [*allālōn*] while the participle is directed to themselves [*heautos*]. One another is a reciprocal pronoun indicating the activity among members of a group to each other. The reflexive pronoun *heautos* means the action is done to or for one's self. A handful of examples of the latter pronoun can be pointed to as justification for also translating it one another. Yet even in those contexts, it also appears that the reflexive pronoun referred the individuals in a group speaking each to themselves so that Jesus knew the "thoughts" of a group speaking to themselves (Mk. 9:2-4; cp Mt. 12:22-25). That these pronouns have different referents, the former to the group, the latter to individuals, is also born out by the switch from adjectives to the participle. In the first case, Paul calls the Ephesians to be kind to one another. Kindness is that attitude and demeanor that puts others at ease around you rather than rubbing them the wrong way. It acts to encourage comfort rather than agitation. This is about how we interact with one another. Truth may still agitate people and kindness will state that truth plainly but without letting the offense be one's disposition. They are also to be compassionate ones. Used frequently of how Jesus felt for the masses in their distress, compassion originates in the gut feeling one may have upon seeing or learning of another's trouble or adversity. Compassion acts perhaps through mercy to address another's suffering or troubles.

Many believers struggle to be kind and compassionate because they fail in the last situation, they do not show grace to themselves. Our English Bibles translate the verb *charidzomai* as

“forgiving” but it is a verb form of the word grace (*charis*). The *-idzō* ending is causative,³² therefore to cause grace or to be gracious. Being gracious can include forgiveness and certainly does if it is appropriate, but grace is broader than forgiveness. It is a whole attitude that chooses to view others as God sees us and not to focus on others’ shortcomings or differences of opinion that are neither righteous nor unrighteous. Being gracious is about learning to count true of ourselves and others what God counts true of us (cp Rom. 6:11). It is learning to give ourselves some slack when we fail or sin and instead of imposing some ridiculous punishment on ourselves, we get back up, set our minds to who God says we are in Christ and move on in His plan. In this context, the object of grace is ourselves or themselves. Because believers are hard on themselves and hold the bar so high, they often fail to meet their own standards, standards which often tend toward some version of legalism. Being harsh and ungracious with themselves most likely moves them to be unkind and withhold compassion from others. This makes sense because the spiritual believer has kindness as part of that fruit and goodness and love that play key roles in being compassionate. However, to be spiritual, one must follow the Spirit’s lead (Gal. 5:16, 18). The Spirit leads us to our life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). If we refuse to see ourselves as God does, we will not be spiritual and will not be kind or compassionate. However, by directing grace to ourselves, even when we don’t deserve it because that is the definition of grace, and then we can show others the care they need. All this promotes unity in the body.

5:1 Remember that no chapter divisions were intended when Paul wrote this letter, he begins this sentence with the same imperative as in the last sentence, “You become.” We do not stop at kindness and compassion, but we become mimics of God and walk in love (5:2). An imitator is not one that merely attempts to copy what they observe in another. The Thessalonians had not met the believers in Judea but they were imitators of them because they both suffered at the hand of their respective countrymen for their faith in Christ (1 Thess. 2:14). However, believers can become imitators of God because we are His beloved children. We are not only called God’s children, but we are God’s children (1 Jh. 3:1). We are not adopted as God’s children but born from God (1 Jh. 5:1). In this way, the Father’s seed or spiritual DNA is in us (1 Jh. 3:9). As born ones from God, we love those who have been born from God (1 Jh. 5:1ff). For this reason, as we are called “beloved born ones” we are the objects of the Father’s love.

5:2 Paul calls believers to walk or live their lives in love. The comparative standard [*kathōs*] of that love is as Christ loved us and handed over Himself in our place. Christ loved first by washing the feet of the disciples (cp Jh. 13:4-17). He has also handed over His life. He also handed Himself over for the Church (5:25). Paul saw Christ the Son of God handing himself over on behalf of Paul (Gal. 2:20). At the moment of His physical death, He handed over His spirit to the Father (Jh. 19:30). Believers were handed over to God’s grace and the work of God (Acts 14:26; 15:26, 40). These last four references demonstrate that the verb *paradidōmi* can be used of committing or commitment to care. Believers committed themselves to God’s grace and care. Christ committed Himself on behalf of us, so rather than committing Himself for His own care, He has committed Himself to or for our care. This is a reference to His ongoing ministry on behalf of the His Church. He sits at the Father’s right hand so that we all sit in Him. He sits at the Father’s right hand and intercedes on our behalf (Rom. 8:34). He is our Advocate, our character reference with the Father (1 Jh. 2:1). He not only died in our place but now lives for us.

³² Wm. Douglas Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (NY:MACMILLAN COMPANY, 1957) p. 15.

His commitment of Himself is also an offering and a sacrifice. Offerings were carried to present before God. The offering may be a freewill offering or one brought in appreciation for something God had done. An offering could also be for one's sin. In the Old Testament, a sacrifice involved a death and a burning of the victim, so the noun *thusia* derives from *thuō* to go up in smoke. All the sacrifices that New Testament believers can offer are free of a death: our bodies, praise, good works, giving. Christ's offering and sacrifice involved not only what He did at the point of offering Himself in death as well as His present offering of Himself in care for His body. His offering and sacrifice were made to God and it had a good aroma to God. Though not stated precisely, Paul may imply that when we love as Christ did, our act of love is also a good smelling sacrifice to God.

5:3 Paul reminds the Ephesians that certain activities are inappropriate for believers, to the point that they should not even be named among believers. "Named" may have here the idea that such should not even be suggested or identified among believers. Paul identifies three specific areas of unrighteousness, all of which are works of the flesh. Fornication is any sexually immoral activity outside of marriage. Uncleanliness is the attitude that predominantly imagines or views others and situations in an inappropriate sexual manner. Covetousness means to want more. One is discontent with what they have. Covetousness is not limited to inanimate things. God commanded Israel not to covet a neighbor's wife (Ex. 20:17). Paul warned the Ephesians away from the lifestyle of unbelievers who have given themselves over to sexually lewd conduct with uncleanliness and did so with greediness, that is they were never satisfied with their sexual "successes" (Eph. 4:19). Following the first two, this understanding of covetousness would make sense. These things are not fitting for saints. "Fitting" [*prepei*] is that which is outstanding or most visibly notable. These activities and attitudes should not be what others see when they look at believers.

5:4 To these three, Paul adds shamefulness, foolish talk, and quick-witted jesting. While the last three are inappropriate for believers, they are also inappropriate in conversation. We do not need to talk about what others do. Foolish talk means we don't talk about how they think. This may extend to the manner in which we view others in a group such as the division between Jews and Gentiles. Serious matters can be treated lightly in jest, where others cover the seriousness of what they do with quick wit.

5:5 The Ephesians knew the end of people who lived like this. In his two years of teaching them, Paul made it clear how God will judge such people. He reiterates the list of activities but this time changes the nouns to indicate the people who practice such activities. He adds a detail to covetousness stating it is idolatry. He makes a similar statement in Colossians 3:5. Idolatry replaces God with gods, often with idols or objects that individuals think will bring them happiness or can change their life. Wanting more functions the same way. People think that by getting more than they have they will finally be happy and fulfilled. Rather than relying upon God, they rely on things the same way that some rely on false gods.

Such people have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ even God. Grammatically, the nouns Christ and God share one article meaning they refer to the same person. Christ is God. Our inheritance is by God's grace (Acts 20:32). The Spirit is the downpayment of our inheritance, guaranteeing that we get all God promised (Eph. 1:14). Our inheritance is kept safe in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). Believer can also inherit some of God's promises right now (Heb. 6:12). Part of our inheritance is future and requires that Jesus Christ change us so that we can inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50). Paul refers to a future aspect of the kingdom of God when we finally receive our complete salvation and share in Christ's kind of glory.

Premillennialists often refer most references about the kingdom to the future thousand year kingdom of Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is only the first thousand years of the Son's kingdom. Of His kingdom there is no end (Lk. 1:33). However, the kingdom is not only a future hope. Believers are living in a form of the kingdom while awaiting a future form of the kingdom. The current form of the kingdom of God involves the exercise of power in our lives (1 Cor. 4:20). That kingdom involves our expression of righteousness, peace, and joy all produced by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The kingdom of the Son of His (God's) love is a kingdom of priests (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6). In that kingdom, we serve as priests. Forms of the Greek *leitourgia* express priestly service to people. The objects of our service are other believers as we present our bodies to serve them (Rom. 12:1ff), as we give of our substance to meet other's needs (Php. 2:17, 25; Rom. 15:27), as we praise God's character with our lips so others can hear about Him (Heb. 13:15), as we do good to other believers and fellowship with them (Heb. 13:16). This is our unshakeable kingdom for which we should have grace to do priestly service [*latreuō*] to God (Heb. 13:28). Unbelievers share no inheritance in this kingdom. They are unable to serve saints. They cannot inherit in the realm in which are privileged to serve.

While believers may engage in immorality, inappropriate thoughts, and covetousness, none of these will characterize the life of a believer. God disciplines believers so that we are not condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:6). Unbelievers, specifically those engaged in the activities mentioned have no inheritance with believers. Paul repeats this idea in other letters (Gal. 5:21). Paul reminds us that they share no inheritance with us because it should make us wonder why we would engage in activities that characterize them. If they do not inherit, why would we want to live like them?

5:6 Paul warns the Ephesians to let no one deceive them with empty words. Koine Greek has several words expressing types of deceit. This verb *apataō* means to give "a false impression, whether by appearance, statement or influence."³³ Some will use empty words that have no substance or support to suggest that these activities, these sins, are not serious and not off limits. They may point to individuals who do such things but also do "moral" things or "good works" as defined by the world. Like the mockers about whom Peter warns us, they may claim that God has not nor will judge such activity (cp 2 Pet. 3:1-10). Peter points out that these mockers go out according to their own lusts or cravings (2 Pet. 3:3). God will judge sexually immoral and adulterers (Heb. 13:4). While believers may succumb to temptation at times, as noted above, it is not acceptable and is unrighteous before God.

God's wrath comes upon the sons of disobedience for these very things. "Sons of disobedience" are not just unbelievers in general but those believers advanced within the family of unbelievers to the status of sons. They are able to represent Satan's family by their disobedience or as sons, mature disobedience. In these sons, the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who is Satan works within these people (2:2). Rather than childish fits of disobedience, the sons have matured in their ability to disobey God, of blazing a trail for others in how to disobey God. The man of lawlessness who is the son of destruction will set himself over all that is called or feared as a god (2 Thess. 2:3-4). The coming of this son of destruction is by all powers, signs, and lying wonders. By these with all deceit (*apatē*) he gives a false impression among those who are perishing (coming to ruin; 2 Thess. 2:9-10). The man of lawlessness will show these others how he can dethrone God and they will do the same by

³³ W.E. Vine, op cit. p. 281. Vine defines the word under the noun *apatē*.

worshipping this son of Satan god. God's wrath comes in measured samples now (Rom. 1:18). God will pour out His wrath on them without dilution during Daniel's 70th week (Rev. 14:10).

5:7 Therefore, they being the objects of God's wrath due to their mature disobedience, Paul calls us to not become partakers of them. The adjective *summetochoi* occurs only here and in 3:6 where believers of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds equally partake of the promise (of access) in Christ Jesus. So, for believers to partake with unbelievers would be amazing as their future and ours are different. We are not the objects of God's wrath (cp 1 Thess. 5:9) while these sons of disobedience are the objects of God's wrath.

5:8 Paul's draws out the distinction between them and us further by reminding us of our past as being darkness but now being light. Darkness is the absence of light. John 1:4 defines light as God's life made visible by activity. Believers have this life, eternal life (1 Jh. 5:11-12). Believers may live out the life as light or they may not live out that life hence darkness (1 Jh. 2:9-11). Believers may or may not live in light. Unbelievers live only in darkness as they do not have eternal life and cannot live out that eternal life. We are not in darkness not from the night nor from darkness (1 Thess. 5:5). We are sons of light even sons of day time. Paul called believers to not sleep (1 Thess. 5:6). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, he used *koimaō* to refer to the sleep of physical death. In 5:6-7, he uses *katheudō* of the sleep of laxity in thinking and life. 5:6 contrasts this sleep to being alert and sober and so demonstrates that this type of sleep is not being alert and not being sober (whether literally or figuratively).

While we were darkness prior to salvation, in the Lord we are now light. God sees us in the Lord as having life and making it visible. Paul refers to us as is in the Lord rather than in Christ to emphasize Christ's right to dictate our conduct in keeping with our standing in Him. Paul calls us to walk as children of light. Walk refers to how we live our everyday lives and how we live depends upon how we think or frame our minds (Rom. 8:4-5). Paul does not refer to us as sons but as children for this ties us to the Father and our being born from Him. That new birth involves a union with the Father and our ability to share in His kind of nature (1 Jh. 5:1; 3:1, 9-10; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). We have light because we have eternal life. We live out that eternal life as God's children and this by the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. We can choose to set our minds on our life in the Lord and live down here as God's children living visibly His life.

5:9 This verse is considered by scholars to be an abrupt interjection in Paul's thought. The fruit of the light is in the realm of all goodness, righteousness, and truth. The verse begins with a textual problem; should it be fruit of **light** or **Spirit**? The latter is supported by a text from about AD 200, several other later texts and the majority of texts classified as having the Byzantine type of readings. The former is supported by five texts dating between 3-6th centuries and several texts from much later times. Therefore, the textual evidence is equally divided. The next question is whether a copyist is more likely to change light to Spirit or Spirit to light? While one might alter Spirit [*pneumatōs*] to light [*photos*] to make it agree with the preceding statement, it seems more likely that someone would alter light to spirit to make it agree with the statement about the fruit from the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

The fruit of light is that fruit that expresses what eternal life looks like when we live it out. That fruit is broader than the three following characteristics as they are the sphere or the realm in which we find the fruit. Eternal life appears in the realm of these three qualities. This is probably not exclusive to these three but these three are pertinent to this context. Goodness is attitudes and actions that seek the wellbeing and contentment of ourselves and others. Righteousness is also standing and actions that conform to God's standard of what is right.

Truth is that which is genuine and not hidden. Filthiness, foolish talk, and quick witted jesting are the opposite of these three characteristics. Goodness does not focus on that which leaves us unclean. It does not speak that which lacks wisdom. It doesn't make a quick wordplay to respond to proper things or corrections. None of these verbal activities are righteous. All three seem to miss or avoid truth. Consider how the banter and mocking of unbelievers calls God's righteousness into question even in humorous jokes at God's expense or the expense of those who live righteously. Think how such talk sees only what they consider good and miss God's goodness to us (e.g. Adam and Eve in the garden).

5:10 When we walk in light, we are proving by our lifestyle the validity of what is well-pleasing to the Lord. The participle *dokimadzō* is a test that seeks what is good or valuable. A lifestyle that lives out eternal life acts as a proving test to demonstrate these qualities that are well-pleasing to God. "Well-pleasing" translates *euarestos*. This adjective is based on *arestos* - pleasing with the prefix *eu-* good or well. In its various forms, these words express God's pleasure at our living out His work in us. One who lives in their flesh is not able to please God (Rom. 8:8). Activities that are well pleasing include presenting our bodies as living sacrifices and being transformed as we do it (Rom. 12:1-2), setting aside our rights for the benefit of less mature believers so they might mature (Rom. 14:18), not giving up on our God-given service even when we suffer (2 Cor. 5:9), giving to the needs of other believers as a sacrifice (Php. 4:18), believing children obeying their parents (Col. 3:20), believing slaves submitting to their earthly masters without verbally responding (Tit. 2:9), living by faith in God's promises (Heb. 11:6), do priestly service through grace (Heb. 12:28), as priests offer the sacrifices of doing good and fellowship (Heb. 13:16). All these kinds of activities are done in the use of eternal life and in the realm of goodness, righteousness, and truth and are therefore not activities of our sheer willpower and our human effort but the exercise of the life He has given us and the nature in which we share as His children. It is well-pleasing to God because we are using what He has given us as part of our salvation and using it/them as He desires.

5:11 Paul warned them not to be partakers with them and now calls them to no fellowship closely [*sūn* prefix] in the unfruitful works of darkness. "Unfruitful" is contrasted to the fruit of light. These works are characterized by darkness or the absence of God's life in activity. Rather than share in common in those works, Paul calls us to reprove those works. The verb *elengō* bears the idea of exposing to the light, providing proof of guilt. If we live out light, our life proves the failure or lack of those who live in darkness. We do not need to open our mouths and accuse them, as our lifestyle itself should do so. Rather than living in sharing with them, we reprove by living before them. Jesus did this. His life and the works He did made their sin visible (Jh. 15:24).

5:12 The activity of the unbelievers, the things they do in secret should not be the things about which we believers speak. The first phrase is "the secret things coming to by (done) up them." Even the world, though it generally lacks shame, recognizes that some activities should be not be paraded before everyone. From the three items listed in 5:3, 5 involve sexual activity outside of God's healthy boundaries. Paul told the Corinthians that even the Gentiles do not behave as the incestuous man from their church (1 Cor. 5:1). Gentiles do behave that way at times but they have the presence of mind to hide such actions, while this man appears to have openly engaged in immorality and the church knew it but did nothing about it. It is shameful for us to even talk about such actions. The word "shameful" is an adjectival form of the first noun "filthiness" or "shamefulness" in 5:4. Just as we should avoid their shameful chatter, it is also shameful for us to talk about their shameful behavior.

5:13 The hidden things will not remain hidden. The hidden things of darkness are made visible by the Light. Jesus Christ spoke to the people during His earthly ministry (Jh. 15:22). As a result they have not cloak or covering for their sin. Jesus repeats this but regarding His works (15:24). In both passages, He says that if He didn't speak or didn't do works, they would "have not sin," by which He means that they would think they are fine. His words and works demonstrated to them their sinfulness. They could excuse their words, actions, and attitudes by comparison to other people. However, Christ's words and actions demonstrated a genuine compassion and goodness they had never observed. The crowds were amazed by the authority with which He taught (Matt. 7:28-29). Jesus was compassionate towards the people and acted on that compassion to address their needs (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32). Christ's words and works expressed His life as light and made visible [*phaneroō*] the sinful works of people. The light is eternal life in the action of our conduct. All things that this light of life shines upon becomes visible.

5:14 Everything that makes other things plainly visible is light. In 13, we have "the light" referring to the specific use of eternal life. Here light has no definite article meaning that it refers to the kind of life that Christ has. We share in that same eternal life. As we exercise love among believers our attitudes, words, and works are light and like Christ's light, it makes visible their works by contrast. There is no need of decrying their sin, of public castigation of their unrighteousness, of raging against the people or the system. Jesus only castigated the religious leadership for misleading the people. He was honest with all about sin and salvation, but He did not attack the masses with appeals to clean up their lives or how horrible they were. He warned of judgment for those who refused to recognize the problem of sin.

Paul calls us to rise up [imperative]. He addresses believers as sleeping [*katheudō*], as those who are not alert, such as the disciples sleeping when Jesus told them to pray (Mt. 26:40, 43, 45). Believers who are not "walking" (5:1, 8) give no evidence of the life they possess. Sleeping, such believers look no different than unbelievers who are spiritually dead. Paul is calling these believers to rise up out from among the spiritually dead, live differently by living out eternal life, and reprove their works by the contrasts of lifestyle.

If they would rise out from the dead ones, if they would cease from their spiritual sleep, if they would walk in love as Christ loved us, then Christ would shine "on you." "On you" translates a pronoun in the locative/instrumental/dative form. "On you" may reflect a locative or dative understanding. "By means of you" as though we are a tool or instrument in His hands reflects the instrumental sense and I think it best represents what Paul intends. Christ shine in us but even more so, be means of us. Others get to see this light that is Christ's life shone by means of us as NT believers. Jesus promised His disciples that if they would guard His commands (to love) that He would "disclose" or "make Himself plainly visible" to them or by means of them. Both are probably true. If they live out that love because they guard the commands, then Christ would be seen through them as an instrument but they would especially get to see Christ doing this in them.

5:15 Therefore, Paul calls the Ephesian believers to walk accurately not as unwise but as wise, making good use of the season, because the days lack the proper character. Wisdom is knowing how and when to use what we know. The Ephesians sat under Paul's teaching daily for two years. They had the information. They now needed to put it to use. They needed to discern how to properly use what they knew about God and His plan, about their salvation, about their identity in Christ, about the body of Christ and their part in the body, about the difference between them and unbelievers. Ephesians demonstrates they knew these truths.

Rather than living like the unbelievers, they should align their lives with their salvation. We live in evil days, days that spread a painful harm to others. We should not allow our culture, our days, the world around us to dictate how we behave. Our behavior, like Christ's, should demonstrate life. We should make good use of the time God has given us.

5:17 Because the days are evil we should not become imprudent. The noun ἄφρονες refers to one who does not properly frame their mind. They do not take the information they know and use it to think about and analyze their situation so they can respond. For the believer, that framework involves our identity in Christ and God's faithful work (cp Col. 3:1-3). If we frame our minds properly, we can understand the Lord's desirous will for us. "Understand" is to put things together or stand them together. It is the ability to put together the truths God has revealed for us with our circumstances. If we are called in one body and there is one body, how should that affect the manner in which we live? Those truths should bear on our conduct, especially our interaction with other members of the body of Christ. If God has made us one, it is logical to think that His desirous will is for us to live as one, to get along with our fellow believers rather than divide over earthly differences, differences from the past that no longer exist in the Church.

5:18 Having charged the Ephesians with knowing God's will, which will involves living out light, Paul now adds two additional charges. In 5:17 "become" and "understand" are imperatives as are the new charges "be drunk" and "be filled." We may wonder why Paul must warn them against drunkenness. The present imperative may have two senses: don't become drunk if you are not and stop being drunk if you are. Paul's charge is more than a contrast to being filled. Some of the Ephesians may have resorted to drunkenness in response to the conflict or harsh treatments. It is not the response of all, but due to the sin nature, some people have more of a propensity to drunkenness especially as a means of coping with pain whether that pain is physical, social, or emotional. Drunkenness is reckless [*asōtia*]. It does not contribute to anyone's salvation. However, drunkenness is listed among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:21). While it may be the human or flesh's method of solving a problem, it is not God's method and His is better. "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).

To be filled is to allow the Spirit to fill us with the qualities we need to function as parts of the body or the fullness. We cannot function as part of the body by our own efforts. If we rely upon our own efforts and ideas, we will only contribute to more conflict within the body. Therefore, the Spirit can and will fill us for this need.

(This is a more extensive development of Paul's teaching on filling)

Many Christians know of the filling of the Spirit, but few understand it. Some varieties of Christianity have confused filling with the baptism of the Spirit, indwelling, or some second work of grace. This has been common among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. Wayne Grudem is not a cessationist,³⁴ but does not classify himself as a charismatic. He classifies the filling of the Spirit under his discussion on the baptism in the Spirit. He makes no distinction, seeing baptism as the initial event and filling a repeated event of getting more of the Spirit like a balloon expanding with more air.³⁵ J. Rodman Williams describes his understanding of Spirit

³⁴ One who believes that God ceased the operation of some gifts from the Spirit, once they fulfilled their purpose.

³⁵ *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) p. 782. He argues against the Pentecostal view of baptism as a post-conversion experience.

filling, “It points to that dimension of the Spirit’s bestowal that relates to interiority, that is to say, the whole community or person is inwardly pervaded by the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ He relates it to the sound of wind filling the room, and therefore to God’s dynamic presence distinct from God’s omnipresence.” Rene Pache, who allowed for the activity of Pentecostal gifts, explained the Spirit in what we might call ‘getting more of us.’ He wrote, “The Spirit in us is like an overwhelming force; He immediately occupies every particle of our being that we relinquish to Him, even as the air immediately fills any empty space to which it is given access.”³⁷ He further indicates this idea later, “We have seen that God wishes to fill us with His Spirit. But only what is empty can be filled. Undoubtedly, if we are converted, the Spirit has occupied a certain amount of room in us, but is every part of our being open to admit Him?”³⁸ (emphasis mine). Gordon Fee in his tome on the Spirit in Paul’s writings appears to hold a view similar to Pache when he writes, “‘be filled by the Spirit,’ with the emphasis on being filled to the full by the Spirit’s presence.”³⁹ He compares Ephesians 5:18 to Paul’s charge in 2 Timothy 1:6-7, and gives his sense of these texts as an continued appropriation of the Spirit’s presence or a keeping the gift aflame.”⁴⁰ So also, Thomas Oden explains Spirit filling as “being fully yielded to or filled with the Spirit... This refers to the calling to submit completely to the indwelling Spirit in order that God’s won work may be accomplished.”⁴¹ All these appear to understand filling as more of the presence of the Spirit, sometimes understood as the Spirit getting more of us or permeating us more fully.

Cessationists often take the view that the Spirit is not the content of filling but is the instrument or means of filling with some other content. Harold Hoehner pointed out, “Moreover, nowhere in the NT does πληρωω followed by εν plus the dative indicate content.”⁴² David Eckman understands the filling as our use of “resources of the Spirit of God” to address our weaknesses.⁴³ So understood, the filling would be more our responsibility in light of something the Spirit has done. John F. Walvoord summarized his view of this filling, “Every reference to the filling of the Holy Spirit indicates a spiritual condition on the part of the person filled which is brought about by the complete control of the Spirit.”⁴⁴ Walvoord’s explanation is echoed among other dispensational writers.⁴⁵ Graham Cole also refers to this filling as control, though he takes a different approach to the purpose of filling than do

³⁶ *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) p. 202.

³⁷ *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954) p. 118.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 121.

³⁹ *God’s Empowering Presence*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) pp. 721-722.

⁴⁰ *ibid*. p. 866.

⁴¹ Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology, Vol 3*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) p. 225.

⁴² Hoehner, *op cit*, p. 703.

⁴³ *Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit*, eds. Daniel Wallace and M. James Sawyer (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005) p. 213.

⁴⁴ *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) p. 192. He treats the filling in Ephesians to be the same as the filling described in the gospels, distinguishing only that in Ephesians it is to be the normal experience rather than temporary. p. 194.

⁴⁵ See C.C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965) p. 94, and Robert Gromacki, *The Holy Spirit*, (Nashville: Word, 1999) p. 186. Theodore Epp mentioned the necessity of the Spirit’s control several times. *The Other Comforter* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible, 1983) p. 96. Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology, Vol. 2*, (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009) p. 340.

Walvoord and Ryrie.⁴⁶ Larry Pettegrew observes that “control” connotes “total control over a puppet. It suggests either all or nothing.”⁴⁷ He suggests the idea is better expressed “to be under the influence.”⁴⁸ Later in Walvoord’s discussion on filling, he used language similar to Pache stating, “The thought is not that individuals by any process have received more of the Spirit, but it is rather that the Spirit has complete possession of the individual. ... Accordingly, it is not a question of securing more of the presence of God but of entering into the reality of His presence and yielding to all the control and ministry for which He has come to indwell.”⁴⁹ John Williams interprets this, “we may and, indeed, ought continually to know the reality of the Spirit’s fullness in our lives (Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9).”⁵⁰ While recognizing some results of this fullness, which he does not explain, he seems to make the believer responsible for these, using such expressions as, “the apostle’s suggestion” and “exhorts his readers to be thankful.”⁵¹ Therefore, in this view, some idea of “control” or “influence” constitutes the content with which the believer is filled or allows the Spirit to control.

These various perspectives demonstrate no agreement as to the Spirit’s filling, in fact I am impressed by the fact that so often Bible students bring to the interpretation of this passage information that is not directly tied to it, either by context, vocabulary or theme. L.S. Chafer illustrates this as he dealt with the believer’s responsibility regarding the ministry of the Spirit. Under the heading Conditions Prerequisite to Filling, he lists three negative directions given the believer: grieve not the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).⁵² Chafer then went on to collect Scriptures which he believed illustrate each point. Many of his points have genuine bearing on the believer’s spiritual life, but are not directly related to the issue of filling in Ephesians 5:18. This is frequently the case among Bible students.

Ephesians 5:18ff is often interpreted to be an individual experience resulting in Christ-likeness or some full presence of the Spirit. We saw this above among various writers. To be sure, an individual element is involved but it has a broader outlook. Additionally, many writers tie this in some form to sanctification and not to a believer’s relationship with others in the body of Christ. Yet the filling is ultimately about the body of Christ.

In Paul’s previous uses of filling and fullness in Ephesians, he has laid emphasis on the body of Christ, the Church (except for 1:10 and perhaps 4:10). He communicated to God because he wished the Ephesians to be filled up to all the fullness (3:19). In the context of Ephesians three, the Spirit, who would make them visibly might by His (God’s) power, accomplishes the filling (3:16). By context, it makes sense to understand Paul’s charge in 5:18 to be filled to refer to the same matter. In chapter three, he told them he was communicating to God for this filling for them, and in chapter five, he lays responsibility on the Ephesians to

⁴⁶ *He Who Gives Life*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007) p. 219. Cole is not a dispensationalist (p. 138 n.34).

⁴⁷ *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001) p. 204.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 204. He expresses significant agreement with Walvoord, and Ryrie.

⁴⁹ Walvoord, *op cit*. p. 192.

⁵⁰ *The Holy Spirit Lord and Life-giver*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1980) p. 160.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 164.

⁵² *Systematic Theology*, Vol. VI, (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) p. 233.

be filled. The imperative verb “be filled” indicates that the Ephesians had a responsibility. Paul’s communication to God was not to be answered by the sovereign move of God apart from any proper response of the Ephesians. Paul wanted them to be filled, and they were to be filled.

5:19-21 Paul lists the results of this filling. The main verb “fill” is an imperative, and the words speaking, singing, psalming, thanking, and submitting are a series of four present active participles, “submitting” being present middle participle. If filling results from doing these things, the aorist not the present tense would have been used.⁵³ Therefore, I understand the participles to describe the result of the Spirit’s filling. Though I’ve tried to confine our study primarily to Ephesians, Paul gives a similar list in Colossians 3:16-17,⁵⁴ and a brief comparison of the two passages will be helpful.

The following chart compares the two passages. The main verb is an imperative in both passages: “be filled” in Ephesians and “let dwell” in Colossians. The first participle in Ephesians is “speaking” which Paul expands to “teaching and admonishing” in Colossians. Both of these participles are accomplished in “psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs,” Paul adding “and” between the nouns in Ephesians (or omitting in Colossians). The next participle is the same in both “singing” with the addition of “psalming” in Ephesians. Both are done “in your heart.” in Ephesians “heart” is singular and plural in Colossians. In Ephesians it is “to the Lord” and “to God in Colossians.” The next participle is the same “thanking.”⁵⁵ Both are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, with Paul adding Christ in Ephesians 5:20, and it is done to “the God even Father” and “the God Father.” In the next phrase involving submission, Paul used a participle in Ephesians, and switched to an imperative verb in Colossians 3:18. These parallels are not mere coincidence. Paul was writing about the same issue in both texts.

⁵³ Dana and Mantey, op cit. p. 230, also Hoehner, op cit. p. 706. For an interpretation that these are the means of being filled, see Arnold, op cit. p. 351f.

⁵⁴ cp. Hoehner, op cit. p. 704. He understands “speaking” in Ephesians to be “same or similar to the ‘teaching and admonishing one another’” in Colossians. p. 707.

⁵⁵ I take the phrase in Colossians 3:17, “and whatever you happen to do in word or in work” to parallel the Ephesians 5:20 phrase “always, on behalf of all things.” Most translations translate this phrase with the addition of a verb “do” as though Paul were writing about how to “do” something, rather than about being thankful in whatever one does.

Therefore, much of the context leading up to the charge in Colossians 3:16 to let the “word of the Christ dwell in you richly” has been body related. Therefore, Paul was not charging them to let the Bible, or a word about Jesus Christ, or the words of Jesus Christ dwell in them. All are appropriate at certain times. However, in this context, Paul is urging the Colossians to let the word, the truth, the teaching about the union of Jesus Christ with His body and all that it entails to dwell in them. Thinking about, measuring one’s attitude in light of, responding to circumstances in light of what one knows about this relationship results in the qualities associated with the filling by the Spirit. When writing to the Colossians, Paul was not speaking in terms of “fullness” and therefore, he did not use the instruction “be filled” but the instruction to let a set of truths dwell richly within them. Both imperatives have the same point, because Paul was charging believers to allow God to give them the ability to properly relate to fellow believers in the body of Christ.

Some have recognized this as more a congregational issue as opposed to an individual issue of sanctification.⁵⁶ I believe Cole and Fee are correct in part. However, this is individual insofar as only an individual can obey Paul’s charge for himself. He may encourage others to do so, but he cannot make others be filled. He cannot do it for them. He can be certain that he is part of the solution and avoid being part of the problem. Therefore, the charge to be filled is given to the whole church about a church need, but is fulfilled as individuals obey.

The Results of Spirit Filling

On 4:32, we considered the distinction between the reflexive pronoun [εαυτος] and the reciprocal pronoun [αλληλος]. That distinction is key to understanding the results of the filling. Filling is the provision of qualities and attitudes necessary to guard the unity from the Spirit. The first participle “speaking” or “teaching and admonishing” in Colossians is done to one’s self, as Paul used a reflexive pronoun. Contrary to Hoehner, I do not believe Paul used the reflexive pronoun with a reciprocal sense. To do so misses the point. The first participle is not directed at others, but at one’s self. That is the issue. In the midst of conflicts, the first person one needs to address is himself. It is common for churches to be troubled because believers first speak to others. Paul addressed this exact problem in 4:29-32. It is apparent that at least some in the Ephesian church was speaking rotten words and thereby grieving the Spirit, when they were to guard the unity from the Spirit (4:3). Their rotten or cutting words that do not build up the body, grieved the Spirit by working contrary to His purpose. Their language was characterized by bitterness, anger, hot anger, shouts, and blasphemy (4:31). Remember, the anger of man does not render God’s kind of righteousness (James 1:20). Therefore, the Spirit first fills the believer with words that he needs to address to himself, not others. The Spirit gives him what he needs to adjust himself to the body of Christ and God’s purpose. Psalms were statements of praise. Psalms connect the character of God with benefits received due to God’s character. God’s grace is how He says good things about us in Christ—that’s praise (1:6). Hymns at the time of the New Testament were not specifically musical. Hymns are worship statements in which one recognizes God’s character. When the church gathered after John and Peter were released from an examination by the Jewish religious leaders, the people worshipped and asked (Acts 4:23-30). They identify God as the Creator. They recognize God’s prophesy of the events of earthly leaders against Christ and connect it directly to the details of Christ’s arrest, trial, mistreatment, and death. Then they asked God for help. In Acts 2, people spoke the mighty works of God in various languages (Acts 2:11). So people could worship God and worship is blessing or saying good things about God (1 Cor. 14:13-16). Odes or spiritual

⁵⁶ Cf. Cole, op cit. p. 219, and Fee, op cit. pp. 721-722.

songs are songs that are characteristic of the Spirit. However, if it is spiritual, we can only appreciate those songs with our spirits. Some “Christian music” feeds the soul far more than the spirit, as it appeals to our emotions and may make statements that are not true. The believers’ souls are certainly troubled by the conflicts between these groups. Rather than songs that feed their emotions, they need songs that encourage them to think clearly about God, His work, His people as He has planned. The elders around the throne sing a new song about the worthiness of the Lamb to open the seals of the scroll (Rev. 5:9). In this song they recognize that He was slain and so bought them for God by His death. This is not a warm fuzzy song but a song that feeds the spirit. Believers need to address themselves by thinking about God, His works, and singing those truths to speak to their spirits. In Colossians, Paul expands this as teaching and admonishing. Teaching simply means to give instruction. Admonition means to put us in mind perhaps as a warning or at least a caution about how a truth should affect our actions. All this is to help us

The Spirit then fills the believer with singing and psalming to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). The speaking to ourselves naturally moves to speaking to the Lord. We still are not addressing others, but God. Believers often speak to others long before they even consider talking to God about the matter or focusing on God’s work. The believer sings and psalms in his heart. The heart is the center of decision making. Singing and psalming positively affects the decisions made in one’s heart. Nothing in the text requires the singing and psalming to be vocal, for they are done in the heart and to the Lord.

5:20 The third result of filling is addressed to God: being thankful (Ephesians 5:20). Too often, problems in an assembly escalate because believers do not focus on the good grace of God in all things and in place of all things. The Spirit fills the believer with thanksgiving for God’s good acts of grace to him. “All” may refer to “all people” with a specific reference to all the believers. Remember, being thankful in everything is such a key aspect of God’s will for the believer, that Paul stated that fact specifically (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

5:21 Finally, we have a result that is other-centered—submission (Ephesians 5:20). It is rare for an individual to willingly submit to another with whom he is at odds. The unbiblical attitudes and language of Ephesians 4:17-5:17 do not encourage one believer to submit to another. However, after the Spirit has filled one with words and song which he addresses to himself, and thanks which he addresses to God, the Spirit then fills him with the attitude of submission. God has gifted every believer. God has planned works for every believer. Every believer will be the object of some of those works God has planned for others. If a believer refuses to submit, he misses out on the work of God through others. A pastor-teacher who will not submit to the exhortation, acts of mercy, directions of organization as well as other gifts, deprives himself being the object of God’s work through other saints.⁵⁷ We will all be on both the serving end and the submitting end as we relate to other saints. Sometimes this is true within minutes when the body is assembled and interacting. This is true of any saint in relation to the service of others.

The Greek word rendered “submit” [*hupotassō*] means, “to submit to the orders or directives of someone -

⁵⁷ I illustrate this with the pastor-teacher because I am one, and have often had to be reminded to submit to the exercise of other’s gifts on my behalf. Additionally, pastors are sometimes struck with pride and do not submit to the ministry of other’s gifts, other than material gifts.

‘to obey, to submit to, obedience.’⁵⁸ While people often view submission negatively, holding a mental picture of a superior grinding a lesser person under their heel, the idea is more of a sense of order from the base of this word *tassō*. Order allows tasks to be accomplished in an orderly and more beneficial manner. One physical appendage does not argue against doing its job with the other members. Rather, each member works together, some obeying others so that the human body functions smoothly. The frame of mind from the flesh is hostile to God and refuses to submit to God’s directions (Rom. 8:7). Living by the standard of the flesh results in death, for the believer operates in the realm of spiritual death, or that part that is not yet saved, and may end in physical death as discipline. When Israel refused to submit to God’s righteousness, the nation fell into disaster resulting in idolatry, lack of care for one another, and ultimately captivity (Rom. 10:3). By bringing ourselves into obedience under God’s design for our lives, we can resist the Devil and he will flee (Jas. 4:7). Younger shepherd-teachers should bring themselves under the authority of the older shepherd-teachers so God will raise them up to the full leadership position in His time (1 Pet. 5:5-6). Paul refused to submit to false brothers who wished to ruin Christian liberty and bring believers into slavery (Gal. 2:5). This passage is helpful for it demonstrates that submission in this case would have been detrimental to the believer’s spiritual life. If we understand that God’s design of submission is not to restrict or crush or freedom but to encourage us to allow others to exercise their spiritual gift or simply Christian service to direct us in God’s will, to warn us away from deviations from His will, or to meet other needs we may have, we will find submission refreshing. The fear is that of disrupting this work Christ does through all the members.

5:22 Though some English translations make this a separate sentence, it is a verbless clause connected to the preceding participle “submitting” in 5:21. Paul makes a special application of submission for wives to their own husbands. It does not say to husbands or other men but to their own [*idios*] husbands. They are to submit as they would to the Lord. The previous participial clause “submitting to one another” involved submission to the service or exercise of gifts for the benefit of one another. We should not expect Paul to have changed the idea of submission in this clause. He is not charging wives with submission to their husband’s whims but to their husband’s service. When their husbands server them or act to help, they are to submit to that service.

5:23 Wives should submit to their own husbands because the husband is the “head” of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, Savior of the body. Many understand “head” or headship as referring to who is in charge and makes the final decisions if they are bad decisions or contrary to God’s will. All the supply for the body’s growth comes out from [*ek*] Christ the Head (Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:19). Christ is the head over all the parts of the body (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:19). God, that is, the Father, is the Head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). This means that the Father supplied to Christ all He needed and when He needed it (Jh. 5:20). He gave the Son to have life in Himself (Jh. 5:26). The Father has placed His seal upon the Son of man that He is God (Jh. 6:27). The Father sent Him (Jh. 6:57). Christ is the head of the male (1 Cor. 11:3). Christ supplies to the man not for the man’s own selfish welfare but to pass on to the woman, as the Father gave to the Son of Man for the benefit of those to whom Christ ministered. Regarding the use of gifts, even the head cannot say to the foot that it has no need of that member (1 Cor. 12:21). While the head directs and supplies, it also needs the supply from the other members. In this instance “head” is not likely used of Christ but part of the metaphor for the interaction of body parts in service to one another in the body.

⁵⁸ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, Eds. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) p. 468.

The submission of wives to husbands has been misunderstood on both sides. Men sometimes view it to mean that the man is in charge and he is the final arbiter of all matters. In this light, women often view it as giving up their freedom to be a slave to their husband's whims. Rather, in light of the Biblical view of headship, the husband is supposed to care for and supply to the wife what God wants for her. Headship is a caring role, not a domineering role. In the following context, Paul calls husbands to love their wives. If husbands love their wives as Christ did by laying down their lives for the best of their wives, the wife should want to submit to this and allow him to do so. Honestly, it is hard to submit to someone who only thinks they are in charge but cares little for how it affects those "beneath" them. This is especially true in a marriage relationship.

To further help us appreciate the proper nature of headship, Paul attaches the the final verbless clause, "He is Savior of the body." As Savior, He laid down His life to secure our salvation. He bore our sins. He rose again that we might be free and have life. As Savior, He has acted for our benefit. What this means for headship and submission is that both involve benefit. As head of the Church, Christ acts for its benefit. The Church submits to experience or enjoy those benefits. These two phrases linked without a conjunction provide a beautiful picture not only of Christ and the Church but of the husband wife relationship.

5:24 Paul calls wives to submit to their husbands as the Church submits to Christ. The present middle indicative "submits" suggests that the Church is doing this. However, Paul's call in 4:17ff for the believers to live properly and in harmony indicates that the Ephesian church was struggling with this. The present indicative then puts an optimistic spin on how the Church should function. The Church benefits and grows from its submission to Christ. That submission to Christ is submission to the other members that Christ uses to benefit each of us. Wives should submit to their husbands in the same way. As she submits to headship, she benefits from the leadership and supply that Christ supplies to the husband. This should not be understood to mean that Christ does not supply directly to the wife. However, God has designed a structure to demonstrate that He does all things decently and in order. Submitting to the care and provision from her husband demonstrates something to the angels or messengers as opposed to the fallen nature's drive to assert one's own choices in how God will accomplish His purpose. When Eve transgressed God's rule of not eating from the tree, He said that her desire would be "against" her husband (Gen. 3:16).⁵⁹ Therefore, the wife who is filled by the Spirit will not continue in this fallen attitude toward her husband but will submit to Him. Her submission is to be in all things.

5:25 Paul leaves off his series of participles that express the results of being filled and adds another imperative - LOVE YOUR WIVES. Christ used the verb *agapaō* when He gave the disciples His new command. He charged us with loving other believers like He loved the disciples (Jh. 13:34). In the immediate context, Jesus laid down His life by washing the feet of the disciples. So, we fulfill His command by serving others. We should not consider any act of service to be beneath us. In this same way, Paul calls husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the Church and even handed over His life in place of the Church. This is not selfish love. This is not love that acts because one views his wife as desirable or pleasing. Like Christ, he is called to love by serving her, of meeting her needs, by handing over His life (cf. 5:2). On the

⁵⁹ The Hebrew text ואל-אישך תשוקתך can be translated that her desire shall be **against** אל her husband. The last phrase affixes the waw to the pronoun indicating disjunction, so "BUT he will rule over you." This last phrase demonstrates that the first phrase is to be understood in the sense of "against." See notes in the NET Bible on this text.

verb *paradidomi* “hand over” Abbott-Smith gives as the second of five possible meanings, “to commit, commend” and cites as examples Acts 14:26; 15:40; 1 Pet. 2:23.⁶⁰ We may understand this idea as handing Himself over as His dedicating Himself to His purpose.

5:26 Christ’s goal in handing over His life was to sanctify her having cleansed her by a washing of water by means of an utterance. To sanctify is to set apart from normal situations of life. When God came down on Sinai to meet with Moses, the mountain was set apart and no one and no animal was to approach the mountain. It was set apart from normal contact (Ex. 19:23). A holy kiss as a greeting was a special kiss that said you are friend and family (1 Thess. 5:26). To set apart the Church is to make it a special assembly, not an ordinary group, an assembly set apart to Himself and the Father. He has cleansed her [aorist participle] by a laving wash [*loutron* < *louō*] of water. This is the Church so this is not baptism. He does not baptize the Church. The Spirit baptizes individuals into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This is a bathing wash consisting of pouring water over from a ladle.

This cleansing involves an utterance, a *rhēma* rather than a *logos*. Jesus spoke to the disciples and by their reception of what He said, they were clean (Jh. 15:3). In that text, Jesus is using the word “clean” for pruning a vine. So, the disciples were pruned from the distractions by what Jesus had said. The Hebrews needed to approach God knowing they had been sprinkled and had been washed with clean water (both participles are perfects) (Heb. 10:22). Again, this is a metaphor for a purifying that believers undergo at the moment we believe in Christ. The cleansing addresses the conscience of the believer that worries we are not clean enough to come before God. Due to Christ’s sacrifice and work, we are clean enough (Heb. 9:14; cp 10:2). In this text, “dead works” are the works of the Law that made one clean enough to approach God at the tabernacle or temple. Some of the Corinthians had lived in overtly unrighteous activities but they had been washed at the moment they were saved (1 Cor. 6:11). Again, this is not baptism, for baptism does not remove the filth of the flesh, regardless of whether filth refers to physical dirt or more likely the spiritual filth of the flesh or sin nature (1 Pet. 3:21). On filth see two uses in James 1:21 and 2:2. Christ’s blood continues to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jh. 1:7, 9).

This cleansing is accomplished by means of a word from Christ. He intercedes for us, so that He is able to save us to full maturity now and at the Rapture (Heb. 7:25). Intercession is specific, and the goal of that intercession is the completion of our hope of full freedom from the dominion of our sinful nature (Rom. 8:21, 23-24, 34). He asks for what He knows we need to be set apart to Him. He gave Himself over or dedicated Himself for the purpose of making us ready.

5:27 The ultimate goal of His dedication and all His included work is to present the Church to Himself wrapped in glory. Joseph and Mary took the infant Jesus to present Him at the temple (Lk. 2:22). We are to refuse to present our bodies for unrighteous purposes, but present our members to God for righteous purposes (Rm. 6:13). The verb “present” is in the subjunctive mood not because it is uncertain if we will present, but because it is uncertain when He will present us for we do not know when He will come for us. This section will end by describing the Church as Christ’s bride, therefore, this presentation is His bride readied to meet her groom. The adjective “in all her glory” [NASB] describes someone or something as being in glory, or wrapped in glory, or demonstrating the reputation. When Christ presents the Church to Himself, she will be wrapped in glory. She will fully demonstrate the reputation that God

⁶⁰ Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 339.

has given her. Further, the Church will have no spot or wrinkle or anything like these. Because the Church is made up of believers, if even one believer should fail to be all God has planned, then the whole is marred. A spot is not the entire thing but a part of that thing. If one believer is less than God planned, then that one would be a spot on the bride, or that one would be a wrinkle. This promise is a promise not just to the whole, but to every part of the whole. It should assure us. In Christ God has chose us to be holy and blameless (1:4). At the Rapture, the whole will be holy and blameless. As with that last phrase, if even one believer can be blamed, then the whole is not holy and blameless. This stands so much in the face of the teaching that future for believers who are part of the body of Christ will be varied based upon our works. This teaching often results from confusing Scriptures regarding believers under the Law who do have different future with the future for Church believers.

5:28 So, in this way, that is the way Christ is dedicated to our glory and grand future, husbands should love their own wives as they love their own body. The Church is Christ's body and each believer is a member of that body and He loves His body. The husband and wife are one flesh (5:30-31). Therefore, for a man to treat his wife with anything less than sacrificial love is foolish and is like doing harm to himself. So, the one loving his own wife, loves himself. This is not selfish for Paul says that love "does not seek its own things." (1 Cor. 12:5). Rather, Paul's point is that people normally look out for themselves and if one did that, they should be looking out for their wives. But Paul has given the sacrificial example of Christ's dedicated love and so that even though it is as though one loves his own body, it is not done selfishly.

5:29 Normally, no one hates his own flesh. Hate is *miseō* a dismissive hatred rather than a hostile hatred. So no one ignores his flesh, or spends not care on it. People tend to physical needs as they are able. The normal person nourishes his flesh and tenderly cares for or warms it. Both words are used for what parents do to provide care for their children (Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 2:7). They are the opposite of the unfriendly, dismissive hatred. This nourishment and care is comparable to what Christ does for the Church. He provides the nourishment and care to members and through those members to others (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19). Christ knows exactly what the whole Church needs and what each individual part of that Church needs and so operates provide.

5:30 The idea of a man loving his wife like one loves his own body is more appropriate than we might initially recognize. We are members of Christ's body. Paul has reminded the Ephesians of this truth several times in this letter. So, Christ loving His body the Church illustrates well the love a husband can and should have for His wife.

5:31 Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, where Moses explains the marriage relationship between a man and woman. It was not good for man to be alone so God formed Eve from a portion of Adam's side. She was genuinely part of Adam, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. When they came together they were one. That oneness requires a man to leave his father and mother and cleave to His wife. Relationships to others are severed and a relationship of oneness with his wife begins. As Paul reminded the Ephesians of the oneness believers share, this is a oneness between two people but illustrates a oneness of all of all believers who are part of the body of Christ with Christ.

5:32 This mystery is great. Paul is not speaking about the oneness between a husband and wife, but the oneness between Christ and His Church. Paul has mentioned several aspects of our oneness, but the full extent of this oneness is yet to be experienced. It is not mysterious in the sense that it is hard for us to discover. Rather, it is mystery in the New Testament sense that it is a truth not revealed in the Old Testament. Apart from this revelation, we would have

no idea that Christ will share with His Church, His body, such a oneness.

Jesus tells two parables about a wedding and virgins waiting for the groom (Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). In neither parable is a bride mentioned because the body of Christ, the Church being Christ's bride was then a mystery. Paul says that we believers are Christ's bride but presently engaged not yet "married" (2 Cor. 11:2). We the Church as Christ's bride will one day be ready to appear, corporately clothed in our righteousnesses (works of love accomplished in us by God) (Rev. 19:7-8). The city on which we will dwell with Christ and the Father is **like** [ὡς] a bride, but it is not the bride (Rev. 21:2). When an angel invites John to see the bride, he shows him the city where the bride lives. Christ will then (?) write the name of the city upon us because it is our home (Rev. 3:12). We sit with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3:21) and are pillars in His temple (Rev. 3:12). The Father and Son constitute the temple (Rev. 21:22) and John has already shown us our relationship to that temple. The city is not the bride. We are the bride, and we will live in/on that city with Christ.

5:33 Returning to his concern for husbands and wives, Paul concludes that each man should love his wife as he would love himself, and the wife is to fear her husband. Why is the wife to "fear" [*phobos*] her [the] husband? Paul has charged wives to submit to their husbands, so why the change to "fear"? In 5:21, a result of the Spirit's filling work is submitting to one another in fear of Christ. Fear has or involves punishment, that is, punishment is the cause of fear (1 Jh. 4:18). Mature loves casts out that fear for this reason. Peter charged believing wives to be like Sarah who obeyed her husband and to do good and not fear anything or be alarmed (1 Pet. 3:6). Paul said that if we don't want to fear the governing authority, we should do good but if we do something worthless, then we should fear (Rom. 13:3-4). It seems that the wife's fear is not of being punished by the husband but of disrupting the love he is to show to her. It is similar to submitting to one another in fear of Christ (5:21). We fear letting Christ down as He works to unite His body.

6:1 Paul turns his attention to the children. These are not just any children but believers. Only believers can obey these instructions. They are to obey their parents and to so so "in *the* Lord." Unbelievers are not in the Lord. Obedience to parents is righteous. It matches the righteous standard God has planned. It is not righteous due to Law, but we should assume it is righteous because He put parents in charge of their children.

6:2-3 Paul quotes the command from Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and mother...so that it may go well with you and that you may be a longtime on the earth." The Law did not call sons to "obey" but to "honor." The Hebrew "honor" is *cabōd* to be heavy or weighty. Hebrew speakers saw that which is worthy of honor as being heavy and weighty either literally or figuratively. Sons were to treat their parents with this honor. They were to take them seriously. That would result in obedience which is righteous. The command carries the promise of a long life on the earth. First, the opposite of honor is to treat a parent unrighteously such as slapping them, cursing them, or to treat them lightly (as opposed to treating them with weight)(Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 28:16). The penalty of the Law for doing any of these was death. Death shortened one's life in the land. We are not under the Mosaic Law, so there is no death penalty for disobeying parents today. We may find that children who persistently dishonor their parents have greater problems and their life may end earlier than one who learns to treat others properly. While Paul does not apply the law and its promise to the grace believer, he indicates a good lesson from the matter of obedience. In Colossians 3:18, Paul adds that such obedience is well pleasing. It is not mere obedience but in the context of being filled or relating to who one is as part of the Christ (Col. 3:16), God is well

pleased. Such obedience is then chosen by the child but is God-produced (cp Jh. 3:21).

6:4 Having told children to obey their parents, Paul must now encourage fathers to be reasonable with their children. He is not to provoke his children to anger. Paul used the verb *parorgidzō* in Romans 10:19 of provoking Israel to anger by God taking the message to a Gentile nation. He used the noun form of this word [*parorgismos*] in 4:26 of something provoking one's anger. In our text, an unreasonable father can cause his child to become angry as he (the parent) is impossible to please. In the parallel of Colossians 3:21, Paul warns fathers against causing the children to be angry. The verb *erethidzō* has a causative ending [-*idzō*] meaning to cause someone to be hostile towards and is related to the word for enmity or hostility in the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Paul adds to the warning that the consequence of such actions may cause a child to lose heart or to put out their fire [*athumeō*] from the negative α and *thumeō* to burn. Rather than exasperate children, fathers are to nourish them in child-training and admonishment of the Lord. Paul used "nourish" in 5:29 of how a man takes care of his body. The word is based on the verb *trephō* to feed, the noun meaning "food." Widows to be taken on to the church support role need to be known for having "brought up children" a translation of this word combined with the word child. While the word family emphasizes food and feeding it encompasses the broader idea of care for children that includes feeding but must involve more. That the "feeding" of their children involves more than physical nourishment is demonstrated by the two nouns training and admonishment. Child training involves all the instruction and discipline that provides a child the means of growing into an adult with discernment and wisdom. Admonishment means to put one in mind of a truth and often involves pointing to a negative action or attitude as a warning away from doing the same. So Israel's failures serve as admonishment for us (1 Cor. 10:11). A person who wishes to put himself and others under law should be admonished (Tit. 3:10). A believer who does not want to work but wants to be supported by the church is disorderly and should be admonished as a brother (2 Thess. 3:15). Leaders or teachers in the church must teach and admonish, because believers need their mental errors or misunderstandings corrected (Col. 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:12). These uses in the church illustrate part of the parent's responsibility.

6:5-8 It is estimated that nearly 27 percent of the population of 1 Century Greece and Asia Minor consisted of slaves. As a result, there is a good chance that many of the Ephesians believers were slaves. Paul mentions slavery in 1 Corinthians 7, Colossians 3, Titus 2, and Philemon indicating that some believers were slaves and they needed to be encouraged about their standing in the local church. He tells believers not to worry about being slaves but to make good use of their freedom if they can attain it (1 Cor. 7:21-24). What is true for slaves is true for all believers, do not seek to alter your circumstances but be content in the condition in which God called us.

Slaves are to obey their masters according to the flesh. "Masters" translates *kurios* a noun referring to a person as a master over another, a lord or superior, or an address such as "sirs" in which the one speaking addresses another as being greater in standing. Here is it a master. According to the flesh means not the Lord Jesus Christ but earthly slave owners. They should obey with fear and trembling. They need to take seriously the authority this owner has over them. The masters have the ability to be quite cruel if they chose. Peter told slaves to submit masters. Peter uses *despotēs* a master who has absolute power or authority. Peter tells them to submit not only to good masters, and reasonable masters, but even to crooked masters. So even if their master was not an easy person to serve, they should still submit.

Slaves are to obey their masters in sincerity from their hearts as though they are serving

Christ. “Sincerity” translates *aplotēs* that which is single, unmixed, or unwoven with something else, that something else being a hidden or ulterior motives. It is sincere because what you see is what you get. Giving is to be sincere, otherwise, one should keep the money (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11). Paul’s conduct was in sincerity from God rather than fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12). Our minds should be sincere or simple into Christ, as opposed to the complexities of religions that that with craftiness corrupt our conclusions (2 Cor. 11:3). They serve with this sincerity from their heart, the location from which we make decisions. Their ultimate master is Christ, and as they serve their earthly master sincerely, they also serve as though they answer to Christ, which we all do.

“Eye service” is the opposite of sincerity. It serves to be seen and to draw attention to what one is doing. It seeks to please men, while they should see themselves as Christ’s slaves. “Man pleasers” is a single word but Paul uses the words separately saying that he does not “please man” (Gal. 1:10). Paul referenced his work in the gospel as opposed to working a job as a slave. As Christ’s slaves, they can do God desirous will from their soul. We may serve, knowing it is the right thing to do, but do it while grumbling, complaining, or with inner animosity. It is God’s desirous will [*thelēma*] to exhibit the fruit of light and to make good use of our time (5:9, 16). Both aspects of His will are fitting to this charge, as that takes this beyond eye service and pleasing men. The soul is the seat of our emotions and so we can serve even with good feelings. Their service should also be with good intentions, or that which is good in the mind, a good plan. For the second time, Paul reminds them that they can serve as though they are serving the Lord rather than men. They are to obey their masters, but their true Lord, their true master is Jesus Christ.

Believing slaves should remind themselves that each person carries away from the Lord whatever good thing they have done. Good is *agathos* being good in that it has a sense of wellbeing, seeking what is good for others, not only themselves. This carrying away may refer to a crown at the judgment seat or some benefit in the present. Paul uses “carry away” [*komidzō*] in 2 Corinthians 5:10 of the judgment [*bēma*] seat of Christ, at which our works of service are evaluated as to motive. This seems to be Peter’s meaning in 1 Peter 5:4. This word occurs in Hebrews 10:36 of carrying away the promise when doing God’s desirous will. That promise is spiritual rest from our works to be good enough before God, i.e. to approach Him. This for our present life, not in our eternal future. Doing God’s will as a slave can bring the promise of spiritual rest as the promise in Hebrews, and this seems to be the case.

For believers who are not slaves, does this charge have any bearing on employee relationship to employers? There are limitations due to employees being able to leave an employer. However, might employees communicate something to their employers by doing a good job and sticking with the job over the long haul? We simply must be cautious how far we push this idea, but it has some merit for the believer who finds their contentment in Christ. So, Paul ends the charge to slaves by reminding all believers both slave and free that we all carry away something from the Lord. That promise is for us all. When Paul tell us that the slave is God’s freeman, he also tells us that freemen are Christ’s slave (1 Cor. 7:22). He bought [*agoradzō*] us with a price, so we are His slaves (1 Cor. 7:23).

6:9 What Paul has told the slaves, he says is appropriate for the slave masters. They should do God’s will. They should not be men-pleasers, or do eye-service. They should serve from the heart and soul and with a good intent as serving the Lord as a slave. Yes, earthly believing slave masters are the Lord’s slaves. The Lord does not threaten us, and masters are to let go of threatening. They are encouraged to live in this way by knowing that the Lord in heaven does

not show any favoritism. He doesn't favor the rich or the masters over the poor and slaves. He treats all of us equally in Christ. Just as Paul has called the believers to focus on their identity in Christ as opposed to their earthly status as a Gentile or Jew, so here he calls slaves and masters to see themselves in relationship to the Lord in heaven that shows no favoritism.

6:10 “For the rest” Paul introduces the remaining issues, namely Satan’s interference in the lives of believers. The next eleven verses address Satan’s attack on believers. Paul will point out that Satan’s methods are part of our problem in the unnecessary conflict between believers. God not only reveals the existence of a conflict with Satan but provides believers with a means of defending against Satan’s temptation. Satan tempts believers in the hope that we will give in and sin. This gives him opportunity to accuse us before God (Rev. 12:10). When Satan was present before God in the opening chapters of Job, he accuses Job of behaving only because God protects him (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-5). Though His accusation is against Job, it appears pointed at God as though he were saying to God, “You can only get loyal followers if you pay them to be loyal to you.” Satan tempted Jesus but because Jesus never succumbed to his temptations, he (Satan) had nothing in/on Jesus (Jh. 14:30). He could not point to error, trespass, or sin on Jesus’ part. Jesus was innocent, like an unblemished and spotless lamb (1 Pet. 1:19). His goal of tempting Jesus was also to impugn His character and thereby the character of God.

Believers can resist Satan, so James calls us to resist him (Jas. 4:7). James does not tell us how to resist him apart from “submitting to God.” Paul explains how we submit and how we resist. We submit first by being made strong [present middle imperative of *endunamaō*] in the Lord. This verb means to “to acquire strength, be invigorated, be strong”⁶¹ Paul was made strong by the one empowering him (Php. 4:13). He explains that this empowerment is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1). At Paul’s defense, the Lord was present with him and empowered Paul for His defense (2 Tim. 4:17). In each example, the empowerment is in the inner man, similar to the language in Ephesians 3:16. We don’t need physical strength to resist Satan. We find this strength in the Lord. *Kurios* is anarthrous here and occurs without the article in half of its occurrences in this letter. Without the article, Lord may refer to any of the persons of the Godhead, or to all of them in general in the same way as the title God. With the preposition *en* Paul refers to the believer’s position in Christ but as the One who is over us as Lord. In Romans 6:11, Paul charges us with logically counting true of ourselves something God says or credits to be true of us in Christ (Rom. 6:11). In Colossians 3:1-3, Paul calls us to seek out those things above and to set our frame of mind to those things. Therefore, to be made strong in the Lord requires the believer to set his mind to who he is in the Lord with special focus on God’s promise of strength. The empowerment is by means of the manifest or visible might [*kratos*] that comes from God’s endued power [*ischuos*]. With this God provided mental empowerment, the believer is made strong to resist Satan.

6:11 Paul calls the believer to put on [*enduō* aorist middle imperative] the whole armor [*panoplia*] of God. The noun *hoplos* referred to an implement of war, arms, or armor. The adjective *pas* prefixed to the noun gives us the idea of “whole armor” or “complete armor.” God does not provide the believer with a piece of armor or a single weapon. He gives us all we need and we are called to put it all on. “Of God” is an ablative of source indicating that the armor is from God, He provides it to us. This armor gives us the ability to stand against the devil’s methods. The verb *histēmi*, means to stand. Whereas the devil’s goal is to tempt and leave the believer defeated on the ground. So, as the devil uses his methods, the armor allows

⁶¹ Mounce, G1904.

the believer to stand rather than be defeated. James uses a form of this verb *anthistēmi* to call believers to “resist” the devil (Jas. 4:7). Satan’s methods are schemes or craftiness [Mounce:G3497]. He leads people astray to accomplish his purposes (4:14). While most Christians are aware that Satan is the tempter, few can delineate his methods or craftiness.

Satan’s schemes

The Devil deceives in the realm of fear and uses fear to deceive people.

The Tempter could have tempted the Thessalonians using agitation [σαίνω] and pressure [θλιψις] to get them to stop believing and loving (1 Thess. 3:3, 5-6).

Satan is a spirit of cowardice [δειλία], intimidating believers to not act (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

The Devil uses the fear of death [φόβος] or of suffering to control people (Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 2:10).

Bishops need a good testimony from those outside the assembly so Satan can not ensnare them (1 Tim. 3:7). Satan can use unbelievers to move believers out of God’s will with fear of what they may do.

Doubt arises from fear, of either being wrong or consequences of one’s choice.

Believers may doubt that they could be acceptable without observing certain days, or eating only certain foods (Rom. 14:22-23).

Discouragement or disappointment with God’s will often precede doubt. We want a “better” experience (Job 3:3, 11, 20-22; 2 Cor. 12:7-8).

Doubt may lead to independence from God’s plan.

The Devil deceives in the realm of pride.

Arrogance can lead to actions outside God’s will (Jas. 4:6-7).

A brother might speak against a brother with harsh and judgmental words (Jas. 4:11).

A believer may plan a course of action without determining whether it is God’s will (Jas. 4:14). In this context, the course of action was a business venture, which is not wrong of itself but is wrong because of the disregard for God’s will.

A believer might show off by actions and evil that spreads (Jas. 4:16).

Some believers cause divisions among the saints (Rom. 16:17, 20). They put their cravings before the needs of weaker brothers (16:17-18). They deceive (16:18).

Both individuals in the James 4 and Romans 16 texts are acting to pursue their goals in pride and deception and certainly without love (1 Jh. 3:10).

Not dealing graciously with another believer can provide Satan a foothold

(2 Cor. 2:10-11). A brother had been punished (2:6). He was severely grieved (2:7). Satan affects the conclusions of the mind (νοηματα result of the mind; 2:11). Satan convinces us that we should never be gracious with the brother.

The Ephesians were giving the devil a foothold by their actions (Eph. 4:27). They let the sun go down on their fury (4:26). Satan uses this to get them to act, bringing some opportunity to act on it. Some were stealing instead of working to help others (4:28). Some were speaking rotten words, that hurt and tore others down (4:29).

A new believer is not to be a bishop, he is in danger of pride (1 Tim. 3:6). He can be puffed up (a cloud of smoke), thinking he is something. He is to prove himself first. Young men are to submit to the elders (1 Pet. 5:8). The men appear to have been worrying about suffering in the church and the fact that the elders were not leading (5:7, 10). They could resist the devil (5:8).

A Bishop is to flee youthful lusts by which he can become ensnared to Satan (2 Tim. 2:22, 26). He is in danger of being self-conceited (by context), convinced he can argue others over to his position. He is not to argue (2:23-24). Others are ensnared to do Satan's will, that is they just want to argue and debate. It is likely the same will happen to a bishop if he tries to engage others in debate.

Ananias and Saphira were tempted to lie (Acts 5:2). Satan filled their hearts to lie. He deceived them to think it was okay to lie about what they give. Their actions are described as pilfering/embezzling (kept back, 5:2) and lying (5:3, 4).

The Devil deceives regarding specific aspects of God's will as it relates to the body.

Some younger widows went after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15). They learned to be idle in their service in the church (5:10, 13). I would suggest this is deception and pride that one is entitled to be inactive.

They engaged in gossip (5:13). They're deceived that others need to know and proud that they know something.

They were busybodies (5:13), they try to fix matters without being asked for help. This too is pride. They think

They are deceived that their actions are OK and may have resulted from frustration or disappointment with their circumstances.

Satan could tempt married couples (1 Cor. 7:5). They were withholding marital relations. They could be tempted if they remained apart too long. This temptation involves deception that various responses (unfaithfulness, bitterness, being grieved) would be okay.

The Corinthians were in danger of being led astray (2 Cor. 11:3). They were being led astray from the simplicity of having their minds (indicated by νοηματα) set in Christ. They were led astray by teachers (ministers of Satan 11:12-15) who present three lies or deceptions (11:4). They herald a Jesus which is similar to but Paul didn't do this. They focused on the earthly life of Jesus

(hence Jesus not Christ). They herald a different Spirit than the one Paul announced. He is our pledge and seal (1:22), gives us life (3:3, 6), provides liberty and glory (3:17, 18). Their spirit does none of these. They herald a different gospel. They announce a different means of initial salvation, likely through “righteous works” and a different means of present salvation. They are ministers of righteousness. This situation is similar to that in 1 John 4:1-6. False teachers (anti-christs) were being heard by the unbelievers. Believers were wondering why the world heard the unsaved, and wondered if they should change their methods.

Satan used a man to pervert truth with selfish deceitfulness (Acts 13:8-10).

6:12 I have not randomly decided what Satan does but have laid out the temptations and problems that Scripture attributes to Satan. By identifying these specific areas of temptation, we can know when we are dealing with Satan versus our own sinful nature or the world system. By identifying these we can know when we need to put on the armor from God. It also helps us see that other people are not really our problem. Our wrestling match is not with people (flesh and blood) but against spiritual powers. The context of Ephesians has addressed the conflict between saints. As Paul draws this letter to a close, he reminds them that their wrestling match is with Satan and his armies. This passage also reminds us of the role that these fallen spirit beings have in the governing of this world. They stand behind our visible rulers and manipulate the governments and societies to accomplish Satan’s goals, though Scripture demonstrates that God’s purposes are not thwarted.

6:13 Having identified the source of the problem, Paul charged the Ephesian saints to take up the whole armor of God. This armor with the Divine empowerment of 6:10 gives believers the ability to resist Satan in the evil day. It is a day that causes pain and spreads (*ponēros*) presumably to other days. If the believer does not resist in this day, the problems will not go away the next morning but remain. They remain until we get our minds, our thinking gets straightened out. So, having done all to stand, being strengthened and having put on the armor, we are to stand. So Paul will detail this armor. We cannot stand until we have put it on.

The Roman empire reminded all those under its rule of its rule by the presence of its armies. In nearly every community throughout the empire, soldiers stood in the streets. They kept order, maintaining the Romans peace (*Pax Romana*). They served as an illustration or mnemonic device for six areas of proper thinking. Satan’s attack involves thoughts, ideas, or suggestions that are contrary to God’s plan. The armor is not physical but six areas of counter thinking. In the following verses, Paul will point out how to think accurately in the face of Satan’s temptation.

6:14 We stand by **girding our waist with truth.**

Satan chiefly deceives, and we begin by looking at our situation in truth. What is true? What is not? Do we expect things God hasn’t promised? Are we blaming others for our problem/s? Remember who the real enemy is. Identify the temptation or temptations that Satan is using at that time. This is truth. Do not allow him to deceive you any longer.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness.

Satan deceives us into thinking we don't need God and we are something special of ourself. We need to remember that we are only righteous in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21). Apart from Christ we would be nothing. Apart from Christ, we could do nothing righteous. He is our righteousness and only through Him can we even act righteously.

Putting on as shoes in readiness with the good news of peace

Satan deceives us to thinking others are the problem and we are better off without them or are even justified in speaking harshly against them. But Christ has made peace between believers in Himself (Eph. 2:14-16). He has made us all one in Christ and that is good news. We should ready ourselves with that good news to adjust our thinking and to share with other believers.

Shield of the Faith

Satan deceives us into thinking God doesn't care or doesn't want to talk to you. He may also tempt us to think that we don't need to talk to God but can solve our problems ourselves. We've been promised unprecedented access to God through Christ and by the Spirit (Eph. 2:18; 3:12). So, we are to remind ourselves that we always have access to God because we sit at His righthand in Christ.

Helmet of Salvation

Satan wants us to act independent of God, to revert to a works salvation attitude: working for our future, working for our right to talk to God, working, working, working. Our salvation is by God's grace (Eph. 2:8). God has prepared works for us to do, but under grace we do not earn a better salvation. Remember grace will help us look at and relate to fellow believers better (4:32). Remembering God's grace to us in Christ will help us remember that we are always free of condemnation

The Sword which is the Utterances of God

Satan does not want us to think about what God says. Paul does not use the *logos* [λογος] for "word" of God but *rhēma* [ρημα] an "utterance." This word emphasizes utterances or statements. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul began this letter reminding us that God has said all good words about us in Christ in the heavenlies, where "good words" translates our often obscure "bless." God says we're in Christ, that we are made alive, raised up and seated in Christ, and so much more (cf. Eph. 2:5-6). All these are utterances of God. This part of the armor tells us to review what God says about us.

Communication with God

Worship

Our English "pray" often translates the noun *proseuchē* [προσευχη] and its verb *proseuchomai* which in the letters to the Churches has replaced the old word for worship *proskuneō* [προσκυνεω]. *Proskuneō* was worship that involves physical posture such as falling down or falling before a superior. *Proseuchomai* becomes communication which chiefly focuses on God and His work. Satan does not want us to think about God and His character. We might actually trust God if we remember how powerful, good and kind He is. God doesn't need worship but we do. Worship focuses us on God, His work, and His character.

Worship is sometimes associated with the music part of a church gathering and indeed it may be. But worship is so much more. Worship can be longer statements about God's character as in Acts 4:24-28 and Romans 22:33-36. Yet often, worship is simple statements about God: the God of the glory (Acts 7:2); the Creator who is blessed into the ages (Rom. 1:25); no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11); the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21-22, et al); there is no injustice with God (Rom. 9:14); God is able (powerful) (Rom. 4:21; 11:23; 2 Cor. 9:8); the God of hope (Rom. 15:13); God of peace (Rom. 15:33; 16:20); God is faithful (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18); God is wiser and stronger (1 Cor. 1:25); God is not a God of chaos but peace (1 Cor. 14:33); The God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3); God of love and peace (2 Cor. 13:11); God is ONE (Gal. 3:20); to the praise of His reputation (Eph. 1:14); the Father of glory (Eph. 1:17); God, being rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4); God who created all things (Eph. 3:10); from whom every family is named (Eph. 3:14); Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all we ask of think (Eph. 3:20); God's wrath comes... (Eph. 5:6); the God of peace (Php. 4:9; 1 Th. 5:23; Heb. 13:20); the living and true God (1 Th. 1:9); God's throne is forever (Heb. 1:8); God is not unrighteous (Heb. 6:10); God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29); God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10); God is light (1 Jh. 1:5); God is love (1 Jh. 4:8); God of heaven (Rev. 11:13; 16:11)

Supplication

We are not the only person who faces temptations from Satan. By telling us to engage in supplication, Paul is telling us to take time to ask for others. This word always has some unknown variable. When Simon Magnus thought he could pay money for the ability to impart the Spirit, Peter told him to repent/change his mind and supplicate that this intent of his heart might be forgiven (Acts 8:22). Paul begged/supplicated to the chiliarch to permit him to speak (Acts 21:37). Paul always supplicated while worshipping that God would give him a good journey to be with the Romans (Rom. 1:19). Paul's supplication was the salvation of his people, but he had no promise from God that they would all be saved (Rom. 10:1). The Macedonians were supplicating to Paul that they be allowed to help our in sending a gift to the relief of the Jewish believers, for they didn't know if Paul would allow it (2 Cor. 8:4). Paul supplicated to see the Thessalonians face to face and set right what he had left undone (1 Thess. 3:10). He didn't know if God would allow him to do so. A widow should be recognized for continuing in supplication and in worships night and day (1 Tim. 5:5). This again illustrates that the two are different and neither is a subset of the other.

Supplication is vital at this point, for we don't know all believers, but we can still remember them in their struggle. We don't know their specific struggle but we know all struggle with some of these at times. So, supplicate for them. Satan wants us to think about ourselves, not others or he wants us to think negatively about others. Supplication helps us to refocus in a positive way on others. Verse 18 ends with "supplication generally for all the saints."

We worship by/in Spirit. The Spirit is the one who enables our access through Christ (Eph. 2:18). We don't have to figure out how to get through to God. We need only to recognize that we can talk to God because we are in Christ and He sits at the Father's right hand. So talk to God and the Spirit will make the connection.

We are to be watching ones as we put on the armor. Satan wants us to become distracted. He wants us to not put on the armor, not worship, not supplicate but try to push past this in our daily activities. In 2 Tim. 2:4, Paul reminds Timothy that when we are under a Satanic temptation/attack we need to step aside from the matters of daily life and deal with Satan. Take the time to adjust your thinking with the armor, so Satan will flee (Jas. 4:7). They watch by holding fast and supplication generally concerning all the saints. The noun *proskarterēsis* is a

“holding fast” sometimes translated “continuing” or “being devoted.” These latter two are true in so far as it emphasizes to what they are holding fast. In this text, the object of both nouns seems to be “all the saints.” The very issue throughout this letter is the union or lack thereof among believers. Holding fast to all the believers is as important as supplicating to them. Satan wants us to be so self-focused that we neglect one another. But the early church was characterized by this holding-fast to worship, others, and to proper truth or teaching (Acts 2:42, 46; 8:13).

6:19 Paul asks them to worship and supplicate also for him. He hopes that God might give (subjunctive of *didōmi*) a word in opening his mouth to make known with boldness the mystery that is a good news. When Paul went to Jerusalem in Acts 21, he was confronted with thousands of Jews who all believed. But they were all zealous of the Law. Paul knew he should have told them that the dispensation or house rule had changed, but he was not bold enough in the face of all these Jews to stand his ground explain this mystery truth. Paul designated the present dispensation as a mystery in 3:9 and that the unity in the Christ is a mystery in 3:6. The two go hand-in-hand. They are a good news for believers that we are not under law and are all equal in Christ. We wouldn't normally think of Paul needing boldness to speak, but he had been intimidated by many fellow Jews. So, he agreed to put up money so some Jewish men could offer sacrifices to end their vow. Paul should have explained, as he does in Hebrews, that there is no more sacrifice for sin and that we can all come boldly to God at the throne of grace rather than worrying about whether we are worthy to come and talk to God.

6:20 Paul is an ambassador of this good news and was in chains because of it. When Paul was with these Jewish men, other Jews who knew him assumed he had desecrated the temple by taking uncircumcised Gentiles in, which he had not. They went about to kill Paul but he was rescued by Gentile/Roman soldiers and through a long series of events, eventually ended up imprisoned in Caesarea Philippi and then in Rome for two years. He knew that he needed to speak boldly, openly, and without fear. It was necessary [*dei*] to do so. He was commissioned as a manager to tell people this mystery (Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1). Therefore, if he is to fulfill his God-given commission, he must speak this good news.

6:21-22 Paul has sent Tychicus to Ephesus, probably with this letter, but also so the Ephesians could know the things about Paul and what Paul is doing [*prassō*]. Paul sent him so they could know all these things. Hearing word of how Paul is doing in prison and the opportunities God provides him will encourage their hearts. Knowing Paul is in prison may have discouraged some Ephesians from serving properly or speaking about Jesus Christ. Tychicus is mentioned in five different passages. He is a native of Asia (Turkey)(Acts 20:4). As Paul does here, he describes him to the Colossians as a beloved brother, faithful servant (minister), and a joint-slave in the Lord (Col. 4:7). He was trustworthy enough that Paul sent him to Ephesus and eventually to Crete (2 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12).

6:23-24 Paul assures them that God's peace is with the brothers. This verbless clause emphasizes the reality of peace. Love in combination with faith is also theirs. As seen in chapter one, love expresses itself in an act as we believe God's promise of being able to do good works (2:10). The peace, love, and faith are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They have planned these and because we are children for God (5:1) and have eternal life because the Father and Christ indwell us, we can experience both. Certainly the Spirit works these out as fruit, but Paul is considering their origin. God's grace is with all the one's love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility. Paul is thinking about the experience of grace. Those who are not loving Him because they do not love the brothers are not enjoying the benefits of God's grace.