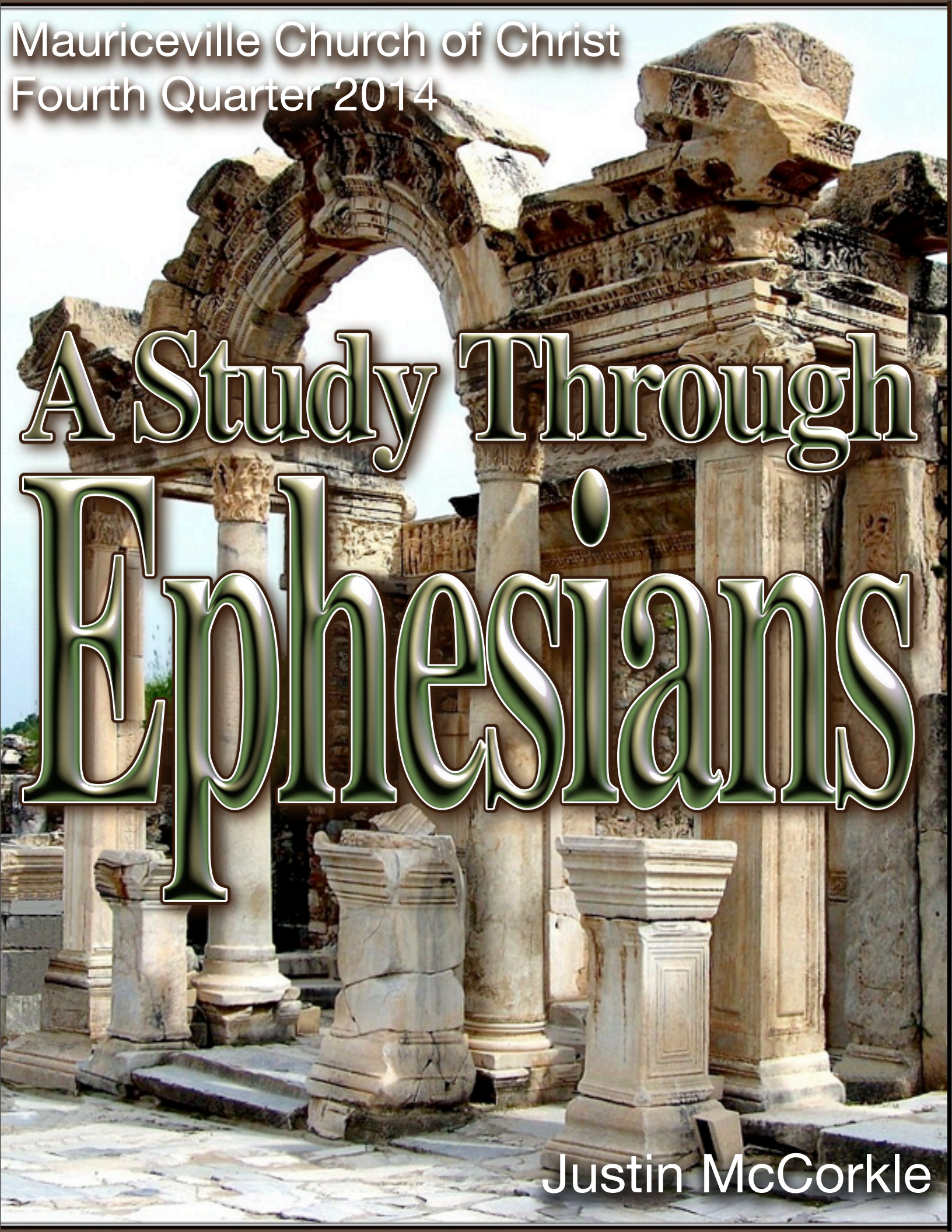


A Study Through Ephesians

Justin McCorkle

Mauriceville Church of Christ
Fourth Quarter 2014



A Study Through Ephesians

Justin McCorkle



Prelude to the Study

“By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;” (Ephesians 3:4-5)

The letter to the Ephesians contains a few of the most well-known statements in the whole of the bible as well as some of the most abused texts in Scripture. The marital lessons and illustrations of chapter 5 are read at many weddings. The armor of God in chapter 6 is taught in Bible classes across the world. Calvinists take a stand on chapter 1 to claim individual predestination by God. And faith-only salvation teachers uphold chapter 2 as a proof text for their doctrine. With so much reference made to the Ephesian letter in the religious world today, it is wise for a Bible student to have a firm mental grasp on this relatively short book.

Our goal in studying this letter is to reverently reflect upon the inspired message of the apostle with a mind set to consider the context facing the recipients. As we come to a deeper understanding of the Christians in Ephesus and their struggles we can begin to more appropriately apply the lessons of Ephesians to our lives and church today!



Table of Contents

Lesson 1: Introduction and Salutation(1:1-2).....	Page 5
Lesson 2: Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:3-14).....	Page 9
Lesson 3: God’s Power and Grace (1:15-23).....	Page 13
Lesson 4: God’s Saving Plan (2:1-10).....	Page 17
Lesson 5: All United in Christ (2:11-22).....	Page 21
Lesson 6: Revealing the Mystery (3:1-21).....	Page 25
Lesson 7: Unity of the Spirit (4:1-16).....	Page 29
Lesson 8: The Old and New Man (4:17-32).....	Page 33
Lesson 9: Imitating God	Page 37
Lesson 10: The Church	Page 41
Lesson 11: The Christian Life	Page 45
Lesson 12: The Christian’s Hope	Page 49



This work has been made with the hope that together we can search the scripture and develop a greater understanding of it. Hopefully, it will make your study of this topic more edifying, more profitable, and more enjoyable. It is not intended to take the place of your responsibility to prepare for the studies. Please devote adequate time to the material before our study, so we can all be edified by one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

All verse references are taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995 unless otherwise noted.

This book was printed by the Mauriceville Church of Christ at a cost of \$1.50.

Introduction and Salutation

Ephesians 1:1-2

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 1:1-2

By whose will was Paul an apostle?

Who was considered a "saint" at the Ephesian church?

Paul is writing to those who are "_____" in Jesus.

What does Paul want for them from God?

In order to gain the most strength from this or any other New Testament letter we must first understand the context of its writing. In this lesson we will consider the author of the letter, the recipients, and the opening salutation to these Christians.

Authorship

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..." (1:1)

This letter begins in the typical manner for letters of the time with the identification of the author. That the apostle Paul authored this book has never been seriously questioned or challenged in the annals of Christianity. However, Paul's apostleship was challenged numerous times during the days of his labor by false teachers who sought to overthrow the truth Paul preached. The second letter to the Corinthians and the letter to the Galatian churches contain hearty defenses of Paul's apostleship, but the simplicity of introduction and lack of apostolic defense in the Ephesian letter suggests that there was no such problem in Ephesus. Paul was an apostle by the will of God and the brethren in Ephesus knew it.

The apostle Paul was imprisoned during the time of this writing during his first Roman imprisonment between the years of A.D. 62 and 64. (3:1, 4:1) Acts chapters 25-28 discuss some of the events of this time period. Luke records, "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God..." (Acts 28:30-31) During these days the apostle Paul penned the letter to the Colossians and this one to the Ephesians, sending them both to be delivered by Tychicus. (6:21, Colossians 4:7-9) The close proximity of writing those

Introduction and Salutation

Ephesians 1:1-2

Recipients

“To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus...” (1:1) Paul addresses this letter to the same church that he had planted while preaching in Ephesus as recorded in Acts 19. Christ’s church began in this city with the conversion of individuals who had been baptized with John the Baptist’s baptism at some earlier time. (Acts 19:1-7) After this, Paul began preaching to the Jews in the local synagogue (Acts 19:8) and then worked heartily among the Greeks so that “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks... So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.” (Acts 19:10, 20) Paul spent about three years among the Ephesian church doing the work of the Lord. (Acts 20:31) This time together and the success they enjoyed endeared his heart to the church. His affection can be seen throughout this letter. Eventually, some in the local population became so angry with the success of the church that Paul decided the attention was a hindrance and moved on to another area.

The apostle is proud of this church and identifies them as “faithful in Christ Jesus.” The content of the letter focuses on extolling the faith and exhorting these Christians to continue on. There is a stark contrast between the words to this group and those to churches such as in Galatia and Corinth.

Salutation

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:2) The opening greeting from Paul is one of prayer and petition to God on behalf of the Ephesians. “Grace” and “peace” from the Holy One is requested for the brethren who have braved so many trials to uphold the truth. “Grace” has reference to undeserved blessing from God be delivered to the church. None deserve the wonderful spiritual blessings that God can and does pour forth in His Son! The “peace” desired for these brethren most likely has reference to inner peace that each can find in Christ, despite whatever outward occurrences make take place. At another place Paul speaks of this inner peace saying, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) True contentment is

Introduction and Salutation

Ephesians 1:1-2

Considering Ourselves

Paul was one who had shown his love and concern for the Ephesian Christians. They had reciprocated his affection and labored together. Their mutual love is seen when, while visiting with the Ephesian elders, we see the Ephesians begin “to weep aloud and embrace Paul, and repeatedly kiss him.” (Acts 20:37) Love does not exist by accident and relationships aren’t formed through apathy. If we are to build a church like these brethren we must behave like these brethren. It takes time, selflessness, and hard work to build a bond of unity comparable to that shared between Paul and the Ephesian Christians. Let us labor toward the same by being there for one another during difficult times, sharing the word with one another, and keeping a shared vision of our goals, plans, and purpose!

Such a simple opening prayer as that found in 1:2 gives us noble aspirations. We must understand that we are not deserving of Christ’s blessings. When we request from God we are requesting His grace. We should also be wise enough to pray for the inner peace to be content in all circumstances. Grace and peace from the Father and the Son are essential in order to grow into the image God has designed for us. In these few words a lifelong goal is described and guidance from God are requested. Are you asking God for the grace and peace that only He has to offer?

Introduction and Salutation

Ephesians 1:1-2

Who was the author of Ephesians and what were his circumstances when writing this letter?

How did the author and these Christians know one another? How much time had they spent together?

With what prayer does the letter open? Explain the meaning of the two requests.

What are two things that we should strive to imitate about the Ephesian church as discussed in this lesson?

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 1:3-14

What has the Father blessed us with?

What did God choose us to be in Christ before the world was founded?

What did God make known to us?

What had the Ephesians done when they heard the message?

Praise is to be given to God for all that He has done for us through His Son! The apostle Paul devotes this section during the introduction of the letter to remind the Ephesians of the great things that God has blessed us with in Christ. These people had partaken of the gospel offering and, because of their decision, are now counted among the “holy and blameless” of God!

Blessings in the Heavenly Places

The first chapter of Ephesians is a chapter of praise toward God. And there is much to praise Him for! Paul says, “Blessed be the God... who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”. (1:3) God is to be praised for all that he blesses us with, but the apostle turns our mind to the greatest blessings He bestows; spiritual blessings. What are these blessings? In the following verses Paul speaks of the blessings of making us holy and blameless (1:4), the adoption we receive through Jesus (1:5), redemption in Christ (1:7), forgiveness (1:7), the revelation of His will to us (1:9), and an eternal inheritance (1:11). What greater blessings could be bestowed on us?

Too often we become overly concerned about the physical things about us including wealth, homes, clothing, and even health. While physical blessings can and do come from God, these are not His greatest interest for us and nor should they be ours. In whatever circumstance let us praise the One who blesses us knowing, “Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

He Predestined Us

The apostle continues saying, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” (1:4) Like comments are made in the following verses: “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...” (1:5) and “we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose...” (1:11) This idea of “predestination” does not mean, as some suggest, that it is God who determines whether or not we will come to know Him. Our God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”. (1 Timothy 2:4) The parallel passage of Colossians 1:23 also reminds us Christians that their fellowship with God is contingent upon if they “continue in the faith... not moved away from the hope...” Rather, Paul speaks of God’s predestining as the means by which we can come into a “holy and blameless” state of being and a fellowship with God, that is, through Jesus Christ. We, as a people and nation, have been predestined to receive these spiritual blessings. It is our choice to be a part of His people or not!

He Made Known the Mystery

The revelation of God’s will to mankind is offered up by the apostle as another blessing from the Father. We read, “He made known to us the mystery of His will... with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.” (1:9-10) The “mystery” Paul speaks of is the revealing of that which was formerly unknown-- God’s will as accomplished in Jesus-- but has now been revealed. The Spirit was promised to the apostles so that they would know the truth and reveal it to all. (John 16:7-13) When Paul preached this mystery to these Ephesians they believed and obeyed it!

All things have now been ‘summed’ up in Jesus, as the ‘mystery’ of God reveals to us. Jesus has been given all authority and power and is reigning from the right hand of the Father. (Matthew 28:18-20) This understanding in Christians should produce fruit for God through Him! It was revealed “to the end that we who were the first to hope in

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

Christ the Father is praised. The Ephesians were in the first generation of Christians, the “first to hope in Christ,” and Paul expected them to live in such a way as to deliver the praise to God that is due Him.

He Sealed Us in Him

The Ephesians had responded appropriately to the revelation of the mystery at the hands of Paul: “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given ”. (1:13) Upon their faithful submission to God’s will they were “sealed” with the Holy Spirit. Paul later uses the same language saying, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (4:30) ‘Sealing’ something was meant to verify authenticity and truth of message. A king would seal a letter so that all would know not to tamper with it and the recipient would know it was authentic. We have been “sealed” so that it is (spiritually) evident that we are God’s possession, having obeyed the truth of the message. (See also 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, 2 Timothy 2:19) The Holy Spirit is, in this image, like the stamp that marks us as God’s. Our response to the message determines whether we are sealed in Him or not! May we always seek to respond appropriately to the God of Hosts, “with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.” (1:14)

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

What are the spiritual blessings that Paul mentions in these verses that God has blessed us with in Christ?

What does the “predestining” that Paul speaks of in this text refer to?

Explain the “mystery” that the apostle writes about. What does he refer to and how has it been made known?

Explain the concept of being “sealed” by the Holy Spirit.

God's Power and Grace

Ephesians 1:15-23

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 1:15-23

What had Paul heard about them?

What "eyes" does Paul hope will be enlightened?

What is Jesus seated "far above"?

What is the body of Jesus?

How easy it can be to forget or overlook the magnitude of the grace God has bestowed on us! In this study we will consider the reminders that the apostle Paul delivers concerning God's power and grace in accomplishing His will in the church and exalting Jesus to the position of authority.

The Faith Among the Ephesians

Paul was constantly concerned about the growth and faithfulness of the Christians and churches he had labored with. Paul describes his worry as "daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:28) Many of the letters that this apostle wrote are written in earnest in attempt to pull them back from spiritual failure. However, the tone of the Ephesian letter is quite different.

Paul writes, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers..." (1:15-16) Word had come to him, likely through Epaphras (Colossians 1:7-8), that the Ephesians had proper "faith in the Lord" and "love for all the saints." What a compliment to receive from this Christian leader! Indeed, without faith and love there can be no spiritual profit within a church. Loyalty to Christ and selfless consideration of one another are the same principles that all are called to in Christ, including the apostles. Reworded a bit, is this not a description of the greatest commandments as given by Jesus; to love God completely and love your neighbor as yourself? (Matthew 22:37-40) What joy it must have brought to the apostle's heart to know those that he had labored among for so long were continuing to prosper in faith during his absence. With thankfulness Paul approached

God's Power and Grace

Ephesians 1:15-23

A Prayer for Ephesus

Written prayers are common in Scripture. Many of the Psalms are prayers, prayers are found written in several of the prophets, and Paul includes prayers in several of his letters. The prayer found within Ephesians 1 is with a particular spiritual goal in mind for the brethren. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened..." (1:18) This metaphor presents the heart of a man (that is, the intellect, conscience, and inner character) as having eyes that can receive the 'light' of truth. In other words, Paul prays that their innermost being can receive the light of truth that will so guide their walk through life. He mentions three particular truths that he desires them to understand to their core.

The first prayer is "so that you will know what is the hope of His calling..." (1:18) The eternal reward we are awaiting is a great encouragement to continue in faith. Having a strong trust that we can receive the reward and a clear vision of attaining it will help us through many trials!

Secondly, Paul prays that that they know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints..." (1:18) We sometimes speak figuratively of the riches of a heavenly home for us. This statement shows us that God sees His people as "the riches" for Himself! God will "inherit" us from the world at the end of all things. (1 Corinthians 15:24)

Lastly, the apostle prays they will know "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." (1:19) God exerts great power toward benefiting those who are His children. He continues to explain that this great power is the same as that which has raised Christ from the dead. What does His great power do for the Christian? It saves us, gives us all spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3), and helps bring us to the ultimate victory. We must know that God is using His great power to help bring us to the reward! We are not alone in this struggle through life. We need not trust in our strength alone. We need but to lean more completely on the Lord and He will help see us through all difficulties!

God's Power and Grace

Ephesians 1:15-23

The Exalting of Jesus

“These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead...” (1:19-20) The power of God that is benefiting us is the same as the power which raised Christ. This great accomplishment continued to raise Christ to the Father “and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this act but also in the one to come.” (1:20-21) Only the Father Himself was excepted when all things were placed under Jesus. The power of God has given Jesus authority over all creation and all dominions. (Matthew 28:18-20) Paul continues, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (1:22-23) Although Jesus has authority over all, there is a special sense in which He has authority over His church. We are those who have willingly submitted to His authority and serve Him diligently. He is our head, we are His body.

Being Like the Ephesians

There are several things about the Ephesian church we would do well to imitate from this text. First of all, we should strive to have faith like they had. Their commitment to Jesus despite their community is commendable. (Acts 19:26-28) Their love for one another was well known even outside of Ephesus and was in accordance with God's command for all of us. (1 John 4:10-11)

We also should pray for and strive to know the hope, the riches of His glory in the saints, and the greatness of His power toward us. Without an “enlightened” heart concerning these things we may lose our trust and fortitude to make it to the end!

Lastly, let us remember to respect and honor the One with authority over all things: the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. As the Head of the church, He deserves our praise above all else! Are you honoring Him as the King of your life.

God's Power and Grace

Ephesians 1:15-23

Who likely brought word about Ephesus to the apostle? What word about the Ephesian church caused Paul to give thanks to God?

What is the “enlightenment” that Paul prays for these Christians to have?

God has great power toward us. What is He using His power to accomplish? What notable events did His power accomplish in Jesus?

If Jesus has authority over all things, why is His authority over the church singled out? What lessons should we learn from the statement?

God's Saving Plan

Ephesians 2:1-10

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 2:1-10

What was their former condition?

By what were the Ephesians saved?

What will God reveal in the ages to come?

What were we created in Christ for?

Ephesians 2 contains some of the most misunderstood statements in all of Scripture wherein commandments of God are so thoroughly disregarded by many religious groups that God's word is negated to the point of being merely suggestion. Context and harmony is our ally when seeking to determine the truth of God and this text is no exception.

Paul has spent the first chapter exalting God and the spiritual blessings given to us in Christ. He begins this chapter by reminding the Ephesians of their condition outside of Christ.

The Former Condition

It can be easy to forget where we've come from, and equally easy to lose sight of where we are going. This chapter opens with a reminder of the former condition that these Gentile Christians were in saying, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked... we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (2:1-3) The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and, as those living in sin, these brethren deserved its full reward. Both in the "flesh" and in the "mind" they were in rebellion to the truth.

The sinful practices of the Gentiles had been so long engrained in their society that from their youth their minds were at odds with the will of God. They were "by nature children of wrath" in that they only knew to do wrong, having practiced evil for so long! The idea of something being "by nature" due to longstanding practice can also be seen in 1 Corinthians 11:14 with reference to hair length. Romans 1:21-24 speaks of the Gentiles and how they had become so corrupted. We read

God's Saving Plan

Ephesians 2:1-10

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”

Despite the mindset of these Ephesians before they heard the truth, their situation changed with the introduction of the gospel.

Salvation from God

These people deserved death for their sins, but what could they do to change their situation? The condemnation resting upon them was of their own doing, but their salvation could not be of their doing. “But God... made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” (2:4-6) “Grace” refers to the fact that God granted to these individuals something that they did not deserve: salvation. Doing so, he has “seated us with Him in the heavenly places.” (See 1:3 and 1:20.) Spiritually speaking, they have been seated with Christ in heaven!

Note the three blessings named up to this point in the chapter and their imitation of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. They were dead in sin (2:1), God then made them alive (2:5), and raised them up (2:6), and seated them in the heavenly places (2:6). Paul uses the same illustration with regard to baptism in Romans 6:3-5. It was at the point of baptism that these things were accomplished for the Ephesians! (Acts 19:4-5) In fact, this same parallel is made in Colossians 2:12-14 with reference to baptism, a passage written at the same time as the Ephesian letter.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (2:8-9) Forgiveness of sins is not something that can be earned by man. Even when fulfilling the conditions placed upon the reception of some gift, that does not mean the gift is earned. In 2

God's Saving Plan

Ephesians 2:1-10

river 7 times in order to be cleansed. (5:10) When Naaman dipped himself, “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child...” (5:14) Having fulfilled God’s conditions, could it be said that Naaman earned the cleansing of his leprosy? Of course not! It was completely a matter of God’s grace! Such was the case with the Ephesians forgiveness through obedience to the gospel. (See also Romans 6:17, 23) No man can boast of receiving what they did not earn, whether Naaman or the Ephesians.

A New Purpose

Having been saved by God’s grace through the gospel, the Ephesians now needed to refocus their lives completely on God’s will. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (2:10) Sinful works of man had condemned them, God’s works of grace had saved them, now they must live their lives doing the “good works” that “God prepared beforehand.” Doing God’s will is not optional for a Christian, it is part of the commitment! Through His word they learned of the things that God desires for them to do. (3:4-5)

Learning From Ephesus

It is not fruitless for us to remember our former condition apart from Christ, just as these brethren were reminded. There was a time that we were completely lost and cutoff from God’s mercy. However, God’s grace made it possible for us to approach His throne again! We must be forever grateful for His mercy! Having been saved, let us focus our lives on His will and plan. As we study and grow we must always been looking for ways to more thoroughly apply the principles of God’s word to our lives. Even the revelation of His will is an act of grace! What we were “by nature” can and should be untaught through the renewing of our minds in Christ! (Romans 12:1-2)

God's Saving Plan

Ephesians 2:1-10

In what way were the Ephesians “children of wrath”?

What three things mentioned by Paul in this text parallel the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus?

Does the idea of salvation by grace mean that there must not be conditions placed upon salvation? Give an example to support your answer.

What works were the Ephesians to be seeking after as Christians? What are some examples of works that God has prepared for us?

All United in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 2:11-22

What were these Gentiles called by the Circumcision?

What did Jesus break down?

What did Jesus come and preach to those who were far away and near?

What is the whole building growing into?

Having discussed God's gracious plan of salvation for mankind, Paul now turns to speak of the unity that all men find in Christ. The level of animosity that existed in the first century between Jews and Gentiles is difficult for a modern student to truly grasp. It is helpful to recall, though, that the mere mention of uniting Jews and Gentiles in Christ led the mob in Jerusalem to cry out for Paul's execution. (Acts 22:21-22) However, in many churches both Jews and Gentiles were being saved and laboring together for the glory of Christ. The Ephesian church, being primarily a Gentile church, is spoken to by this one who was born a Jew about the blessings they both share in Jesus.

Gentiles Brought Near

The apostle does not hesitate to remind his Gentile students of the spiritual calamity that existed among them before the gospel. He says,

"Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision,'... were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (2:11-13)

Could the light of truth have been any darker among the Gentile nations before the preaching of the gospel? They had no connection to God's promises, covenants, or any abiding hope. "But now..." Things have changed for these Gentiles! Having heard the gospel call and responded they are now His children of promise, have a special covenant with Him, and an abiding hope. These blessings are in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament. (Psalm 22:25-27)

All United in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

Our Peace

Hostility had existed for so long between the Jews and Gentiles that it would seem unlikely, in human terms, for such feelings of animosity to cease in any sort of timely manner. However, the spiritual work of the Messiah is once again seen to be the hope in the darkness of sin. “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one... and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.” (2:14-16) Through one body (the body of Jesus) and one death (the death of Jesus) the enmity that existed between the two groups was removed. But how can this be?

Jesus’ death and resurrection accomplished many important tasks. One of those is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Jesus “broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in the ordinances...” (2:14-15) What was the difference between the Jew and Gentile? Was it not the covenant of God, the Law of Moses? By His death, Jesus removed the “Law of commandments,” thus “abolishing the enmity” between the Jews and the Gentiles. There could now be peace between the two in a new covenant open to all! (2:17)

Another statement regarding Christ’s death and the law is found in Colossians 2:14 where Jesus is said to have “canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” The decrees not only separated Jew from Gentile, but they also were “against us” in that they were only able to condemn. The problem was not with the law but with man’s lack of obedience to it. (Romans 7:12-14) The Law merely, then, stood as a condemner of all. Jesus removed the Law through His death so that man could be forgiven!

God’s House

Having removed the separation between Jew and Gentile the two could be built together into something new; God’s house. He says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints...” (2:19) “Fellow

All United in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

citizens” is a far cry from the distinction before. And they are all together with the “saints” to be found throughout the world. Paul uses the word “saints” much differently than modern religious groups. All of the Ephesians who were Christians were “saints.” (1:1, 15) In fact, all Christians everywhere were called saints by the apostle. (1 Corinthians 1:2, Romans 1:7, etc.) Through the death of Christ a sanctified people have been formed throughout the world of which the Ephesians were a part.

Now, they “are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord...” (2:19-21) God’s house, the church, is built on the work of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of this new spiritual temple of the Lord. As the Ephesians applied the inspired teachings to their own lives and to the local church Paul says, “you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” (2:19-22) Togetherness and mutual building in a new temple of God, the church, between Jew and Gentile! What a thing to marvel at!

God’s House in Mauriceville

There is much we may learn from in our local efforts as we consider these words. Like the Ephesians, we also were brought near to God despite the sin that formerly enslaved us. Whatever enmity may have existed between us and God or us and one another should be set behind us as weights that hinder our work. After all, if Jews and Gentiles can make it work, so can we!

We are laboring together in God’s house. It is a spiritual structure and is mightier and more beautiful than any that existed under Solomon! Through the death of Christ we have been made fellow citizens, saints, and co-laborers in this temple. Do you appreciate what Jesus has done and what we are being built into?

All United in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

Explain the relationship between Jews and Gentiles before the coming of the gospel? Give biblical evidence for your explanation.

What does the “peace” that Jesus brought refer to in this text? What was the source of the enmity?

Who are the saints that Paul speaks of in 2:19? Prove your answer from other New Testament passages.

Paul uses a metaphor comparing the church to a building and temple. Explain the parts of the image.

Revealing the Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-21

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 3:1-21

How was the mystery made known to Paul?

What “grace” was given to Paul?

Paul did not want the Ephesians to lose heart at what?

What is it that surpasses knowledge?

Paul was purpose driven. His labors are still marveled at nearly 2,000 years after his death. His journeys took him all around the Mediterranean, brought him much suffering, and eventually cost him his life. He had been forced to leave Ephesus after a local persecution arose against him and was writing to these brethren during an imprisonment in Rome. What would motivate a man to have such a drive? In this study we will see Paul’s explanation of his work as given to the Ephesians as well as the source of his spiritual understanding.

Paul’s Apostolic Purpose

Acts 9 records the event of Paul’s life that turned him from a persecutor of Christians to an apostle of Jesus Christ. After being set to his work, Paul primarily focused his energies on bring the gospel to Gentile nations. In his words, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you...” (3:1-2) He was a prisoner of Christ in that he was a servant of Christ and this work had led him to prison. (4:1) It was all done “for the sake of you Gentiles.” Without his labors far fewer Gentiles would have come to see the light of Christ.

He recounts, “by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ...” (3:3-4) The message that Paul preached was not of human origin, nor was it taught to him by a man. By “revelation” from God through the Spirit he was given this message. (See also 1 Corinthians 2:1-7.) Having received this message from God he passes it along to all who would

Revealing the Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-21

listen. This very letter, Paul is saying, is revealing the “mystery of Christ.”

Some have the mistaken notion that the Bible cannot be understood. Paul apparently disagrees! “When you read you can understand...” These things are meant to be studied and understood so that the mystery of Christ is made known. If there is any misunderstanding it is our fault, not Paul’s or the Holy Spirit’s!

Unveiling the Mystery

The work of the apostles was a special work that stands unique in all of the annals of history. Their job was to reveal what “in other generations was not made known... [but] has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.” (3:5) The Old Law contained many ‘shadows’ of what would appear in Christ and the new covenant, but these things were not clearly known until the work of the apostles and of the Holy Spirit. One specific revelation was regarding the fact “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel...” (3:6) This was the substance of much of the last chapter’s message. The removal of the Old Law and the introduction into a covenant offered to all mankind whereby all can be forgiven is an amazing revelation that is worthy of the life of Paul!

“To me... this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ..” (3:8) The “grace” given refers to Paul’s apostleship. As the ‘apostle to the Gentiles,’ his task was specifically toward revealing this mystery to them. He was given this work “so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” (3:10) Through the church this eternal plan of God is revealed to all, and the apostle particular mentions the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (See also 1:3, 2:6, 6:12) The revelation of God’s will through the building of His church has made known to even the spiritual hosts the great mystery. (1 Peter 1:12) We now have access to God through Jesus, which was the eternal purpose of God! (3:11-12)

Revealing the Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-21

Paul's Second Prayer

The importance of God's revelation and His selection of Paul as an apostle causes him to write his second prayer of this letter. (The first was in 1:18-19.) He says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man..." (3:14-16) God has placed so much importance on the message and, therefore, on the individuals who have received this message that Paul prays for the spiritual growth and strength in the "inner man" that they will need to press on the goal.

He then prays "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." (3:17) That is, that Christ is continually in the thoughts of these brethren and His teachings guiding their lives. Christ, the Father, and the Spirit are all said to 'dwell in' the saints, and they do so through our continued application and growth in what has been delivered to us! (4:6, 2 Timothy 1:14)

Paul also prays, "that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." (3:17-19) Paul would desire that they can comprehend that which surpasses knowledge; the love of God. Study alone cannot express to the heart of man what has been done to reveal God's love to us. How can a parent put into words the love of their child? It is beyond intellectual. Such is the love of God for us. May all strive to grasp it.

The prayer is ended with the exaltation, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." (3:21) I pray that we can bring to Jesus the glory the Ephesians were taught to bring to Him as we labor in Mauriceville. Let us pass these things on to the next generation and to all generations so that He will be praised in His church!

Revealing the Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-21



How did Paul claim to receive his gospel? Where are other statements from Paul to the same affect?

What specific truth was revealed by the preaching of Paul as mentioned in chapter 3? Why is it important to the Ephesians?

What “grace” was given to Paul? What responsibility went along with it?

What are the three desires of Paul in the prayer of chapter 3?

Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-16

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 4:1-16

What are the “one”s mentioned by Paul?

What does the expression “He ascended” mean?

Why were the positions in the church given?

How should we speak the truth?

Chapter 3 ended with a prayer and hope that the Lord would be glorified in the church for all generations. However, many churches fail to offer glory due to division and false teachings. Flowing naturally from the conversation on the revelation of the mystery and a prayer for the church, the apostle now speaks of how a church is to strive and attain unity in the Spirit.

Building Unity

Church unity starts (and sometimes ends) with the individual. Before a church can be properly knit together each person must seek to have the proper mindset and manner of living. “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (4:1-3) There is a proper way for Christians to “walk” in this life and in the church. To walk in any other way is to live in an ‘unworthy’ manner. “Humility and gentleness” are essential to having godly relationships. (Philippians 2:3-5) “Patience” and “tolerance for one another in love” are also key to building up a local fellowship. With all of these things the Ephesians are to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit” of the church. If these noble character traits define each individual then, with a love of truth, saints can work through any struggle that comes upon a church.

The Ephesians unity in the Spirit also requires a foundation of truth in the church. Paul enumerates seven ‘ones’ that are the foundational truths of the church. He says, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope

Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-16

of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (4:4-6) If each can agree on the meaning of these ‘ones’ then why can they not work through any other disputes? Are these not the ‘ones’ that brought the Ephesians from the darkness into the light? Understanding the true Father, Son, and Spirit, entering into the one body (the church- 1:22-23), taking hold of the hope of heaven and the faith that leads us home by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27) is what has separated us from the world. Paul’s desire is that the Ephesians will never forget that.

Grace Given by Christ

The apostle labored bring about the faith in these brethren to individually have the proper mindset. He taught the truths of Christ to give the church a sure foundation. His work was, he reminds them again, assigned by Christ. It is written, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men’... And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists , and some as pastors and teachers...” (4:7-11) The “grace” given is the same as that spoken of in 3:7-8. Paul is an apostle as assigned by God. Other ‘graces’ given to the church are mentioned in this text: prophets, evangelists (also called ministers and preachers), pastors (also called elders, shepherds, etc.), and teachers. While apostolic authority and prophecy are miraculous graces given, the other so-called graces are ‘gifts’ (gift and grace mean the same thing) placed into the church by Jesus Christ. Each of these offices was designed and set in the church by Jesus Himself since “He [Jesus] gave some to be...” (See also Matthew 16:18.)

Each position given by Jesus mentioned is “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (4:12-13) Each position adds to the whole and each individual is built up through the proper functioning of the church. The church is to be striving for the full “unity of the faith” and a solid “knowledge of the

Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-16

Son of God.” Each individual is to desire to be mature in the faith and grow closer and closer to the image of Christ. What a noble work!

One might ask, “Why aren’t deacons mentioned?” The cause for that is likely due to the nature of the work of deacons. Each position mentioned is dedicated to the spiritual growth of members whereas the role of deacon is concerned with physical responsibilities, albeit very important ones for the continuance of the church. (Acts 6:1-4)

Benefits in the Church

As a result of the positions put into place by Christ and the dedication of each member of the body Paul could say, “As a result, we are no longer children” believing every lie and false teaching of the world. (4:14) The lies are left behind and the glorious truth is in each heart. Now, “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (4:15-16) The Ephesian church is set to build itself up all the more. May we strive for the same level of maturity in self-sustaining edification as those brethren of so long ago!

Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-16

What is required for church unity as given in this chapter?

What are the 'graces' given in this chapter? Who gave them?

What are we to no longer be? What types of stumbling describe what we have left behind?

Explain the concept of speaking the truth in love? What does having this attitude mean to you?

The Old and the New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 4:17-32

Why are Gentiles excluded from the life of God?

What is the new self in the likeness of?

Who should we not give opportunity to?

Who should we not grieve?

Growing into an image of Christ as individuals and edifying the body together closed out the last study in 4:15-16. Now, the apostle contrasts the condition of the disobedient Gentiles with the Gentile Christians who are receiving this letter. Let us learn from these words to the Ephesians the true nature of a world without Christ.

The Gentile Walk

“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding...” (4:17-18)

Three things are to be discussed concerning the manner of living among the Gentiles. The problem begins in their minds. They walk in “the futility of their mind.” In other words, they trust in human wisdom and planning, trusting in their “darkened” understanding instead of the truth. The idea is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s words, “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” (Jeremiah 10:23) The Gentiles have no understanding of God and His light. So, instead, they walk according to their darkened minds and only find themselves in a worse condition than before.

Paul then says the Gentiles are “excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart...” (4:18) The life of God is the moral, holy, and righteous state of well being that can only be found in the Life-Giver. Their hardness of heart has kept them from seeing the light and sharing in His life.

“[And] they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity

The Old and the New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32



with greediness.” (4:19) Not thinking in the true terms and being cut off from the life of God, the Gentiles have given their lives to “sensuality” or ‘filthiness’ and ‘absence of restraint.’ They do not simply sin sometimes, they do so with “greediness,” never being satisfied with their moral decadence.

Christ’s Way

Despite the behavior of many Gentiles, the recipients of this letter “did not learn Christ in this way... that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self... and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind...” (4:22-23) The renewing of the mind is essential to growing in Christ. (Romans 12:1-2) These brethren were to take what they had learned in Christ and continue in it, lay aside their former sinful state, and think differently about life itself! They must “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (4:24) The spiritual purity that is attained by the Christian is not to be cast aside. The new self is “in the likeness of God”! Several concrete examples of the change from the old man to the new man are given in the next verses:

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each on of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” (4:25) It is not enough to merely stop lying. The old man lied, but the new man speaks truth-- even when inconvenient or uncomfortable.

“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not give the devil an opportunity.” (4:26-27) There are many reasons for a Christian to be angry. Anger at the sinfulness of the Gentiles is an emotion Christians share with God. However, they are to refrain from sinning even when angry. Self-control is the mark of the new man.

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.” (4:28) If a man merely stopped stealing he would be approved by many. However, the spiritual individual knows that they must work and give to others. “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of

The Old and the New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” (4:29) Whereas unwholesome speech used to pour forth from their lips, now the words we speak are to edify (build up) those around them, according to the moment. The tongue can impart so many good things if used well!

Grieving the Spirit

The effect of behaving like the Gentiles when one is a child of God is given in terms that should cause all Christians to pause before sin: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (4:30) The Holy Spirit has “sealed” the Ephesians, or put His mark of authenticity and ownership on them. (1:13) Would we desire this One to be ashamed of us because of our actions? Instead, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (4:31-32) Remembering what they had been forgiven will help them to be forgiving to one another. Jesus says, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

Like the Ephesians, we must strive to put off the old man and put on the new man. It is accomplished only with difficulty as we seek to renew our minds, but the prize to be attained in eternal and our Heavenly Father beams with pride at our victory. May we be children who bring Him joy and not heartache!

The Old and the New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32

Describe the walk of the Gentiles and its effects on those individuals.

What does it mean to “renew the mind”? Why is it important to the life of a Christian?

What examples does Paul use to reveal the change of action between the old man and the new man?

How is the Spirit impacted if we return to the old man? What is this image meant to convey to the reader?

Imitating God

Ephesians 5:1-21

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 5:1-21

Who are we to imitate and walk like?

Who cannot have an inheritance in the kingdom of God?

What were they formerly? What are they now?

What should they make melody with?

Paul spent the latter half of chapter four speaking of the “new self” they are to put on “which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (4:24) Chapters 5 and 6 continue the conversation by looking to the One these brethren are imitate and the practical applications of these principles to various relationships they experience. The majority of this study will focus on what it means to ‘imitate God’ when surrounded by a world of wickedness.

Imitators of God and Christ

How often Christians make excuses for their sin and the sin of others by comparing themselves to other people! “Well,” one might say, “at least I’m not like that person.” This type of self-justification is wrong for two reasons: First, a Christian should never excuse sin or downplay the damage it causes. Secondly, a Christian has set the bar too low when comparing themselves to others who are falling in sin! The apostle sets a nobler goal for the Christian to imitate, saying, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” (5:1-2) The Ephesians do not serve a hypocritical God who teaches one thing and Himself does another. The Father and Son are held up as examples to imitate! Saints are blessed to have a God who is Himself everything that He asks His children to be. Peter announces the same lesson with reference to the Father in 1 Peter 1:15-16 and John teaches the same principle of love from Christ’s example in 1 John 3:16. All have been shown a noble and perfect standard. Why set the bar low looking to the world?

Imitating God

Ephesians 5:1-21

Christ's sacrifice is called a "fragrant aroma" to God. The thought harkens back to the days of animal sacrifice and the obedience to God that the sacrifices revealed. (See Exodus 29:18) God was pleased and satisfied by Jesus' self-sacrifice for man's salvation.

Shunning Evil and Revealing Right

In contrast to the imitation of God, consider the behavior of the world. "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." (5:3-4) Self-control and purity are pictured in various ways by the apostle in these words. Even "greed" is to be put away from the child of God. "Coarse jesting" refers to immoral language or joking. Such things are to be put away from those who are seeking to imitate God. Jesus would not be part of such things, would He? Why behave as the immoral ones when we know that no immoral person has an inheritance in the "kingdom of Christ and God." (5:5)

Abstaining from sin alone is not even enough for the imitator of God. Paul says, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret." (5:11-12) Saints expose the true nature of the darkness by preaching God's message. As Paul has already explained, the Gentiles walk "in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding... because of the ignorance that is in them..." (4:17-18) Who better to teach them the way of truth than one of God's children?

Sin is darkness. All Christians once lived in darkness. Now the Ephesians know, "all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" (5:13-14) They are blessed to have had Christ shine on them that they might see the way out of the darkness! Having the light of Christ has caused them to "arise from the dead," which, spiritually, they were.

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (5:15-17) The Ephesians had wasted much of their past time in

Imitating God

Ephesians 5:1-21

this life doing what is evil. Paul's admonition in these verses literally means to 'buy back your time,' or to make the most of the time left because so much was wasted in earlier days! The "days" (or "seasons") are evil in that the practices of the world in these "days" are evil. Let no Christian be distracted by them!

Godliness in Relationships with Brethren

Paul begins a section of text at this point which focuses on the relationships that Christians have in this life and how it is that they are to imitate God and Christ's love in each one. The first he considers is the relationships the Ephesians have in the church.

Paul admonishes, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things... and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." (5:18-21) Drunkenness causes confusion and selfish outbursts. Christians, on the other hand, should be filled with the Spirit and worshipping God with an attitude of thanksgiving. The Ephesians should then be subjecting themselves to one another for the good of the whole. As Paul tells the Philippians, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3) This is the proper way to "submit" to one another in the church. There is a proper way to submit in every relationship among men. He has already discussed the plan for church unity and the work of the church (4:1-6, 15-16), but without individual submission in love to other brethren the plan quickly falls apart. 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14 reveal practical applications of this submissive attitude.

May we in Mauriceville ever strive to imitate God, reject the world, and submit to one another in love within this church!

Imitating God

Ephesians 5:1-21

Why is God worthy of our imitation? How does Jesus show a love we should imitate? Compare those ideas with what you know of pagan gods.

What things are named that we must avoid? What is the reason Paul gives to avoid them?

Explain the idea of “making the most of your time” and why we should.

What is the overall concept that should regulate our relationships with one another in the church? How do we accomplish it?

Godliness in Relationships

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Why did Christ give Himself up for the church?

What is the promise to children who honor their parents?

What will slaves receive back from the Lord?

What must masters give up?

The last study ended by beginning the conversation of godliness in relationships. 5:18-21 specifically discusses the manner in which the Ephesians should conduct their relationships in the church; with submission to one another and a focus on praising God. As this section of the letter continues, the apostle discusses the godly attitudes that ought to be found between husbands and wives, children and parents, and masters and slaves.

Marriage Illustration

Marriage was the first institution created by God in the Garden of Eden. Jesus looked back to that garden in Matthew 19:1-10 when explaining His will for marriage under the new covenant. It is no surprise, then, that the apostle has instruction for the manner in which husbands and wives are to behave in this God-given union.

Paul writes first to the wives, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.” (5:22-24) The wife’s attitude is to be one of submissiveness to the godly leadership of her husband. The illustration to communicate the concept of her submission is that of the church’s submission to Christ. Certainly the wife should not submit to sinful demands placed upon her by the husband, as the husband has no right to demand such things. Just as brethren are to submit to one another (5:21) in the areas where brethren should, so a wife should submit herself to the husband within the marital arena. A husband that does not receive respectful submission from his wife will lack the

Godliness in Relationships

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

strength necessary to plot a godly course for his home.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory... but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.” (5:25-28)

The illustration of Christ and the church continues while looking to the husband’s role. Jesus loved the church enough to give Himself up for her. Husbands must also give themselves up for their wives; their own will, desires, and selfish ambitions. The work of Jesus brought up the sanctifying of the church, her cleansing, and has prepared her to be presented to Himself like a bride on her wedding day. Likewise, the leadership of the husband to his wife ought to be to accomplish the goals for her that she needs, such as her comfort, security, and life provisions. A wife without a loving and selfless husband will lack the confidence and devotion necessary to build up a husband to the role of family leader.

“The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” (5:32-33) This section of text includes many thoughts that lead to deep discussions and consideration about the relationship between Christ and His church. However, the primary point that Paul is making is with reference to the husband and wife. To summarize the thoughts, husbands should be loving and wives should be respectful. If these words describe the attitudes of each party in the marriage then a happy home will blossom!

Children and Parents

Children are a blessing from the Lord and a great responsibility, as well. This relationship is divinely regulated for the building up of the home and for the glory of the One who gives life to all. The apostle writes, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” (6:1-3) Children are to obey their parents, another way of describing an attitude

Godliness in Relationships

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Certainly obedience is part of the thought, but this would also include the positive command to speak well of them and bring the home glory through positive representation. Jesus tells us that this idea also has a financial aspect in times of need. (Matthew 15:4-6)

Paul continues, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (6:4) ‘Provoking’ means “to exasperate, to anger with irritation because of injustice or needless severity.” (C.G. Caldwell, Ephesians.) This statement presents the concept of balance in training. While children must be discipline and raised in the instruction of the Lord, they also must not be burdened to heavily with rules and regulations from a father’s imagination.

Slaves and Masters

Lastly, the apostle instructs the Ephesians in relationships between slaves and masters. Many of the slaves during this time period were “bond-servants,” or people who had sold themselves into slavery in order to pay debts or provide a financial sum to their families. Paul says,

“Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart... knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.” (6:5-8)

Submission is once again depicted, this time from the slaves to their masters. They are to labor as though they are laboring for Christ, knowing that Jesus will reward their hard work without distinction between slave and free. (Galatians 3:28)

Masters are also admonished, “And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, know that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.” (6:9) The masters are also to ‘serve’ the slaves in that they are to look out for the slaves interests. Threats of violence ought to cease and, instead, the master should always remember that the Lord values master and slave equally.

There is a godly pattern of living for every relationship that we enjoy in this life. Let us continually look to God’s word that we might bring Him glory through every

Godliness in Relationships

Ephesians 5:22-6:9



What is the common thread that is mentioned in every relationship that Paul discusses?

Compare Jesus' devotion to the church with the role of the husband.

What does it mean to "honor" parents?

How does Jesus view the slave and the master? What will Jesus do for the slave who labors correctly?

War for the Soul

Ephesians 6:10-17

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 6:10-17

What must we stand firm against?

What is our struggle against?

What will the shield of faith do?

What is the sword of the Spirit?

Ephesians 6:10-17 is one of the most popularly known texts within this letter. The famous discussion of the spiritual armor has been used from the earliest times as a helpful word-picture to present the fully equipped spiritual warrior. Because of the amount of writing available about the specific pieces of “armor,” we will focus primarily on the ancillary statements of this text that are sometimes overlooked. The Ephesians were surrounded by a depraved culture much like the one we live within today. The apostle sought to hasten these Christians to prepare for the spiritual war that awaits them every time they leave their homes.

Standing Firm

Having discussed spiritual responsibilities of relationships in the preceding verses, Paul begins this section of text by urging, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil... so that you will be able to resist in the evil day...” (6:10-11, 13) Let us analyze each portion of this urgent plea.

A ‘self-help’ myth is constantly peddled in many churches today that suggests if a person will simply be the best version of themselves then they can overcome anything. The apostle, though, urges the Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” The idea is that they can only have the strength to overcome their spiritual enemies if they trust in the strength of the Lord. The idea is similar to Paul’s discussion of contentment when he says, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) By cultivating the spiritual qualities the Spirit has taught us in the word within ourselves we can

War for the Soul

Ephesians 6:10-17

find the contentment and fortitude to withstand evil. The term Paul uses to describe the spiritual tools from God that can equip Christians is the “full armor of God.” Trusting in themselves will not avail the Ephesians. Only by allowing the Lord to outfit them in His prescribed way will give them the strength they need.

They need a strong defense because of “the schemes of the devil.” They were not to believe their enemy to be a fool or to be weak. He has “schemes” to try and tear them down. He plots their downfall. Peter says, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) Not only that, but his attacks will be brutal and require ‘all hands on deck’ to overthrow. They are urged, “resist in the evil day,” that is, when Satan arrives to try and destroy them. He was scheming against them individual and against the church. He is doing the same today.

The Enemy’s Nature

The ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu writes, “Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster.” The apostle Paul is announcing this same wisdom to the Christian when he communicates the nature of a Christian’s spiritual enemies: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (6:12) Our enemy hides behind physical pawns, but his true nature and purpose is known to us.

Paul says we war “against the rulers, against the powers.” These rulers and powers are the same as was mentioned in 1:21 in the spiritual places and are likely references to “angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode” (Jude 6) and other evil things in the spiritual realms. The dark spiritual hosts are set in their will to destroy the church. Paul also speaks of “the world forces of this darkness” or the forces that are in the world to perform the will of the ‘rulers and powers’ of darkness. Christians war “against the spiritual forces of this wickedness in the heavenly places” or the ‘spiritual realm.’ (See 1:3) Do each of these terms refer to different types of evil beings? We do not know for sure. Nevertheless, the point is clearly made that we ought to be alert and sober minded regarding the forces of evil

War for the Soul

Ephesians 6:10-17

The Armor of God

How can a Christian stand against such an impressive host of enemies? The answer is, once again, through the strength of Christ. Our Lord has given us a spiritual armament that will equip us to defend against these enemies.

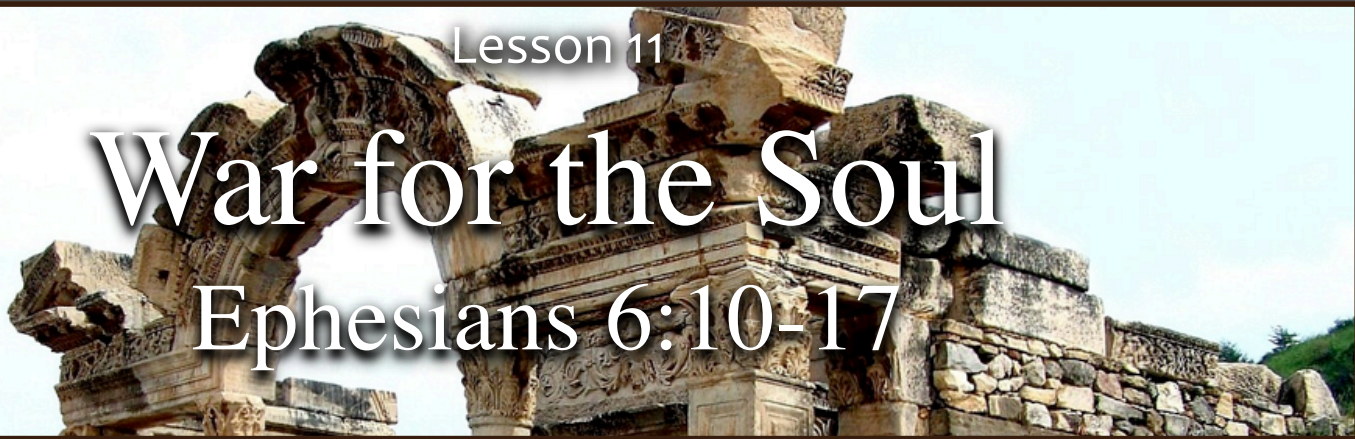
“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (6:14-17)

The pieces described would have been used to fully equip a professional soldier during the days of the apostle and would create a formidable warrior. Stripping away the imagery, we see that the things which make for a mighty spiritual warrior are truth, righteousness, preparation in the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. If the Ephesians would make each of these a cornerstone of their personal faith then the church could stand together as a mighty spiritual fortress and a beacon of hope to the lost.

May we also strive be more trusting in the strength of the Lord and to be thus equipped by Him in spiritual armament. Imagine the fight we could wage against the forces of darkness if we made each piece of the armor a goal to achieve in our own lives!

War for the Soul

Ephesians 6:10-17



How does Paul's teaching overthrow the 'self-help' teaching of many religious groups today? How should we find strength?

Describe Satan's work against the church. What is the "evil day"?

What do we war against? Explain the nature of our enemy.

What are the things which make for a spiritual warrior for Christ? How can we gain these things?

Mutual Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-24

IN PREPARATION

Ephesians 6:18-24

What prayer does Paul request for himself?

Who is Paul sending to the Ephesians?

Why was that person sent?

What does Paul pray for grace to be with?

The apostle Paul prepares to end the letter to the Ephesians with an exhortation and request for prayers from these brethren whom he had grown to know so well. Paul has repeatedly shown his devotion to prayer in this letter. He has offered two prayers for the Ephesians (1:18-19, 3:14-19) and exhorted them to be “always giving thanks for all things.” (5:20) Now, again, he speaks of the value of prayer to the Christian.

Prayer Requests

Prayer is powerful. When God’s children approach His throne with petitions they can be assured that He hears them and is concerned for their well-being. With this fact in mind, Paul commands, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...” (6:18) The thought “in view” refers to the spiritual war as studied in the last lesson. Knowing that they face a determined and powerful foe, the Ephesians should be prayerful about their condition in the fight and about “all the saints” who are waging the same war on different fronts.

Although the Lord established churches with local autonomy, we should still have a vested interest in the gospel’s success in other places. The spiritual war is not limited to our hometown. Our brethren all over the world are seeking the lost and defending against the attacks of the evil one. Let us pray for their success as well as our own.

As a personal plea, Paul asks for them to “pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the

Mutual Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-24

gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (6:19-20) The apostle has a burning desire to preach God’s truth so he requests prayers that he may receive both opportunities and the boldness necessary to prick the hearts of men. These things were so thoroughly on his mind that he made the same request of the Colossian Christians.

“Devote yourselves to prayer... praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.” (Colossians 4:2-4)

Paul’s humility shines through in his words to both churches. First, he recognizes that there is a way he “ought” to speak and so there must be a way he should not speak God’s word. Many seem to think that ‘as long as I am speaking truth then nothing else matters,’ but the apostle Paul knew that it takes wisdom to properly spread God’s message. He tells the Colossians, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” (Colossians 4:6) The message must be “clear,” “bold,” “truth” (4:15), “in love” (4:15), and properly for “each person.” Second, Paul recognizes that his opportunities to preach are given by the will of God, which is why he asks for prayers to gain opportunities. He does not trust in his own wisdom apart from God’s providence to be a successful preacher. Third, Paul knows that he could fail to do what was required in a moment of weakness and so asks that brethren pray for him to be bold. In other words, Paul knows that he can stumble and fall just as all Christians can. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Sending Tychicus

The love Paul has for the Ephesians once again becomes apparent as he discusses his efforts to comfort the brethren who were concerned about his imprisonment. One might expect an imprisoned person to bemoan their condition and seek pity from others. However, Paul attempts to comfort others concerning his condition and even sends messengers to assure the brethren that he is doing fine. For this mission to the

Mutual Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-24

“But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.” (6:21-22)

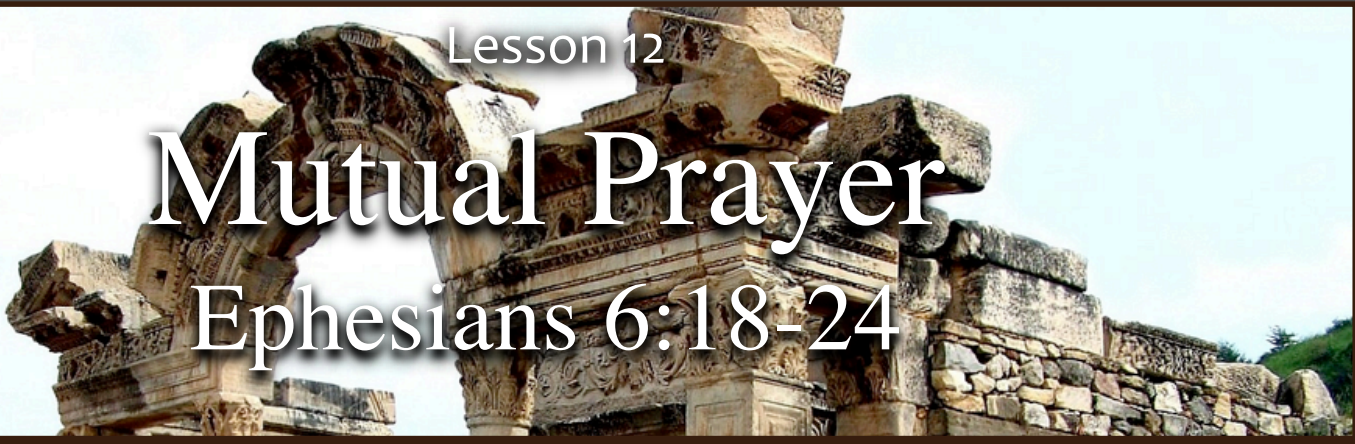
In a time where news and updates often traveled slowly, it could be a heart-wrenching experience to await news of a loved one who was in trouble. Paul did not want such energies exhausted over his condition. No one enjoys seeing those they love in mourning. Paul had the same concern for the Philippians when they were concerned about the health of Epaphroditus, one of their brothers and a helper of Paul. He quickly sent the man back home in order to comfort the Christians. (Philippians 2:25-30) Those types of considerations reveal the self-sacrificing attitude the apostle had for the children of God. He was willing to be inconvenienced and even burdened in order to alleviate the sadness of others. Truly, his attitude is an example to all believers.

Final Prayer

In closing the letter the apostle pens one final prayer for the Ephesians: “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.” (6:23-24) Peace, love, and grace are all spiritual blessings that God offers freely for His children in Christ’s church. These simple words depict an attitude and calm assurance that can steady our hearts in an unstable world. I pray that we can enjoy peace in our hearts through the comfort of God, love with faith toward one another, grace to save us in the last day through the sacrifice of the Son. May we all endeavor to keep a love for our Lord that is incorruptible.

Mutual Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-24



In what ways does Paul's prayer requests concerning his work reveal his humility?

Why is Paul sending Tychicus to the Ephesians? When is another time that Paul did something similar for the same reason?

What spiritual blessings does Paul pray for the Ephesians to have as he closes the letter?

What passage in the book of Ephesians is of greatest impact to you at this point in your life? Why?

This book belongs to:
