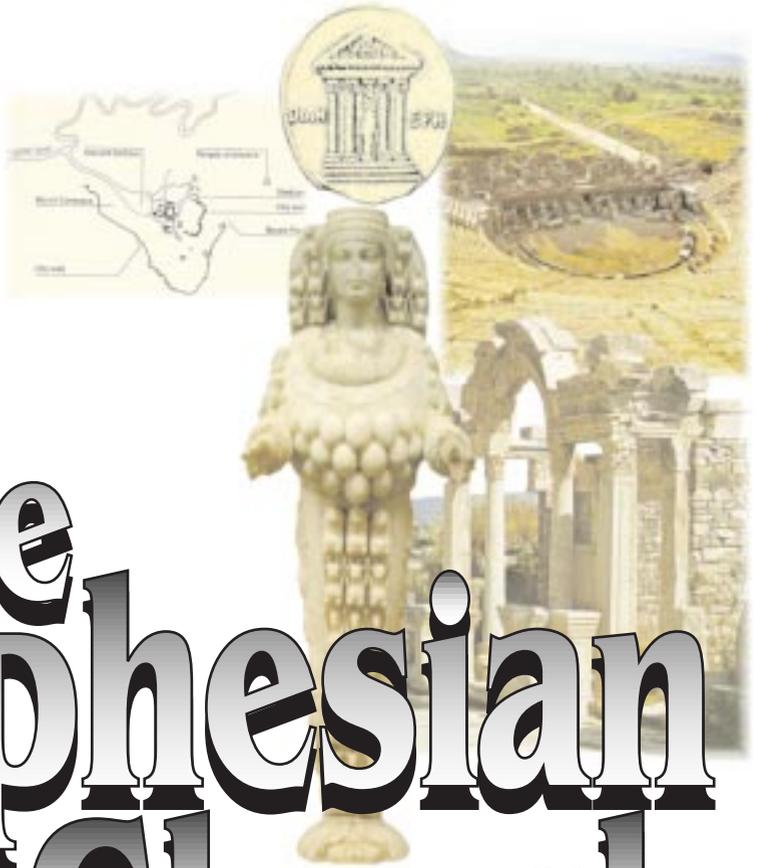


# The Ephesian Church

The Only New Testament Church  
Examined by Three New Testament Writers

Morris McDonald





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## **The Ephesian Church**

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## The Ephesian Church

The Ephesian Church is unique in the treatment it receives in the New Testament as three inspired writers record God's evaluation of the work there. Luke wrote of its **formation**, Acts 18,19, then of its **foundation**, Acts 20. Paul recorded its **fulness** in Ephesians 1-3, then its **focus** in Ephesians 4-6. John was inspired to point to the Ephesian church's **failing** in Revelation 2:1-7.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, before committing to a visit there, saying, *I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries*, I Corinthians 16:8,9. Three things may be observed about the great missionary apostle here. First, he was a man who followed plans in doing the work of the Lord, second, he always viewed his ministry in terms of opportunity to do a work for God, and third, he thrived on opposition. Would not many of us have said, I do not think I can do much here because there is opposition? Paul was different and this was the leader God used to develop the church witness in Ephesus.

Further, the Ephesian Church counted among its leaders Paul, Timothy, and John. We know Paul spent at least three years in Ephesus but we are not told the length of ministry Timothy or John had there.

In the Ephesian church we find six elements that make up this church's foundation in its beginning:

1. A Godly Leadership. Not only did Paul, Timothy, and John minister there, but there were trained, Godly ruling elders.

2. A Gospel Message. The church begin with the preaching of the simple gospel of faith and repentance, Acts 20:21.
3. A Genuine Ministry. Paul is open about his ministry in their midst, *servng with all humility...with many tears, and I am pure from the blood of all men*, 20:19,26.
4. A Grave Warning. *Take heed therefore to yourselves*, 20:28. While many omit this from their ministry, Paul **emphasizes** the terrible prospect of wolves coming in to devour, as well as false prophets arising from their midst to carry them away from Christ. Paul was a faithful minister, not a run-of-the-mill positive gospel pulpiter who wouldn't even make the devil mad.
5. A Glad Prospect. *I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up*, 20:32. What better comfort than to be left in the hands of God. Jonathan Edwards preached, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God"—a much needed message, but let us remember to preach also, "Saints in the hands of a loving God!"
6. A Graceful Parting. When a man's ministry is done, he should be in a position to part gracefully. Paul labored to complete the work in Ephesus, to bring the church onward to a place of maturity in Christ. See Ephesians 4:12,13

*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* (Ephesians 3:20,21)

## The Ephesian Church

The Church at Ephesus is the only New Testament Church examined under Divine microscope by three inspired Bible authors.

Luke records the Ephesian Church chosen in Acts 18-20

- Acts 18, 19                      The church's formation
- Acts 20                              The church's foundation

Paul records the Ephesian Church challenged in the book of Ephesians

- Ephesians 1-3                      The church's fulness
- Ephesians 4-6                      The church's focus

John records the Ephesian Church chastened in Revelation 2

- Revelation 2:1-7                      The church's failing

*“I will tarry at Ephesus ... for a great door and effectual is opened unto me.” (1 Cor 16:8,9)*

## The Ephesian Church — Its Formation

### A Church Chosen, Acts 18, 19

A study of the **Church at Ephesus** is profitable for the following three reasons:

1. It is the only New Testament church of which three inspired writers have taken note:

Luke writes from the vantage point of history in Acts

Paul writes from the vantage point of testimony in Ephesians

John writes from the vantage point of eternity in Revelation

2. It is the only New Testament church of which three of its leaders are known:

Paul oversaw its beginnings,

Timothy continued its development, and

John directed in its maturing

3. In the Ephesian Church may be observed patterns both of church leadership and Church building in a more complete form than any other New Testament church

The **City of Ephesus** was the most important Asian crossroads city in what is now western Turkey. It was a seaport city on the Aegean Sea. At the time of Paul's ministry there, beginning about 53 AD, Ephesus was an important commercial, banking, and cultural center. Rome, Athens, and Corinth lay to the west while Caesarea, Damascus, and Jerusalem lay to the east. It was made up of many

cultures and was celebrated for its religious importance among the pagans of the day.

The temple and statue of Diana were destroyed 356 years before Christ, on the very day Alexander the Great was born. Its reconstruction is said to have taken 220 years. The rebuilt Temple of Artemis “ranked as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world until its destruction by the Goths in 263 AD. Fragments of its richly sculptured columns may be seen in the British Museum. Silver coins from many places show the validity of the claim that the goddess of Ephesus [Diana] was revered all over the world.” (John Bimson, Baker, 1995, p. 130) The city wall enclosed some 1,027 acres of land with the Temple of Artemis its central feature. The temple building was 425 feet long (130 meters), 220 feet wide (67 meters), and had 127 pillars that supported a roof that rose to 60 feet (18 meters) above the ground. Very little of this temple area has been reconstructed, but massive marble columns lie on the ground and a portico has been set in place to give an idea of the massive size of this temple building. A long, wide marble street is still in place at the site. A small Moslem village called Selcuk is nearby today. We were welcomed in the town square when we visited there in 1978. An important church council met in Ephesus in 431 AD.

### **The Ephesian Church:**

Of this church, Paul said, *I will tarry at Ephesus...a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries*, I Corinthians 16:8,9. Paul addressed them as *an apostle of Jesus Christ*, as *the prisoner of the Lord*, and as *an ambassador in bonds*, Ephesians 1:1, 4:1, 6:20. Paul wrote that this church had received *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*, and they were *accepted in the beloved*, Ephesians 1:3,6. These believers were, *saved by grace, sealed in the Spirit*, and *strengthened with His might*, Ephesians 2:8, 1:13, 3:16. They were admonished to *walk worthy of their calling*, to *walk in love*, and to *walk as children of light*, Ephesians 4:1, 5:2,8. The Ephesian Christians were to *be kind one to another*, *be followers of God*, and *be filled with the Spirit*, Ephesians

4:32, 5:1,18. They were not to be *carried about by every wind of doctrine* and *not to grieve the Spirit*, Ephesians 4:14,30. Admonished to *put off the old man*, they were to *put on the whole armor of God*, Ephesians 4:22, 6:11. As God's children, they were to *keep the unity of the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit*, and to *pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*, Ephesians 4:3, 5:18, 6:18. In Acts we find the church at Ephesus chosen, in Ephesians it is challenged, and in Revelation it is chastened.

## **Part 1: Acts 18:19-28**

18:19-22 — Paul ends his second missionary journey

18:23 — Paul begins his third missionary journey

18:24-28 — The ministry of Apollos in Ephesus

Note: As we begin, our aim is to follow the Puritan Principle of Bible Teaching:

- 1) Read the text plainly in a language the people understand,
- 2) expound doctrine that naturally arises from the text,
- 3) give the plain teaching of the text as it relates to the whole of Scripture,
- 4) make application to the hearers.

### **1. The church at Antioch, 18:22**

- a. Became the epi-center of Christian missions with the ministry of Paul and his associates
- b. Beginning at Acts 13, this church was the focal point of Christian activity
- c. Background information about Antioch: It was the chief city of Syria and third in importance in the Roman empire, behind Rome and Alexandria. It was a Gentile city with a large Jewish population. Believers were *called Christians first in Antioch*,

Acts 11:26. From this church Paul and Barnabas sailed on the first missionary journey, see Acts 13:1-3.

## **2. Three aspects of Paul's third missionary journey, 18:23**

- a. Follow-up with the churches in Galatia and Phrygia, with his main ministry in Ephesus
- b. Follow-up with the churches in Macedonia and Achaia
- c. Follow-up with the Ephesian Church, with visits to Macedonia, Corinth, Troas, Miletus, and Caesarea. (Time period covered four years plus, Acts 18:23 to 21:17)

## **3. Apollos, a man *mighty in the Scriptures*, 18:24-28**

This young man was a learned Jew from Alexandria (Egypt) which was a center of Greek learning and culture, as well as a place of refuge for the Jews

- a. Apollos was noted for five things:
  - 1) *an eloquent man*,
  - 2) *one mighty in the Scriptures*,
  - 3) *instructed in the way of the Lord*,
  - 4) *fervent in the spirit*, but
  - 5) had no knowledge of the cross work of Christ, of the truth of the resurrection, and awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit
- b. Aquila and Priscilla heard him teach and were led to *expound unto him the way of God more perfectly*, 18:26. The word is *katechemenos*, lit, "to catechize." Later, when Paul went to Macedonia, he wrote to Titus, who has been left with the work in Crete, Titus 1:5, requesting that he come and bring *Zenas the lawyer and Apollos*, Titus 3:13.

Observe here the good graces for a consecrated servant of God:

- 1) young ministers should be taught by mature Christians,
- 2) *they took him in*, revealing the character of those who are willing to assume responsibility,
- 3) young Christians need to be teachable,
- 4) those who love the Lord need to be confirmed in the gospel.

Lesson: Here was a leader who was teachable - *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*, II Timothy 2:15.

- c. Apollos goes to Corinth and is used by God to *mightily convince the Jews*, 18:28. G. Campbell Morgan declares, “A fit instrument is always to be found. The operation of the Spirit may be limited by the instruments (men), but is unlimited by the power of God!” Note: Here is the setting for I Cor. 3:4,6,7; *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos...I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. For we are laborers together with God.* Matthew Henry notes that when Apollos came to the fuller light and experience, he went to Corinth to do for Paul in Corinth what Paul did for him in Ephesus. Paul could do his planting in Corinth, and be successful; then Apollos did the watering. When Paul came to Ephesus he found the planting of Apollos, and his work will water it, trusting God for the increase

## **Part 2: Acts 19:1-41**

19:1-20 — Paul ministers in Ephesus

19:21,22 — Paul’s journey to Greece

19:23-41 — Uproar in Ephesus

## 1. A question of baptism: Paul meets converts of Apollos, 19:1-7

v. 1, *finding certain disciples*- Paul has returned to Ephesus, following his earlier visit to establish this church, 18:19-21. Specifically, he encounters twelve (v. 7) who are asked, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* It is helpful here, I believe, to follow the exact aorist participle which emphatically denotes past completed action that makes this “when ye believed.” Moulton’s Greek Grammar notes this word is “doctrinally important.” The Pentecostals and charismatics want to use this verse to support their second blessing teaching, that salvation is one step, while receiving the Holy Spirit is a second or additional step. We believe the Holy Spirit indwells the convert at the moment of salvation. Further empowerment may, however, be given as needed, as in time of deep distress or trial.

v. 3, *Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism*- the baptism of John (the Baptist) was preparatory. Matthew Henry allows that they were convicted, convinced, and converted, but untaught. v. 4, John’s work was the prologue, the Spirit’s work the drama played out on the stage where there is forgiveness, fulness, and freedom.

v. 6, *the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues*- Again to take a note from Matthew Henry, “The unusual Spirit manifestation was to ensure that those of Ephesus understood the vast difference between being a disciple of John and of Jesus.”

### Understanding the methods of the Holy Spirit

1. Acts 2, at Pentecost the Spirit fell on believers; the order was, baptism, then the Spirit (Spirit given to empower the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem)
2. Acts 8, converts in Samaria (v. 14-17); the order was baptism, then the Spirit (Holy Spirit given as the gospel is extended beyond Jerusalem, into Samaria)

3. Acts 10, in the household of Cornelius (v. 44-48) they received the Spirit, then were baptized. (Spirit is manifested as the gospel was given to the Gentiles)
4. Acts 19, followers of Apollos, baptism is administered, then the Spirit is given. (Holy Spirit is given as the gospel went to “the regions beyond”)

Note: The gift of tongues either came before or after water baptism, it came with or without the laying on of hands, and it came only when attended by an Apostle. We can not base a doctrine upon two or three stories when there are many variable within those stories as to order and design.

## **What the Bible Teaches about Speaking with Tongues**

- The possession of the Holy Spirit is immediate upon conversion (See: I Corinthians 12:13, John 14:16,17)
  - The practice of speaking with tongues was limited to Apostolic times (See: I Corinthians 13:8, Acts 15:12, 19:11)
  - The purpose of speaking with tongues is to affirm the gospel to the lost (See: I Corinthians 14:22, Acts 2:6,8,11)
  - The place of speaking with tongues is that of the least of the spiritual gifts (See: I Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31)
  - The peril of tongues speaking is that it often brings confusion into the church (See I Corinthians 14:8, 26-28, 40)
  - The perversion of tongues speaking was that women usurped the use of this gift (See: I Corinthians 14:33,34)
1. The plain truth about speaking with tongues is that Jesus Christ never taught tongues speaking while on earth. John, James, Jude, and Peter wrote nine New Testament books but never once mentioned this gift. Paul wrote thirteen New Testament books for instruction to churches and to young ministers and only mentioned this subject to one church. His purpose in writing to

that one church was to deal with tongues speaking as a problem in the least spiritual of the New Testament churches.

## 2 Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus, 19:8-10

v. 8, the Holy Spirit directs in the inspired record to give glimpses of the Apostle's ministry rather than a chronological accounting. Paul did not stay long in some cities, for some were so apathetic they did not even mount opposition, but in Ephesus, he declared, *a great door and effectual is opened upon me, and there are many adversaries* (I Corinthians 16:9). G. Campbell Morgan notes, "The difficulty of the situation created the greatness of the opportunity." *disputing and persuading*, the word "disputing" is *dialegomai*, lit. "to speak thoroughly, to reason through, as in a dialogue." Close examination of the gospel turns away the hostile heart and draws in the humble heart. Paul went into the synagogue, explains Matthew Henry because "there he had them together and had them, it might be hoped in a good frame."

v. 9, *He departed from them*, indicates there are times and good reasons to practice separation. In 18:20, there was a plea for Paul to stay on, but God's Spirit was directing him to leave. Now, there was opposition and an evil speaking of *that way*, so Paul left behind his three-month ministry in the synagogue. Peter's exhortation was, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation!* (Acts 2:40). *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing*, II Corinthians 6:17; *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, Ephesians 5:11; *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds*, II John 10,11. There are never times to fellowship with and promote those who oppose the Word of God. There are times to stand in the gap and take on those who oppose the work of God and there are times to separate or leave and follow the

command of the Word of God to preserve a clear, clean witness for Christ.

3. *God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul*, v. 11,12

God chose to confirm the witness of the Apostles by miracles, including signs and wonders. The Bible records no miracles at Thessalonica, Berea or Athens, but evidently many at Corinth. In II Corinthians 12:12, Paul wrote, *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, wonders, and mighty deeds.*

In v. 19, note the inspired order, *God wrought ... by the hands of Paul*. God is first, his servant is the instrument used to perform the work. Regarding v. 12, they brought handkerchiefs and aprons, either their own or those taken from Paul. One needed merely to touch the hem of Jesus' garment to gain healing. This does not teach us a pattern for our use in the church today, notes Matthew Henry. In a note of warning, G. Campbell Morgan, great preacher at the Westminster pulpit in London, said, "A miracle is not a demonstration that the spirit producing it is good."

### **Why Signs and Wonders and Are They to Be Expected Today?**

- A. There are counterfeit signs and wonders - Matthew 24:24, *For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders.*
- B. God has a specific purpose for signs and wonders - Matthew 4:23, *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* This was a normal part of our Lord's earthly ministry. Acts 2:22, *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth,*

*a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you.*

- C. Miracles accompanied the work of the apostles to authenticate their ministry - Mark 16:20, *And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*. Acts 4:7, *And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have ye done this?* II Corinthians 12:12, *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you ... in signs and wonders and mighty deeds*.
- D. Miracles do not necessarily lead people to believe in God - Matthew 11:20, *Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.* Luke 16:31, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*
- E. Some people will be led astray by exhibitions of signs and wonders - Matthew 7:22, *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me.* II Thessalonians 2:8,9, *And then shall that Wicked be revealed ... even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders*.
4. Subtle opposition from the adversary, but God's work is extended, v. 13-20 When certain *vagabond Jews... took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits* and take control of them, as they observed Paul doing, they were, claims Matthew Henry, trifling with spiritual things. Those who know nothing of the work of Christ in the heart have no place attempting to claim the power of God to do some great work. The evil spirit asks, *Who are you?* They were imposters therefore, God judged them! *This was known to all the Jews and Greeks ... and fear fell on them all, and the name of Jesus was magnified. And many that*

*believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds.* What follows is a remarkable event. Evidently, church people had sought instruction in the black arts but the force of holy conviction is so great that they burned what must have been a small mountain of books! Better to commit wicked things to the flames than let them fall into the hands of an innocent person. A Judas might sell them for a bit of silver, but would you want silver from that which was sent your way to damn your eternal soul? Matthew Henry says, “Those [who] are recovered from sin themselves will do all they can to keep others from falling into it.”

v. 20, *So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.* The word “mightily” has the force of something that is “overpowering, irresistible.” It is a blessed sight for those who love God to see the church built and growing and to see the gospel prevailing against opposition.

5. Paul leaves to minister in Asia, 19:21,22

*Paul purposed in the spirit ... to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome ... but he stayed in Asia for a season.* Lightfoot suggests that at this point the Roman emperor, Claudius has died, therefore Paul perhaps believed this would be a providential occasion to visit that city. The great missionary might have retired for a few months following strenuous labors in Ephesus, but this is not his makeup. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia for a special follow-up ministry, while he stayed in Asia to extend the gospel work there. It is at this time Paul wrote I Corinthians. In I Corinthians 15, we find, *Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do ... the churches of Asia salute you, Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you,* v. 10,19,20. Can you see the warm relationship that existed among these early churches? They were strangers and pilgrims in a hostile world.

## 6. The Ephesian uproar, 19:23-41

v. 23, *And the same time there arose no small stir about that way*. Here is an interesting Bible expression we do not use much today. Hebrews 10:19,20 instruct us, *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us*. This expression appears at least seven times in the book of Acts: 9:2, Paul sought those *of this way* to bring them bound unto Jerusalem; 18:25, *This man [Apollos] was instructed in the way of the Lord*; 19:9, [they] *spake evil of that way before the multitude*; 19:23 (above); 22:4, Paul testifies, *I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women*. Also, 24:14, Paul again gives witness, *But this I confess unto thee, [Felix] that after the way which they [Paul's accusers] call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets*; 24:22, *And when Felix heard these things, having a more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them [that is recessed the case for a time]*.

## **Great World Religions are in Opposition to the Gospel and are not “other ways to God”**

J. Gordon Holdcroft, beloved Bible Presbyterian missionary of years gone by, has recorded in his important book on the early extension of the gospel the following: “The jealousy and hatred of great heathen religions is understandable, for these are not, in final analysis, as some suppose, merely the result of man’s dim groping for the light. Much less are they so many pathways to God, as certain ‘Christian’ theologians, and even missionaries, would have us believe. Rather they are, in a very large measure, the expression of that age-long enmity foretold at the dawn of human history when the Creator said to the serpent, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head,*

*and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* (Genesis 3:15; Holdcroft, INTO ALL THE WORLD, p. 160)

v. 24-41, In extended notes on this section, Matthew Henry appears to rejoice in the obvious success of the gospel as noted here.

**First**, he observes the victories of the Word of God, v. 25-27, *Ye see and hear, claims Demetrius, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people ...but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificance should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.* One of the most lucrative occupations of that area was the manufacture and sale of miniature representations of the statue of Diana, usually done in silver. They were sold widely.

**Second**, Henry takes note of the nature of the opposition, against which God raised up

- a) one man sold out to doing God’s will,
- b) signs suited to the needed testimony, and
- c) a church that stands purified when books of curious arts were destroyed.

**Third**, a peril against the liberty to preach the Word of God now appears. However, a) God instead instituted a rapid spread of the gospel throughout the whole region, and b) the opposition, although meeting in conference, v. 25, are beset by confusion! See v. 29, *And the whole city was filled with confusion,* and v. 32, *Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together!* Paul held a consistent testimony before his enemies. William Culbertson once said, “Help me to live today as I will have wished I had lived this day in that day.”

v. 35, the town clerk speaks and appeases the crowd, but one must be wary here, as Morgan notes, “The church patronized has always been the church in peril, and very often the church

paralyzed.” When the true Presbyterian believers in Cameroon took their stand against the World Council of Churches, the ecumenical church obtained by various means the aid of the political officials to suppress God’s people who separated *for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*, Revelation 1:9. Pastors and elders were thrown in jail, their churches were padlocked and various properties were confiscated. Today, after 30 years, a faithful remnant is still standing. “The church persecuted is the church pure and the church powerful.” - G. Campbell Morgan

## **Summary and Application**

Charles Spurgeon said, “We are not charged with the responsibility of making converts any more than we are in the making of cabbages or carrots. Our task is to sow the seed. The results are with God. We are proclaimers, God is the producer.” This was Paul’s view of his ministry, *God gives the increase*.

Here we have observed the bulk of the time of Paul’s third missionary journey. His ministry in the city of Ephesus was the Apostle’s main goal and from the inspired record, we would have to say God indeed gave the increase. In the next chapter we see the great value God places on the church, which He has purchased with His own blood. Here we have had set before us the formation of the church at Ephesus. There was Paul’s visit at the end of his second missionary journey, which was step one. Next came Apollos, who became better equipped to minister and he labors in Ephesus. This was step two. On his third journey, Paul spends at least two years, three months in Ephesus, making this step three. In 19:20, the Holy Spirit gives us a one-line evaluation, *So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed*. Then an estimate is made by unbelieving towns people, *Moreover ye see and hear; that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people* [from the worship of Diana], 19:26.

We see stages of development and leadership change in the Ephesian church. Apollos, Paul, Timothy, and John. It has been said

there are three generations of church leadership generally found in the modern church:

1. Those who confront the issues that made necessary the formation of a new church body (the generation who rose up to fight, men schooled in the high principles of the truth of the Word of God).
2. Those who maintain the struggle in building a viable work for God (the generation who remember, but did not live in the battle, men who continue to hold the torch of truth).
3. Those who depart from maintaining a strong offense, seeking a more neutral and conciliatory stand (the generation who forgets, who avoid the struggle, then go soft; men who long for a broader appeal, while still professing to hold to the “old truths”).

**David Brainerd**, faithful missionary to the American Indians, said, “Oh how precious is time; and how guilty it makes me feel when I think I have trifled away and misimproved it, or neglected to fill up each part of it with duty, to the utmost of my ability and capacity.” His ministry which was so greatly used of the Lord lasted hardly more than three years.

**Franklin Logsdon** tells of the president of a Christian college who entered the chapel service one morning with a most solemn demeanor. Following the hymn, he stood to speak to the student body and said, “I have just received a phone message bearing sad news. A fine young man who graduated from this school three years ago has died suddenly.” A hush fell over the students. Scanning the upraised faces of the young people, the president asked, “If all you desire to do, if all you hope to do, had to be crowded into three short years, what would you do differently today?”

## **The Ephesian Church — Its Foundation**

### **A Church Chosen, Acts 20**

In the book *PATTERN FOR CHURCH GROWTH AND MISSIONS*, Timothy Tow writes, As Paul was earnestly heading to Jerusalem by Pentecost, he decided to call the elders to meet with him at Miletus ... The church of Ephesus was uppermost in his mind inasmuch as he had put his whole heart and strength in the training of this pivotal church. We may call Ephesus the Antioch of the West. His instructions to the Ephesian elders may be summed up as follows:

1. He had taught them by example and expense against much opposition.
2. He had emphasized the Gospel in their repentance to God and faith toward Jesus Christ.
3. He was prepared to face the persecutions that were awaiting his return.
4. He had not shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God.
5. He desired them to be good pastors to feed the flock and guard against wolves, after his departure
6. He desired them to be the more watchful against traitors that would arise from within the Church.
7. He desired they would follow him in self-support, not be lured by covetousness, and to give than to receive, as taught by Jesus. (pages 104,105)

## **A review of Paul's schedule of visits to Ephesus:**

18:19, Paul *came to Ephesus* . . . . 18:21, Paul *sailed from Ephesus* (about 9 months time)

19:1, Paul *came to Ephesus* . . . . 20:1, Paul *departed into Macedonia* (2 years, 3 months time)

20:16, Paul *determined to sail by Ephesus* . . . . 20:38, *They accompanied him unto the ship* (Paul ministered in Ephesus at least 3 years, the main part of his third missionary journey)

## **What was the secret of Paul's steadfastness?**

- First, His adherence to God's will:
- v. 18, consistent
  - v. 19, compassionate
  - v. 20, complete
- Second, His witness for Christ:
- v. 21a, extensive
  - v. 21b, elementary
  - v. 22, earnest
- Third, His doctrinal teaching:
- v. 20,21, trustworthy
  - v. 24, thorough
  - v. 27, total

### **1. Paul departs from Ephesus, following the uproar, v. 1-5**

v. 1, *departed for to go into Macedonia*—notes in the second Corinthian letter tell us a little more here: 2:12, 13, *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.* Also, 7:5,6, *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God,*

*that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus. Then in 9:1,2, For as touching the ministering to the saints ...for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.*

We see how the two accounts are intertwined. The Apostle is beset by fightings and fears, he is disappointed not to find Titus at Troas, but later writes that Titus came to him, which is a comfort. In Acts 19:22, we note that Paul had previously sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, intending to follow, but then we are told, *he himself stayed in Asia for a season*, prior to the disruption in Ephesus. Although apart from Ephesus, he is not far away, extending the gospel outreach. It is at this time the uproar over Diana erupts. First, Paul is inclined to go there but is detained by good reasoning from his friends, *desiring that he would not adventure himself into the theatre*, 19:30,31. A sign of a good leader is his willingness to accept counsel. *He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul*, and *In multitude of counselors there is safety*, Proverbs 15:32,24:6.

The theatre at Ephesus could seat up to 24,000, so possibly a large crowd had gathered. A Jew named Alexander is brought from the crowd and attempts to make a defense, but the crowd was not interested in listening to him, and, *all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. This is when the townclerk steps in and quiets the unruly townspeople and the crowd disperses.

v. 2, Paul comes now into Greece, to Corinth, *and there abode three months*. Recall that Paul had already spent a year and six months in Corinth on his second journey according to Acts 18:11. This verse notes that as Paul proceeded into Macedonia, on his way to Corinth, he *had given them much exhortation*. Paul has left the area of Ephesus in distress, passed through Troas, expecting to find Titus and is exercised over not finding him there, then settles at Macedonia for a brief ministry there. Look at II Corinthians 2:14,15, and we shall discover what truly motivates Paul: *Now thanks be unto*

*God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.*

As Paul finds an increase of ministry, he is once again triumphantly bold in Christ. It is at this point that Paul wrote II Corinthians and sent it on ahead with Titus and others. II Corinthians 8:16-19, *But thanks be to God, which hath put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you . . . And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord.* The Apostle's care of each church was intense, always foremost in his labors for Christ.

v. 3, *Certain Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria* (to Antioch). To avoid this threat against his life, Paul returns through Macedonia, accompanied by seven assistants. Recall what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake,* Philippians 1:29. William McDonald remarks in his commentary on this verse that God cares that we:

- a) fret not—because God loves us, I John 4:16—*we have known and believed the love that God hath to us;*
- b) faint not—because God holds us, Psalm 139:10—*Thy right hand shall hold me;*
- c) fear not—because God keeps us, Psalm 121:5—*The Lord is thy keeper.* Between the two visits to Macedonia, 19:21 and 20:3, Paul wrote his letters to the church at Thessalonica.

v. 4, We know little of these seven. Friends of gospel workers may only be revealed in heaven. Sopater is perhaps the Sosipater of Romans 16:21. Gaius is mentioned as Paul's host in Corinth in Romans 16:23. Aristarchus is from Thessalonica and nearly lost his life in the riot in Ephesus, according to Acts 19:29 (the Gaius named in v. 29 is probably a man of Derbe, not the man from Corinth). Of

course Timothy we recognize as a convert of Paul's ministry and later the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Tychicus, a native of Asia Minor, was one who was with Paul during his second imprisonment. Trophimus was possibly a Gentile of Ephesus. He went with Paul to Jerusalem and was unwittingly the cause of the Apostle's arrest, 21:28,29. He is mentioned in II Timothy 4:20. These traveled on ahead to Troas, while Paul and Luke visited Philippi. We determine that Luke was along because of the personal pronoun "we" in v. 6.

## **2. Paul's preaching in Troas, v. 6-12**

v. 6, The Holy Spirit wisely sketches portraits, rather than trying to gather together all the details so that we become lost in the maze. Here at Troas is an interesting vignette of God's servant doing what he loved to do above everything else. Note that not only does he spend the night preaching and teaching, but at first light, he immediately departs on his journey according to v. 11. The days of unleavened bread refers to the Passover.

v. 7, *And upon the first day of the week when the disciples were come together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* As Christians everywhere now do, they came together on resurrection day, breaking bread as we saw back in Acts 2:42. As also in John 20:19,26 and I Corinthians 16:2—but here in Acts is the first verse linking worship to the Lord's Day. Transition for Sunday as the Christian day of worship, notes Donald Gray Barnhouse, was gradual as there was no direct command to change from Saturday or Sabbath worship to a Sunday gathering of believers. "The Sabbath was based on the seventh day when God finished *the first creation*. The Lord's Day was, and is, based on the first day of the week when Jesus rose from the dead to give validity to *the new creation*." (Barnhouse, ACTS: AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY, Zondervan, 1979, p. 184) Note that the Lord's table is here accompanied by the gospel. We must not miss those special occasions in the church to press home God's Word when hearts are tender.

v. 8,9 Paul preached until midnight whereupon a young boy fell from a window and *was taken up dead*. Miraculously, the boy was brought back to life and Paul counsels, *trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him*. Matthew Henry notes the following,

- a) the parents brought the young boy to hear the gospel [possibly 8 to 10 years old-the age when all boys love to climb!],
- b) the boy grew weary, for it was the hour of sleeping time. Paul imitates the actions of Elijah in I Kings 17:21 and Elisha in II Kings 4:34. Barnhouse tells sometimes in his meetings, someone will come up afterwards and say, “Oh, Dr. Barnhouse, I enjoyed your message, I wish you had gone on for another hour.” He says, his reply is something like this, “Well, I’m not able to raise the congregation from the dead if they fall off their seats after falling asleep. So I always stop on time.”

*THE LORD’S DAY- “The market day of the soul.”*

*A day set aside to plan and make purchase of those things lacking in the spiritual cupboard. A day of effort directed toward the end of meeting the needs of one’s soul.*

*Can you imagine a mother who makes no provision to resupply her kitchen? A mother who leaves unattended bare shelves? What of a father who makes light of attending to that one market day as unimportant to his family?*

*Christian, how the soul cries out for sustenance! Children deprived of spiritual nutrition, fathers and mothers unconcerned about the life supply of God’s spiritual banquet.*

### **3. Paul travels to Miletus, v. 13-16**

v. 13, Paul, *mind[ing] himself to go afoot*. His friends sail southward along the Asian coast, but Paul takes time to go overland for about 20 miles. Why? The fact is, he is somewhat pressed to get to Jerusalem, not even daring to make a stopover at Ephesus, a church so dear to his heart. Let Matthew Henry speak to this point. Paul had been in the company of many friends and assistants but now

he seeks solitude. Both are necessary for us. In making this journey on foot, he:

- a) could call on friends along the way,
- b) commune privately with God over some important matters, and
- c) may have wanted to appear not to indulge himself, but endure hardness as a good soldier, II Timothy 2:3.

v. 16, *Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hastened, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.* The uproar (chapter 19) hastened his departure. Now, he desires to be in Jerusalem. It had possibly been as long as four to five years since he had been there. His love for the Church at Ephesus is so great that he does not shirk his duty to spend time ministering to them, although asking them to travel some 30 miles to come to the port city of Miletus. What do we make of Paul, a New Testament Christian, keeping the feasts? There are those in the church today who rail against any kind of Christian celebrations, be it Christmas, Resurrection Week, or Reformation Day. There was no Biblical command for Jewish believers in Christ to take part in these festivals, which in some cases were actually added to the law and were nowhere commanded by God. Yet here is Paul having part in a these ceremonies, which violated no Biblical principle.

#### **4. Paul meets with the Ephesian church leaders, v. 17-21**

v. 17, He *called the elders of the church.* We simply must pause as one might do when awakening to the vivid rays of a sunrise over a snowcapped mountain with its fresh light sparkling across the blue waters of a mirror-like lake before you. Matthew Henry invests over 10,000 well-chosen words in his attempt to elucidate this remarkable passage of only 22 verses. William McDonald says, “In it [the message Paul has for the elders] we have a valuable portrait of an ideal servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see a man who was fanatically devoted to the Savior. He labored in season and out of

season. He was tireless, indomitable, indefatigable. He was marked by true humility. No cost was too great for him to pay. His ministry was the result of deep exercise of soul. He had a holy boldness and fearlessness. Whether he lived or died was not important; but it was important that the will of God should be carried out and that men should hear the gospel. He was unselfish in all that he did. He would rather give than receive. He was undaunted by difficulties. He practiced what he preached.” (Bible Believer’s Commentary, Nelson, 1990, p. 463)

v. 18, *And when they were come to him . . .* In our Bible safari through these 22 verses, we will observe the following four things that make up the foundation of the Ephesian church:

1. Its leadership, 20:17-19
2. Its gospel (content), 20:21,24-27
3. Its teaching (method), 20:20,27,32
4. Its purity, 20:28-31

These verses contain Paul’s only recorded address delivered specifically to Christians, notes F. F. Bruce. Paul is the central figure here and we see the following about him as he and his ministry are laid before us.

1. 18-21 Paul’s conduct
2. 22-24 Paul’s conviction
3. 25-27 Paul’s commitment
4. 28-35 Paul’s charge
5. 36-38 Paul’s compassion

*Ye know. . .* Paul begins to lay out the ministry he had in their midst. *Serving the Lord with humility; I kept back nothing; I am pure from the blood of all men.* Do you think the Apostle was genuine? If he had been false they could have said, “No you haven’t. You did not do those things here.” Matthew Henry remarks, “He preached the

gospel, not as a hawker proclaims news in the street, but as a conscientious witness gives in evidence at the bar [in a court of law], with the utmost seriousness and concern.” Henry lists Paul’s preaching qualities:

- a plain preacher—*I have taught you,*
- a powerful preacher— *I kept back nothing,*
- a profitable preacher—*profitable,*
- a painstaking preacher—*publicly and from house to house,*
- a faithful preacher—*declare unto you all the counsel of God,*
- a [careful] preacher—*both to the Jews and also to the Greeks,*
- a truly Christian evangelical preacher—*repentance and faith.*

v. 21, *God . . . commendeth all men everywhere to repent,* 17:30.

Paul obeyed as a faithful minister of the gospel, to call upon men to repent, as in 26:20, *that they [Gentiles] should repent and turn to God, and do works meet [suitable] for repentance.* Earlier the record of Acts noted, *Him [Jesus] hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* In repentance we look to God as the one who ordered the covenant promises, and in faith we look toward Jesus Christ as our way to God. Here are two elements of the gospel that mark the salvation message. Neither are conferred upon the basis of merit, but are given by the grace of God

## **5. Paul’s singleness of purpose, v. 22-24**

v. 22, *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem.* Paul was bound in the sense of being prepared for trouble, or he was bound with the idea that he was subject to a great resolve to go to Jerusalem, or further, he was bound in the sense of being bound to a higher calling, *Woe is me if I preach not the gospel,* I Corinthians 9:16; *Make full proof of thy ministry,* II Timothy 4:5.

There was certainly good reason for him to go to Jerusalem, according to Romans 15:25,26, *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.* Likewise in I Corinthians 16:1f, *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia . . . to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.* And further in II Corinthians 8:1f, . . . *the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

## **Suffering and Success in the Gospel**

Suffering and success go together. If you are succeeding without suffering, it is because others before you have suffered. If you are suffering without succeeding, it is that others after you may succeed. (words from a message given at the dedication of the Judson Memorial Church in New York City)

v. 23,24, *bonds and afflictions abide me.* Paul does not know what awaits him in Jerusalem, but a discerning servant of Jesus Christ senses danger. Matthew Henry notes the Apostle's firm resolve to proceed. F. F. Bruce observes, "Self-preservation was not a motive highly esteemed by Paul; his main concern was to fulfill the course." Paul was as one running a race, always eager to cast aside any *weight or sin* that might beset. In I Corinthians 9:24, Paul says, *Know ye not that they which run a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?* Further in Galatians 2:2, *Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Again, Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain,* Philippians 2:16. And finally, in II Timothy 4:7, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*

Barnhouse incorrectly, I believe, argues that Paul here steps out of the will of God, that he should have proceeded on to Rome and avoided Jerusalem, basing his thoughts on the word “spirit” in v. 22, being little “s” and not the Holy Spirit. That is, Paul was following his spirit and not the Holy Spirit. My answer is this, does not the Holy Spirit work in our spirit, lead through our spirit, and convince us by means of a sanctified spirit, with good sense?

Paul wanted to *finish [his] course with joy*. Paul always had the highest purpose in mind in whatever state he was in at the time. Note Paul speaks of testifying of *the gospel of the grace of God*. Matthew Henry states, “Paul made it the business of his life to testify this, and desired not to live a day longer than he might be instrumental to spread the knowledge and savour and power of this gospel.”

**On Paul’s going to Jerusalem** in light of Acts 21:4:  
*And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days, who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.*

Calvin writes: God gave Paul through the Spirit warning of bonds awaiting for his venture.

The believers who sounded a warning had not the complete picture, so spoke in truth the peril waiting Paul.

## 6. Paul’s pattern of apostleship, v. 25-27

v. 25, *shall see my face no more*. Matthew Henry remarks that Paul is saying, “Seeing my ministry is at an end with you, it concerns both you and me to reflect, and look back.” Why would he not see them again? First, because there is much opposition and second, because of much labor that is before him. Paul challenges them to consider the quality of his work—*I am pure, I have not shunned*, a reminder that he has been a faithful watchman on the wall, Ezekiel 33:6, *But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the*

*trumpet, and people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*

Matthew Henry notes:

- a) “He had preached to them nothing but the counsel of God, and had not added any inventions of his own: it was pure gospel [meaning the entire Biblical faith] and nothing else.”
- b) “As he had preached to them the gospel pure, so he had preached it to them entire; he had gone over a body of divinity among them, that, having the truths of the gospel opened to them methodically from first to last in order, they might the better understand them, by seeing them in their several connections with, and dependences upon, one another.”
- c) “He had not shunned to do it; had not wilfully nor designedly avoided the declaring of any part of the counsel of God. He had not, to save his own pains, declined preaching upon the most difficult parts of the gospel, nor, to save his own credit, declined preaching upon the most plain and easy parts of it; he had not shunned preaching those doctrines which he knew would be provoking to the watchful enemies of Christianity, or displeasing to the careless professors of it, but faithfully took his work before him, whether they would hear or forbear.”

v. 26, *I am pure from the blood of all men.* The apostleship was: a ministry for Christ, (under the direction of the Spirit). The apostleship was: a ministry from Christ, (in the power of Christ). The apostleship was: a ministry about Christ, (His cross work for sinners, His intercessory work for saints). Paul was assured of this purity because of his watchfulness over his own testimony as well as the faithful discharge of every facet of his ministry while he was with the church in Ephesus.

## 7. Paul's charge to the Ephesian church leaders, v. 28-35

v. 28, Paul charges them to be diligent and faithful in the work under their care, *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.* “Now this eagle stirs up the nest, flutters over her young,” says Henry, “They must learn to fly themselves, and to act without him, for the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.” Moreover, “Dignity calls for duty; if the Holy Ghost has made them *overseers of the flock*, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust.”

- a) They must first take heed to themselves and have “a jealous eye upon all the motions of their own souls.”
- b) The elders must minister as the Spirit gives opportunity, some to one part, others to another “according as your call and opportunity are.”
- c) In doing all the parts of the shepherd's office, “they must feed the church of God.” Further from Henry, “Take heed to the flock, that none of them either of themselves wander from the fold or be seized by the beasts of prey; that none of them be missing or miscarry through your neglect.”
- d) They must watch, that is be awake, be watchful, not giving “way to spiritual sloth and slumber, but must stir up themselves to their business, and closely attend it.”

In summary, from Matthew Henry, the elders are to take heed:

- a) to yourselves, for “you have many eyes upon you, some to take example by you, others to pick quarrels with you,”
- b) to the flock, “ministers must not only take heed to their own souls, but must have a constant regard to the souls of those who are under their charge, as shepherds have to their sheep.” Also,
- c) to feed the flock, “They must feed the church of God, must do all the parts of the shepherd's office, must lead the sheep of Christ into green pastures,” and

d) to watch over the flock, “They must watch as shepherds keep watch over their flocks by night, must be awake and watchful, must not give way to spiritual sloth and slumber, but must stir themselves to their business and closely attend it.” Ezekiel 34:2 pronounces solemnly, *Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherd feed the flock?* In the same vein, Peter says, *Feed the flock which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind,* I Peter 5:2.

v. 28b, *The church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood. The church is of special interest to the Master:*

- a) it is His possession—*I will build My church,* Matthew 16:18;
- b) it is His by purchase—the world is His by creation, the church is His by redemption, *Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it,* Ephesians 5:25;
- c) it is His for its purchase was of a great price—*Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me,* John 17:6.

v. 29,30, *After my parting shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. The danger that surrounds the church is of special significance:*

- a) those from without—Pharisees, Jewish sects, Judaizers who mix law and gospel (wolves); and
- b) those from within—leaders who go astray or compromise, people who are carried about by every wind of doctrine, false accusers, high-minded, lacking submission to the brethren and leading others astray.

Paul wrote to Timothy, *Thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me!* II Timothy 1:15. Also, *Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, and Evil men shall wax worse and worse,* II Timothy 2:18, 3:13. Peter wrote in reference to Paul, *As our beloved Paul ... in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be*

*understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures to their own destruction, ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness, II Peter 3:15-17. John 10 has much to say about sheep and wolves: *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep, 10:13.**

Satan's attacks against the work of the gospel follow a pattern in the book of Acts. In Acts 1 we find the believers in prayer in the upper room. In Acts 2 we learn of the power that came upon them. Then, in Acts 2 and 3, we see the proclamation of the gospel. Then, in Acts 4-8, Satan mounts fierce persecution. The persecution drives God's people to prayer, resulting in a pouring out of God's power, followed by a proclamation of the Word of God. This results in more persecution. This is a pattern in the book of Acts and in church history.

v. 31, *Therefore watch. The special interest Paul exhibited in planting this church:*

- a) faithful watchman—*watch and remember,*
- b) public preaching diligently applied—*taught you publicly and from house to house,*
- c) constant in ministry—*warned everyone night and day,*
- d) ceased not although some rejected and some received,
- e) a labor accompanied with affection—*with tears.*

v. 32-35, *I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.* Matthew Henry interprets the Apostle's words thusly: "Whatever you want, go to God, let your eye be ever toward Him, in all your straits and difficulties, and let this be your comfort, that you have a God to go to, a God all-sufficient." They were,

- a) commended to God, and

b) to the word of His grace. This “word” is none other than Christ, see John 1:1. This works in you to not only *build you up* but also *to give you an inheritance. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*, Psalm 23:6. On the word “grace” Paul recognized it was only grace that saved him (Ephesians 2:8,9) and only grace that kept him in the ministry, *the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus*, Acts 20:24. Note, please the last verse of the book of Acts, 28:31, *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him*. What victory! Paul is in prison in Rome, Nero is on the throne, and the churches are scattered far away. Yet, consider this, the Jews who sought to silence him were also far away and as yet, Rome had not made a pronouncement against Christianity for it was still considered an insignificant sect. On that basis Paul was free to give the gospel to guards, prisoners, visitors and all who might come within the sound of his voice. God makes *the wrath of men to praise Him, and restrains the remainder of it*, Psalm 76:10.

Paul reminds them, v. 33,34, that he had not sought to profit from his labors in their midst, *I coveted no man's silver*. Philippians 4:11, *For I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content*. Then further, Paul says, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. Matthew Henry says, Paul was attempting to teach them that, “The less encouragement they receive from men, the more they shall have from God.”

## **8. Paul's compassion for the Ephesian church leaders, v. 36-38**

v. 36, *he kneeled down and prayed with them*. We may observe from such a prayer as this,

- a) it was a joint prayer,
- b) it was a reverent prayer in kneeling,

- c) it follows hard on his sermon and warnings to them (a reminder for ministers to pray for those to whom we preach) and,
- d) a parting prayer of passion in a farewell to a beloved church family.

## **Summary and Application**

The Westminster Confession of Faith, in chapter five on the Providence of God, says: “As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so after a most special manner, it taketh care of His Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.”

After the martyrdom of Stephen and the ensuing persecutions against the church, God took Saul, the church persecutor and turned him into Paul, the church planter. The person and power of God are the balance point of the Apostles and the Church in the book of Acts.

J. B. Phillips writing about this period of history said, “[at no time has] any small body of ordinary people so moved the world, that their enemies could say, with rage in their eyes, ‘These men have turned the world upside down.’”

## **What were the elements of the foundation laid in the church at Ephesus?**

1. A Godly Leadership. Not only Paul, Timothy, and John, but evidently spiritual-minded church elders. There were lay people who responded to the Christ-centered ministry of the apostle Paul. Some marks of the kind of leader Paul was are revealed in Acts 20: compassion, conviction, commitment, composure, and courage.
2. A Gospel Message. *Testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 21.*

3. A Genuine Ministry. Paul is open about his labors in their midst, *serving the Lord with all humility ... with many tears, and I am pure from the blood of all men*, v.19,26.
4. A Grave Warning. *Take heed therefore to yourselves*, v. 28 While many today omit this from their ministry, Paul emphasizes the terrible prospect of wolves coming in to devour and false prophets arising from their midst to carry them away from Christ. Paul was a faithful minister, not a run-of-the-mill positive gospel pulpiter who wouldn't even make the devil mad.
5. A Glad Prospect. *I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up*, v. 32. What better comfort than to be left in the hands of God. Jonathan Edwards preached "Sinners in the hands of an angry God"—a much needed message, but let us remember to preach also, "Saints in the hands of a loving God!"
6. A Graceful Parting. When a man's ministry is done, he should be in a position to part gracefully. Too often there comes in a divisiveness, a bitter parting for some reason. It is hard for a church to lose its pastor, but when that time comes, let it be done in the spirit of Ephesians 4:32, *Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*.

### **Work for the Night is Coming**

Work for the night is coming, Work thru the morning hours;  
Work while the dew is sparkling, Work mid springing flowers,  
Work when the day grows brighter, Work in the glowing sun;  
Work for the night is coming, when man's work is done.

# **The Ephesian Church — Its Fulness A Church Challenged, Ephesians 1-3**

## **Wonder at our Position, Wonder at our Salvation, Wonder at our Condition**

### **The Apostle Paul**

The stature of Paul and his ministry is noted in James Stalker's Life of St. Paul:

We have a monument of his success in the churches lying all around Ephesus which St. John addressed a few years afterward in the Apocalypse; for they were the indirect fruit of Paul's labors. "But we have a far more astonishing monument of it in the epistle to the Ephesians. This is perhaps the profoundest book in existence; yet its author evidently expected the Ephesians to understand it.

If the orations of Demosthenes, with their closely packed arguments between the articulations of which even a knife cannot be thrust, be a monument of the intellectual greatness of the Greece which listened to them with pleasure; if the plays of Shakespeare, with their deep views of life and their obscure and complex language, be a testimony to the strength of mind of the Elizabethan Age, which could enjoy such solid fare in a place of entertainment; then the epistle to the Ephesians, which sounds the lowest depths of Christian doctrine and scales the loftiest heights of Christian experience, is a testimony to the proficiency which Paul's converts had attained under his preaching in the capital of Asia.

Matthew Henry’s introduction includes this note, “It is an epistle that bears a date out of a prison: and some have observed that what this Apostle wrote when he was a prisoner had the greatest relish and savour in it of the things of God. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound.” This letter is one of Paul’s four prison epistles, the others being Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

In no other church was Paul’s affection so deep and personal. Acts 20 reveals that intimate relationship. However, when we come to this book, it is almost devoid of affectionate references or personal reminiscences such as one finds in other church epistles—so much so that reading these six chapters one might think this could have been a letter to a church the Apostle had never visited.. As to an answer, we may first lay down the argument that God is free to sovereignly operate in different ways.

Second, many commentators suggest the letter was suited more for Gentile Christians of that area and not more narrowly for only the Ephesian Church.

Third, it is undoubtedly a letter written for general distribution among the churches of that part of Asia.

The book of Ephesians divides into two distinct sections, the first having to do with the believer’s position (chosen in Christ, saved by grace, seated in the heavenlies) and the believer’s practice (walk worthy, be followers of God, be strong in the Lord). Here is the outline we shall follow:

Chapters 1-3 Our Standing in Christ

Chapters 4-6 Our Service for Christ

## **Chapter 1 • Wonder at our position**

1:1,2 Paul’s Salutation to the Believers—*Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints*. Paul never moved away from the conviction that he was a minister only because of God’s call upon

his life. John Newton said, “None but He who made the world can make a minister of the gospel.” Note II Corinthians 2:12, *Our sufficiency is of God, Who hath made us able ministers of the new testament.*

Are you a saint? Paul addressed his letter to saints but the Church of Rome teaches you have to be dead before you can become a saint! Paul was writing to believers in Christ. If you are saved, you are a saint, even though you may not always act very saintly. All who have been born again are set apart and made holy through the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Paul uses the word “saint” in every chapter in this book, 1:1,15,18; 2:19, 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; and 6:18. Someone has noted that the two titles in verse one, “saints” and “faithful,” have this meaning; the saints are those who have standing in Jesus Christ, but the faithful are those involved in service for Christ. This reminds us again of the basic outline of this book. This book opens and closes with a thought about grace: 1:2, *grace be to you*, and 6:24, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul uses the words grace and peace together in writing to Jewish and Gentile converts. *Charis* or grace is a favorite word of the Greeks, while *shalom* or peace is a favorite word of the Hebrews.

### **1:3-14 Paul’s praise to God for blessings in Christ**

v. 3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*. Paul now lifts up praise in highest exaltation to God in heaven as he begins to trace salvation from eternity past, through the present, and on into the future. The expression “heavenly places” appears five times in this letter—1:3, 20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12.

In the Greek, verses 3 to 14 comprise one sentence, revealing God’s eternal purpose past (our election), present (our salvation), and future (our inheritance). Paul opens by drawing attention to our “riches” in Christ. Ephesus was the banking center of that part of the world. Trade brought untold wealth to this crossroads city of

## **Our Blessings in Christ**

Ephesians 1,2

We are <u>in Christ</u>	1:1
We are <u>blessed in Christ</u>	1:3
We are <u>chosen in Christ</u>	1:4
We are <u>adopted by Christ</u>	1:5
We are <u>redeemed by Christ</u>	1:7
We are <u>centered in Christ</u>	1:10
We are <u>heirs in Christ</u>	1:11
We are <u>glorified in Christ</u>	1:12
We are <u>sealed in Christ</u>	1:13
We are <u>people of faith in Christ</u>	1:15
We are <u>given wisdom in Christ</u>	1:17
We are <u>provided with hope in Christ</u>	1:18
We are <u>given power in Christ</u>	1:19
We are <u>quicken in Christ</u>	2:5,6
We are <u>in heavenly places in Christ</u>	2:6
We are <u>saved by grace in Christ</u>	2:8,9
We are <u>created unto good works in Christ</u>	2:10
We are <u>made nigh by the blood of Christ</u>	2:13
We are <u>given access through Christ</u>	2:18
We are <u>growing together in Christ</u>	2:21

thousands of inhabitants. Note Paul’s terms: “riches” in v. 7,18; “inheritance” in v. 11,14,18. We have many blessings in Christ.

*Hath blessed us* is past tense, signifying completed action, yet the *heavenly places* is future. Paul is describing something, however, that is the believer's present possession. We are strangers here but citizens of heaven.

v. 4, *Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.* Here is the wonderful doctrine of election. It simply means, salvation begins with God, not man and it is a work done by Christ, not man. When Christians grasp the truth that God chose them before the foundation of the world it is a wonderful revelation. When we stand and sing in worship, that grand hymn, "The Church's One Foundation," doesn't it thrill your soul, as you begin those words in stanza two, "Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth?" We know God elected:

- a) a nation according to Deuteronomy 7:7, *The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people....*
- b) We also know that God chooses people for service, wholly without any appeal to their will, as He did the prophet Jeremiah, *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee...and I ordained thee a prophet*, Jeremiah 1:5.
- c) So, in like manner God ordains or elects in the matter of salvation, as we learn from Acts 13:48, *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Did not Jesus say, *All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*, John 6:37. Paul's pronouncement found in II Thessalonians 2:13,14 should settle the question of whether God elects in the matter of salvation: *Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto He called you by our gospel.*

v. 4 tells us that our salvation leads to our being *holy and without blame before Him*. I believe it makes good sense to place the last two words of this verse at the beginning of verse 5, so that it reads, *In*

### Spurgeon Said It!

“When I came to London as a young minister, I knew very well that the doctrines which I preached were by no means popular. What a storm was raised! I was reading the other day a tirade of abuse which was poured upon me about twenty years ago. I must have been a horridly bad fellow according to that description, but I was pleased to observe that it was not I who was bad, but the doctrines which I preached. I teach the same truths now, and after having preached them these four and twenty years or so, what can I say of the results? Why that no man loses anything by bringing the truth right straight out. I wish to bear witness, not about myself, but about the truth which I have preached: Nothing has succeeded better than preaching out boldly what I have believed, and standing to it in defiance of all opposition, and never caring a snap of the fingers whether it offended or whether it pleased.”

*love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ....* God’s electing purpose is based in both His love and His holiness. It does not say, “Because God foresaw some would be holy, therefore he proceeded to elect them.” He chose that we might become holy. Let us rest our heart and our minds in the closing phrase here, if we find it hard to grasp this magnificent truth: *according to the good pleasure of His will!* That settles it, doesn’t it? It continues on into v. 6, *To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.* Hosea 14:9 says, *The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.*

Samuel Davies, American colonial minister and evangelist, wrote these words in a hymn we use in our churches today: “Great God of wonders! All Thy ways display Thine attributes divine; But the bright glories of Thy grace, Above Thine other wonders shine:

Who is a pardoning God like Thee? Or who has grace so rich and free?”

v. 7-9, *The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* There were millions of slaves in the Roman empire who were bought and sold like merchandise. The word *redemption* means a “buying back,” which is what Christ did on the cross when He purchased our redemption. In v. 9, we have *the mystery of His will*, while back in v. 5, we had *the pleasure of His will*. In v. 11, we will come to *the counsel of His will*. Isn’t the Lord trying to teach us something? It is not free will, it is God’s will that is important. You have a free will and it is described in Romans 3:12, *There is none that doeth good, no not one.* And again in Isaiah 53:6, *All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.*

v. 10, *Gather together in one all things in Christ.* This dispensation or “fulness” most likely refers to the millennium, for it is then that all will be gathered together in Christ. This verse does not teach universal salvation, but rather universal dominion. See Colossians 1:19,20 for a similar thought.

v. 11-14, *Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will.* Here is the heart of our Reformed doctrine—all things after the counsel of His will.

In Romans 11:32, we have the fundamental premise of Reformed doctrine, *For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.* See also II Timothy 1:9, *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

Matthew Henry says, “All the blessings we have in hand are but small if compared with the inheritance. Christians are said to have obtained this inheritance, as they have a present right to it, and even actual possession of it, in Christ their head and representative.”

*According to the purpose...*, note v. 9 where we have, *according to His good pleasure*. In v. 9, God's pleasure is that *He might gather together in one all things in Christ*, v. 10; and in v. 11, His purpose is that *we should be to the praise of His glory*, v.12. In other words, believers are trophies of the grace of God, made one in Christ Jesus. Those who *first trusted*, v. 12 are Jewish converts, and those in v. 13, *ye also trusted*, are the Gentile converts. Paul lists here the elements of their salvation: first, they heard, second, they believed, third, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. This last phrase appears again in Ephesians 4:30. The act of sealing signifies the following four truths:

- a) it is a finished transaction,
- b) it implies ownership,
- c) it indicates authenticity (*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*), and
- d) it means security. The Roman seal on the tomb where Christ's body lay carried this meaning (Matthew 27:62-66).

In this first section, 3-14, we have seen God the Father, v. 3, God the Son, v. 5, and God the Spirit, v. 13. It is interesting to notice that the "we" of v. 12 (we Jewish believers) and the "Ye" of v. 13 (you Gentile believers) become the "our" of v. 14, *which is the earnest of our inheritance*. Paul returns to this theme in chapter 3, to cover this "mystery" more fully. The word "earnest" in Paul's day meant a down payment to guarantee the final purchase of something. We use this expression when we talk about earnest money. The Spirit is God's first installment as a surety that He will complete the transaction of our salvation. *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*, Philippians 1:6. We are truly full in the Lord Jesus Christ. His blessings abound in us and for us. Was Paul trying to show the Ephesian believers that they did not have to live in spiritual poverty, that they had riches and blessings untold in Christ? Someone has said, "God has a whole warehouse full of unclaimed blessing in heaven because Christians have neglected to pray and ask

God for them.” Spurgeon has a devotional book titled, “A checkbook on the bank of faith.” A promise from the Bible is listed for each day. “Each promise is as good as money in the bank for those who will claim it in faith.”

In this one sentence in the original text, v. 3-14, Paul “has traced the thrilling sweep of God’s program from eternity past to eternity future,” notes William MacDonald in his commentary on Ephesians. All this is for a single purpose: *to the praise of His glory*, v. 12.

### **1:15-23 Paul’s prayer for the saints in Christ**

v. 15,16, Paul begins with praise for their faith and praise for their love, then assures them of his prayers for them. Sadly, however, their love did not last for it is this very point that comes under condemnation in the letter to this church recorded in Revelation 2:1-7, where we learn of them: *thou hast left thy first love*. They kept the faith, but grew cold and unloving. There must be a balance of faith and love in our hearts and in the life of our church. *We love Him, because He first loved us*, I John 4:19.

v. 17-23, this section brings us to the Apostle’s prayer for the believers. There are four recorded prayers from prison by Paul: the passage here, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:9-11, and Colossians 1:9-12. In none of these prayers does Paul ask for material things, his emphasis is upon the spiritual; upon them and not on himself. The American missionary, John Eliot “imposed a law upon himself, that he would leave something of God, and heaven, and religion, with all that should come near him.” (quoted by Charles Bridges in The Christian Ministry, p. 161)

Request is first made that these believers might have enlightenment, *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*. They had Holy Spirit light when they were saved, so the request here is for further illumination. Paul did not want them to frantically search for that which they already possessed. Some Christians do that, running from one church to another, seeking some special

anointing or second blessing rather than living out the practical faith they were given when Christ was made Saviour and Lord in them. There are four parts to his prayer:

First, that each Christian might know God, v. 17, *the knowledge of Him*.

Second, that each Christian might know his calling, v. 18a, *that ye may know what is the hope of His calling*.

Third, that every Christian might know God's riches, v. 18b, *and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*.

Fourth, that every Christian might know God's power, v. 19, *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe*. We need each of these because we are weak, we are bound in this body of flesh, we are beset by many temptations, and we fail in both word and deed.

F. B. Meyer says, "It is *power*. It is *His power*. It is *great power*. It is *exceeding* great power, beyond the furthest cast of thought." And what is the greatest exhibition of that power? It is detailed in v. 20, *Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead*. When the Spirit directed the recording of His work in the church, that book opens with this fundamental doctrine, *To whom also he shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proof*, Acts 1:3. The resurrection of Christ is our doctrinal center of gravity. Without this, Paul says, *preaching is vain, faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins*, I Corinthians 15:14,17. In Romans 10:9, a verse most of us have memorized, we again see this doctrine: *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*. When Timothy was intimidated by criticism because of his youth, Paul wrote to him: *Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead . . . If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him*, II Timothy 2:8,11. Finally, Paul desired that all believers might *experience* the reality of the resurrection in their lives, *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection!* Philippians 3:10.

The glorification of our Saviour is emphasized in v. 20-23. *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.* Christ is exalted over all, for God *hath put all things under His feet.* But note, there is an incomplete here—Christ awaits the completion of the church, his body. Calvin said, “This is the highest honor of the church that until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure incomplete.” Should anyone think there is an implied imperfection here, Paul adds, *Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.* A careful reading of v. 22 tells us that God has given Christ *to the church.* In His position as head, Christ has been given to the church, not just head of the church.

### ***I Belong to the King***

*I belong to the King, I'm a child of His love—  
I shall dwell in His palace so fair,  
For He tells of its bliss in yon heaven above,  
and His children its splendor shall share.  
I belong to the King, I'm a child of His love,  
And He never forsaketh His own;  
He will call me someday to His palace above—  
I shall dwell by His glorified throne.*

## **Chapter 2 • Wonder at our salvation**

### **2:1-10 Power over sin by God's grace**

v. 1, *And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Here is Paul's portrait of the sinner. William MacDonald notes that the first chapter of Genesis resembles Ephesians 2: First, there was ruin, *without form and void,* second, there was introduced the presence of Divine power, *and the Spirit of God moved,* and third, there was the creation of life, *And God saw everything He had made, and, behold, it was very good.* The first ten verses of chapter

two outline a spiritual “rags to riches” story. No Cinderella ever matched the life transformation believers have in Christ!

v. 2,3, *the course of this world*. The *prince of the power of the air* wants us to do evil things, but more than that to believe and follow after evil, to embrace the course, the mind-set, of this world. Warren Wiersbe explains that in our natural condition, we are: dead, 2:1, disobedient, 2:2,3a, depraved, 2:3b, and doomed, 2:3c. Matthew Henry says, of the word in v. 3, *fulfilling the desires of the flesh...*, it is literally an indictment of our will; the “wills of the flesh.” This is a warning that the bondage of our will is total—total depravity.

v. 4,5, *But God!* What hope is cast in these two words. You are at the end of yourself, you have no hope—but God! Your life is shipwreck due to financial ruin, you have lost all and disgraced yourself—but God! You lie in a hospital bed, the diagnosis is serious—but God!

That changes everything, doesn’t it? In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote, *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*. In Philippians 4:19, Paul wrote, *But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*.

*Rich in mercy*, God shows His mercy by not treating us the way we deserve to be treated. Mercy withholds from the believer that which he deserves, while grace provides for the believer that which he does not deserve. The love of God is even more unsearchable because of what I am, *dead in sins*, v. 5. The hymn “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” has this theologically accurate line:

“Two wonders I confess—the wonders of His glorious love  
and my own worthlessness.”

v.6,7, *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. We were dead, now we are raised up! Lazarus was not raised to stay in the graveyard, but to fellowship with Christ. He quickened us and He enriched us.

v. 8,9, *For by grace are ye saved.* Any theology that diminishes the electing love and grace of God, by somehow giving that credit to man, tarnishes God’s glory, which is the very purpose of salvation. We keep seeing this word “grace,” which is used 12 times in this brief letter. Paul places a high value on the grace of God.

### *Amazing Grace*

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound—that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.  
’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed.*

Grace means our salvation is on the basis of no merit or works on our part, that it is all the work of God in Jesus Christ. The word “faith” is a feminine word, while the following word “that” is neuter in form. What this tells us is that the phrase, *that not of yourselves*, does not only refer to faith, which you did not have for it came from God, but the whole matter of salvation is “not of yourself.” A young man was being examined by the Scots elders in the Kirk for church membership and was asked about his salvation. He explained, “Well, I did my part and God did His part.” Taken back, the elders wondered if he had truly understood his catechism teaching, so they asked, “What do you mean?” His explanation was “You see, I did the sinning and God did the saving.” Sin works against us and God works for us.

*“Naught have I gotten, but what I received,  
Grace has bestowed it since I have believed  
Boasting excluded, pride I abase—  
I’m only a sinner saved by grace!”*

*(by James M. Gray, once president of Moody Bible Institute)*

v.10, *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Notice how smoothly things flow from salvation to service. We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works; we do not work *for* salvation, but *because* of salvation. Calvin says, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can

never be alone.” James admonished, *Faith without works is dead*, James 2;26.

The word, “workmanship” is *poiema*, from which we get our word “poem.” It is something that is made, something that utilizes our effort. God spent 40 years working *in* Moses before He could work *through* him. We are called by God to be *fruitful in every good work*, Colossians 1:10, and to *abound to every good work*, II Corinthians 9:8.

## **2:11-22 Privileges in Christ of both Jew and Gentile**

v. 11,12, At the division in the first chapter, v. 15, this word “wherefore” begins the verse just as this verse in the second division of chapter two. *Wherefore remember*. Paul addresses Gentile believers, *who were called uncircumcision*, that is not of Israel. Paul now begins to build an argument that will abolish all claims to any sort of superiority. Gentiles were *without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*. What a list! Not only did the Gentiles not belong, they were without hope. The old Pharisee would stand on the street and cry out, “O God, I thank you that I am a Jew and not a Gentile.” But the state of both Jew and Gentile has already been settled in the first part of this chapter, *We all had our conversation in times past . . . and were by nature the children of wrath*. The Gentiles had many gods, but Paul wrote that they are *without God*. Man-made gods are nothing, they bring no satisfaction. The arguments of condemnation have been presented at the barman is guilty and undone. It seems there is no hope. The case has been carefully crafted to bring the guilty to the end of himself. Then Paul has unbelievably good news to present.

v. 13-18, *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ*. This “but now” parallels the “but God” in verse four. The *middle* wall of partition had divided Jew and Gentile as well as sinners and God.

Paul was caught in an uproar in Jerusalem, when he went there at the end of his third journey. Acts 21:27,28 records: *The Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people . . . crying out, Men of Israel, help; This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.* An intense hatred existed, but *Christ is our peace*, Ephesians 2:14. Do you see the word “peace” in verses 15 and 17 also? The old enmity has been nullified. *Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God*, Romans 5:1.

*For through Him we both have access by one [one mediator!] unto the Father*, v. 18. William MacDonald writes, “Through prayer any believer can enter the throne room, kneel before the sovereign of the universe, and address Him as *Father*.” Note the offices of each member of the Trinity in this verse.

v. 19-22, Christ is our cornerstone. In v. 19, is a list of the new privileges of the child of God, whether Jew or Gentile. This verse is an obvious contrast to v. 12. In an unusual way, the Apostle describes the church:

- a) *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets* [refers to those of the New Testament era],
- b) *Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*,
- c) *In whom all the building fitly framed together* [note 4:16 here],
- d) *groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*,
- e) *in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.

What is the foundation of the apostles? It can be none other than the record left for the church, the Holy Scriptures. Christ is the church’s only foundation— *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*, I Corinthians 3:11. In v. 22, we again have the Trinity mentioned. This holy temple, this habitation of God, would remind the Gentile believers of the temple of Diana and

the Jewish believers of the temple in Jerusalem. Both came to be destroyed in time, but this temple will last forever.

## Chapter 3 • Wonder at our condition

### 3:1-13 Participants in the church by design

v. 1, *I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ*. Paul is under house arrest in Rome, Acts 28:16,30. He begins to lead into a prayer (14-21) but interrupts to explain a spiritual mystery. v. 2-13, *How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*, v. 3, 5. The seeming Old Testament silence about the mystery of both Jew and Gentile being heirs of the grace of God was not absolute. In Paul's defence before Agrippa he said, *I continue unto this day . . . saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say . . . that Christ should suffer . . . and shew light unto the people and to the Gentiles* [that is, to Jew and Gentile], Acts 26:22,23. The idea of "a mystery" is that this was a truth hidden by God in the past, but presently revealed to His family in Christ.

This previously covered truth was important to Paul. At his conversion, recorded in Acts 9, we learn that God had a special mission for him: *he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*. His ministry began in Antioch, a church with both Jews and Gentiles in it. See Ephesians 3:7,8.

In 1798, Napoleon began to occupy Egypt, but by the fall of 1801, he was forced out. Simply one of a great general's failures? Yes, in the eyes of the world, but God was working all things together for His own glory. A Frenchman named Boussand went to Egypt in that short time and came away with a discovery that we know as the Rosetta Stone, found near Alexandria. This single discovery gave archeologists the key to understanding Egyptian

hieroglyphics, for a known language was along side the unknown. In this passage the mystery of the church is uncovered—God’s “Rosetta Stone.” It was not in some silly, convoluted “Bible mystery code” that can only be uncovered by random searches of letters and numbers by computer.

v. 11, *According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Do you know when God decided to build the church? It was in “eternity past.”

### **3:14-21 Prayer for the church by the Apostle (Summary and Application)**

v. 14, *For this cause.* Look back at v. 8, the last phrase: *the unsearchable riches of Christ.* This was the Apostle’s motivation.

v. 15, *the whole family*, that is, those who have God as their Father. Warren Wiersbe says the first prayer, in chapter 1, was a request for their enlightenment, this one was for their enablement.

v. 16, *the riches of His glory.* Hodge says, this is “everything in God that renders Him glorious, the proper object of adoration.” Paul lifts up God. Want to change someone? Change their conception of God. John Newton wrote,

*“Thou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring;  
for His grace and power are such, none can ask too much.”*

v. 17, *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.* The word “dwell” conveys the idea of someone feeling at home or welcome, Colossians 1:19, *It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.* The word “rooted,” also in this verse, has the idea of a tree that puts down deep roots so that it may have nourishment and stability, as in the figure in Psalm 1:3.

A simple outline of this prayer goes like this:

v. 16, strength from the Spirit,

v. 17, submission to Christ,

- v. 18,19a, experiencing Christ’s love, and
- v. 19b, complete in the fulness of God.

Note the word “all” in verses 19,20. Prayer—to the Apostles was not something they did *when they had time*, but something they did *with their time*.

v. 20,21, give us Paul’s doxology. It is proper, notes Matthew Henry, to close our prayers with praise to God. Verse 20 has been refashioned by one writer to read like this: *Now unto Him that is*

- a) *able to do ALL,*
- b) *above ALL,*
- c) *abundantly above ALL,*
- d) *exceeding abundantly above ALL!*

v. 21, *glory in the church*. The eternal, matchless glory of God will be manifest throughout all ages in the church and in its head, Jesus Christ. In 5:27, we learn the church is *glorious* and is *holy and without blemish*. It is interesting to find an “Amen” in the middle of a book. It undoubtedly emphasizes not only the end of the Apostle’s prayer, but also the closing of a section of this Ephesian letter.

# **The Ephesian Church — Its Focus A Church Challenged, Ephesians 4, 5**

**4 Walk in Unity,**

**5 Walk in Purity,**

**6 Walk in Victory**

## **Chapter 4 • Walk in unity**

**First, Paul gave the Ephesian Christians doctrine, now follows duty.**

First the believer's position, now his practice. Arrayed before us in the first part of this letter have been the doctrines of election, predestination, providence, eternal decrees, total depravity, *sola gratia*, sanctification, covenant of grace, ecclesiology, and saint's preservation.

There is a major break in this letter at the end of chapter 3. Paul opens chapter 1 with the Christian's election before the foundation of the world. Chapter 4 opens with the Christian's calling to walk as a witness for Christ in the world. Right principles are essential to right practice. Paul's appeal here is that there will be unity, purity, and victory. In Romans, Paul wrote 11 chapters on doctrines and principles, then a final four chapters outlining duties and practices. In Galatians, Paul wrote four chapters on Christian liberty in Christ, then followed with two chapters on a call to live out that liberty.

In the first section of Ephesians, believers are saved and adopted, in the last section believers are serving and armed.

**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1**

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. – Galatians 5:16

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. – Ephesians 4:1

“Walk in love” – Ephesians 5:2

“Walk as children of light.” – Ephesians 5:8

“Walk circumspectly.” – Ephesians 5:15

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” – Colossians 2:6

“As ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.” – I Thessalonians 4:1

#### **4:1-16 Proper functions within Christ’s body**

v. 1, *Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye were called.* Paul reminds them of his plight, a change from his opening line in 1:1—A bond-slave of Christ, now a prisoner for his Christian witness. He beseeches them on the basis of the believer’s exalted standing to exhibit Godly conduct. *Walk* describes a person’s entire lifestyle and is a word used seven times by Paul in this epistle. The word *vocation* is this idea of “calling.”

v. 2 describes the manner of the believer’s walk—*with all lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering.* v. 3 calls us to *unity.* It has often been said about this verse, that God has not called His people to *create unity* but to *keep the unity of the Spirit.* Ecumenical efforts

to discard doctrine and on that basis bring church bodies together is both against Scripture and is doomed to failure.

v. 4-6, *There is one body and one Spirit*. This is a declaration of that which does exist. In chapters two and three, we saw how that barriers are already removed by Christ. When Jew and Gentile are saved, they are one. When the sinner is made new in Christ, the enmity between him and God has been erased. Paul submits that this is an important truth and is covering it in a different fashion than he did previously. Says Hodge, “The Holy Spirit dwelling in them gives rise to the same aspirations, to the same anticipations of the same glorious inheritance, to a participation of which they had been called.”

The words *one faith*, suggests the idea of creedal Christianity. In Romans, Paul said, *Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you*, 6:17. And in II Timothy 1:13, Paul wrote, *Hold fast the form of sound words*.

### **Why Churches Should Have a Creed**

1. It records the grasp and growth of the church in true doctrine.
2. It safeguards the crucial apostolic teaching of the church to our time,
3. It gives a precise basis for distinguishing between truth and error, and helps preserve purity of doctrine in the church.
4. It acts constitutionally as a basis of fellowship in the church.
5. Its exposition of Biblical truth is of great use for instructional purposes within the church.

v. 7,8, *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ*. Now, we are about to discover that in

unity there will be diversity. Hodge says the diversity in the gifts is essential if there is to be unity. As a practical matter if everyone were an eye how would the body hear? If all were a hand, how would the body walk? The end of v. 8 discloses that Christ *gave gifts unto men*. The *gift of Christ* in v. 7 is the Holy Spirit who “assigns” gifts to each saint, then gives the ability to exercise them.

v. 9,10, Here is a brief parenthesis about a truth foreshadowed in the Old Testament in Psalm 68:18. Christ *descended* to earth at His incarnation, then into the lower parts of the earth, or into the grave. The truth is that for His humiliation, there is given exaltation. Hodge says “The Messiah is represented by the Psalmist as a conqueror, leading captives in triumph, and laden with spoils.” By His obedience and suffering, notes Hodge, “

- 1) He conquered the Prince of this world,
- 2) He redeemed His people, and
- 3) He obtained the right to bestow upon them all needed good.”

In Colossians 2:15, Paul wrote, *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Christ also *ascended* into heaven, to sit on the right hand of the throne of God, *that He might fill all things*. F. W. Grant remarks on this, “There is not a place between the depth of the cross and the height of the glory which He has not occupied.” We receive spiritual gifts from the ascended Christ.

v. 11, Here is a listing of the offices given to the church. Some are *apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*. Apostles were those directly commissioned by Christ to preach and plant churches. The ministry was essentially the planting and extension of the church following Pentecost. The office of Prophet refers to those of the New Testament era. Back in 2:20 we noted, *are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*. This does not refer to the Old Testament prophets. A prophet is one who

speaks for another. Hodge says this office is that which is described in I Corinthians 14.

Evangelists are preachers of the good news of salvation. Philip and Timothy were among the New Testament evangelists. Paul wrote to Timothy, exhorting him to *do the work of an evangelist*. James A. Stewart, Scottish evangelist, pictures *Evangelist* as the greatest of John Bunyan's characters. Further, Stewart notes the example of the non-conformist, John Owen. "The mighty Puritan pastor and possibly the most prolific writer in Christian history, who was also a burning evangelist. The Prince of Puritans has left a solemn message for us all—'a minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more.'"

Most make the last two, one office, that is, pastors-teachers. Calvin suggests that the latter "had nothing to do with discipline, nor with the administration of the sacraments, nor with admonitions or exhortations, but simply with the interpretation of Scripture." On this ground the Westminster Directory made *teachers* a distinct and permanent class in the church. Hodge argues that the absence of the article before *didaskalos* (teachers) proves that the Apostle intended to designate the same person as at once pastor and teacher, to be taken as a two-fold description of the same office. We ordain men whose ministry is to teach in a seminary, but they may also assume pastoral duties from time to time.

v. 12, *For the perfecting [equipping] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*. How to plant and build churches is the popular theme for seminars across the United States. The entire church growth movement, in general, follows two misconceptions.

The first is the emphasis upon church growth, while the Bible always places the emphasis upon saints growth. The concept of growth in the Bible is found in: Ephesians 4:15, growth in all things, I Peter 2:2, growth in the word, II Peter 3:18, growth in grace and

knowledge, I Thessalonians 1:3, growth in faith. Not a word about “church growth.” Of course most church growth experts do not usually mean physical building growth, but they do emphasize numbers, B-I-G numbers, so that we have the mega-church phenomenon. Donald McGavran, who helped mold Fuller Theological Seminary’s church growth theory, wrote, “The church that doesn’t grow is out of the will of God.” It seems to me Paul wrote to one church advising them to put some out of the church. Some churches will be better off with cranky false teachers and cantankerous stonewallers leaving.

Second, The Bible provides God’s method of planting, nourishing, and building churches. The church growth movement has designed strategies and schemes that seem to guarantee that a church planter will have success by following man-made ideas, outlines, and market-driven strategies. One minister correctly observed, “Let us remember, visible growth does not validate theology.”

A comma in verse 12 that we could possibly do without because a mistaken idea about the office of the pastor may arise if left in. *He gave...pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints [omit the comma] for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* This is the idea, the work of the pastor does not fall into three all-encompassing realms with none for the saints who are being perfected or equipped. Perhaps you have seen outlines on this verse that lists the job description of the pastor as:

- 1) perfecting the saints,
- 2) the work of the ministry, and
- 3) edifying of the body.

But, look at it this way, we have: the pastor perfecting or equipping the saints who are then charged with the duty of:

- 1) the work of the ministry, that is ministering to others, and
- 2) edifying the body.

## “FIRST LOVE”

Leon Morris, in his commentary on Revelation says the lost love may have been that of the Ephesian Christians for one another, but more than that, the warmth of first devotion to Christ. “loving devotion to Christ can be lost in the midst of active service, and certainly no amount of orthodoxy can make up for a failure to love one another.”

Artimas is the Greek name with a Romanized version being Diana.

To this, agrees Hodge: “The two latter clauses may be made subordinate to the first—*Christ has appointed the ministry with the view of preparing the saints, for the work of serving one another and for the edification of His body.* If we make the three clauses coordinate, it could seem to teach, “pastors have the gifts, we are not called or gifted, so let them do the work of the church.” A 1906 Papal Encyclical declared that the members of the church have no other duty than of “letting themselves be led, and of following their pastors as a docile flock.”

There are tools the pastor will use in the work of equipping [*katartismos*] God’s people over which he has been made overseer, namely, the faithful teaching of the Word of God and giving himself in prayer. Acts 6:4, *We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.* A seminarian might ask, “That’s it! That’s all I have to do?” Well, not exactly, for you see the minister has tasks that all Christians have: watch over one another and minister to needs, visit the sick, care for the orphans and widows, witness to the lost, go into the highways and hedges and invite people in to the spiritual feast of the Word of God, look after the flock, provide for the poor, and help to administer discipline. The

pastor should lead in such a way so that if he were taken out of the way, the church would go right on in its ministry; not that a pastor is not needed, but his people should be properly equipped.

v. 13, *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* How long does the growth process pictured above last? *Till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,* is the answer. Here are marks of the Christian: maturity and conformity. In v. 14 are marks that a Christian should not have: immaturity, instability, and gullibility.

v. 15,16, tell us that we are to give out the truth and do it with love. Our witness before the world must be without falsehood and done with compassion. The love here is meant to contrast with that which is written in v. 14, *cunning craftiness.*

v. 16, *the whole body fitly joined together.* This is a long verse that tells us, that just as the human body has many parts, all intricately connected, so with the body of Christ. That is why the church is called an organism, it is living. Again we have the word, *love*; a reminder of the important place of love in the Christian family, as told in I Corinthians 13. See also Colossians 2:19 and Galatians 2:20.

#### **4:17-32 Putting off and putting on in the new life**

v. 17-19, There is a saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Not good advice for the Christian—Paul says, *Walk not as other Gentiles walk.* Moses said to Pharaoh, to paraphrase, “We cannot serve God in Egypt.” Pharaoh answered, “You cannot go very far away [so I can keep an eye on you!].” Finally, Moses replied, “There shall not an hoof be left behind.” Exodus 8:26,28, 10:26. When it comes time to separate, make it a clean break.

Verse 17 begins a new section of this epistle, emphasizing a holy walk in Christ. If you struggle against the constraints of holy living, you can’t seem to accept the Christian walk, you view in envy those

who are over on the other side, still in the world, then you are seriously out of touch with the walk of the new man. There are four characteristics of the “old man.”

- 1) *vanity of mind*, v. 17, Sinners and Christians think differently,
- 2) *understanding darkened*, v. 18, the ungodly are always learning, but are never coming to the truth,
- 3) *blindness of heart*, v. 18, calloused and insensitive to things of God,
- 4) *given over unto lasciviousness* [lewd conduct], v. 19, depraved and without moral standards.

### **Because Jesus was different**

Our Lord attracted sinners because He was different. They drew near to Him because they felt that there was something different about Him. The world always expects us to be different. This idea that you are going to win people to the Christian faith by showing them that after all you are remarkably like them, is theologically and psychologically a profound blunder.” (by Martin Lloyd Jones, London)

The use of the word *manthano* or “learned” denotes a once for all act. When Jesus said, *Take My yoke and learn of Me*, He was pointing to a one-time act. The next verse tells us we have *heard* Christ. Paul fell to the ground and *heard a voice saying unto him*, Acts 9:4. Not only have they accepted Christ as Savior, but they have been *taught*. “All truth acquires a different hue and a different character when there is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” (Blaikie) When Lazarus came forth from the grave, his friends were told, “Loose him and let him go,” John 5:44. Get rid of the shroud of death, put away the old, put on the new.

The concept of “putting off and putting on” is used in the letter to the Colossians also, (3:8-12). In v. 22, we have a putting off the old man, in v. 24, a putting on of the new man, and in v. 25, 31, a putting away. These verses are a summary of Romans 5-8.

v. 25-32, Paul now makes some applications of the truth just presented. The first corrective of one in Christ is that he will love the truth and will be truthful. Note v. 29. Next, anger must be dealt with. The verse says, *Being angry, sin not*. Mark 3:5 tells us that Jesus, *looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. It is not a sin to be angry, but is it easy to sin in one’s anger. The advice Paul gives is, do not let your anger smolder, for by so doing you may be giving *place to the devil*, v. 27.

### **Jonathan Edward’s Daughter**

A story is told of one of the daughters of Jonathan Edwards who was alleged to have had an uncontrollable temper. A young man fell in love with her and asked to marry her. “You can’t have her,” was the abrupt answer of Edwards. “But I love her,” the young suitor replied. “You can’t have her,” repeated the learned parson. “But she loves me,” answered back the young man. Again Edwards said, “You can’t have her.” “Why?” asked the determined young man. “Because she is not worthy of you.” “But,” he asked, “she is a Christian, isn’t she?” “Yes, she is a Christian. But the grace of God can live in some people with whom no one else could ever live!”

v. 28, If the “old man” steals to get by, don’t you do it! Give yourself to honest labor. We have what we call the “Protestant work ethic.” This simply means that we believe everyone is directly accountable to God, God has provided us with capabilities to care for ourselves, and that earning a living by the sweat of one’s brow is

ordained of God. See II Thessalonians 3:10, *If any would not work, neither should he eat.*

v. 30, *Grieve not the Holy Spirit.* This grieving is probably connected with the verses just before: lying, unrighteous anger, laziness, corrupt or unbecoming talk, see also v. 31. Our sin grieves the Holy Spirit. A bitter, unforgiving spirit is the devil's playground and the Christian's battleground. I Thessalonians 5:19 warns against *quenching the Spirit*, which is the idea that when we grieve the Spirit, we are in danger of quenching the Spirit. The Spirit, *whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.* The Holy Spirit authenticates our Christian citizenship, empowers our Christian walk, and guarantees our future home in heaven.

v. 32, We once had in our church in Nashville a precious group of little children that had the name "The BYKOTAS." The name represented this verse, *By ye kind one to another!* This entire verse is an excellent rule for one's Christian life.

## **Chapter 5 • Walk in purity**

### **5:1-20 Personal piety pleasing to God**

v. 1,2, Paul builds on the preceding thoughts. Because you have been forgiven through the work of Christ, be "imitators of God." The word here is a word from which we get our word *mimic*. Children like to imitate dad or mom, what they wear, what they do or say, they pick up on everything. We, as God's children should delight to imitate our Father in heaven. God is love, so we should *walk in love*, v. 2. God is light, therefore, we should *walk as children of light*, v. 8. God is truth, therefore, we should *walk circumspectly*, v. 15 [attentive, reliable, not carelessly].

v. 3-14, Next, Paul calls for purity in life, to abstain from sexual sins. Even *foolish talking and jesting* is uncomely. This is not a condemnation of innocent humor, but of senseless, banal talk that cheapens rather than edifies. *Jesting* suggests an ability to easily turn a word, that is, a conversation that is coarse or suggestive. *But rather,*

*giving thanks.* How refreshing to be around a joyous, thankful, and encouraging conversationalist.

In v. 3,4, we are viewed as saints. In v. 5,6 we can be thought of as kings. In v. 7-14, we are “light.” Notice that the deity of Christ is assumed in v. 5 by putting both at the same level.

Please note that the section on sexual sins precedes a word about those who can easily “double talk” and hoodwink people. That is what has happened about the immorality of our day. The perverts of Sodom have become the “gays” of the 1990’s. People who live in adulterous affairs simply live a “different lifestyle.” The tragedy of this is that some leading clergy promote this illicit, false style of living. *The fashion of the world passeth away*, I Corinthians 7:31. v. 7, *Be not ye therefore partakers with them!*

Darkness and light are contrasted, beginning in v. 8. Seven times these words appear here through v. 14. The *fruit of the Spirit* is contrasted with that which is dark and compared to that which is light.

### **What Will Sin Do?**

**First**, sin always takes you farther than you wanted to go.

It did when David sinned with Bathsheba.

**Second**, sin always keeps you longer than you intended to stay.

It did for the prodigal

**Third**, sin always costs you more than you wanted to pay.

It did for Samson.

v. 11, *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* Do you know that the last four words of the

verse separate two kinds of fundamentalists? There are those who take a softer, more tolerant approach, thought perhaps to be a little more up to date, but still willing to remain separate from “works of darkness.” On the other hand, the camp of Biblical fundamentalism has leaders who are not afraid to sound the trumpet blast of reproof! Someone has said that Biblical fundamentalism “is distinguished by that Scriptural spirit of jealousy for God which finds its greatest expression in the militant defense of the faith through the consistent exposure of and separation from any contrary spirit.” (seen in *Calvary Contender*)

v. 12-14, These vile sins are so odious it is shameful to even speak of them. That surely describes today’s society. Verse 14, *Awake thou that sleepest!* We are alive, not dead, we have the indwelling Spirit, we have been washed in the blood, we should be awake and give a witness for our Lord.

v. 15-20, Here is a section of negatives and positives. A correct walk, not as a fool walks, that is, in manner of life. Redeeming the time and understanding God’s will. Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. All part of the life of purity.

v. 18 has to do with the important matter of one’s life being under the control of the Spirit. Being under the influence of alcohol has negative or drug-like effects; there is loss of self-control, there is often debauchery, there is loss of moral inhibition, there is exhibitionism, it produces counterfeit euphoria, and there are serious physical consequences. Do not be drunk with wine. *Wine is a mocker!* Proverbs 20:1.

*But be filled with the Spirit.* First, this is not a “baptism” of the Spirit, it is not the initial indwelling of the Spirit, it is not an anointing of the Spirit, nor is this the idea of being “sealed” by the Spirit. What is this? Notice there are characteristics of one filled with the Spirit in the verses that follow, as James Boice notes in his commentary: it is worship, it is praise, and it is thanksgiving. Perhaps we need to add the thought from v. 21, also, submission. The

construction in this verse lends itself to the idea of “being kept filled” with the Spirit. To this, we may suggest, four things that ought to mark out lives: 1) confess sin, 2) yield to His control, 3) let His Word dwell within us, and 4) be empty of self.

### **5:21-6:9 Purity and proper submission**

v. 21,22, Proper relationships and accompanying submission becomes the theme of this section. Matthew Henry wrote, “The Scriptures are left for a standing rule to us: they are written, that they might remain for our use and benefit.” What rebellion has arisen against the teaching of these verses. Two years ago, in their annual convention, the Southern Baptists suggested that in marriage women are to be in Biblical submission to their husbands. The howls of protest filled the media for weeks! That statement was twisted to mean that an abusive, husband who beats and injures his wife has a right to demand her submission! It is simply astounding to behold the ignorance of Bible teaching in today’s society. Spurgeon said, “When home is ruled according to God’s Word angels might be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.” Could that be true of your home?

#### ***Take Time to Be Holy***

*Take time to be holy, Speak oft with thy Lord; abide in Him always,  
And feed on His Word. Make friends of God’s children,  
Help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.*

There are four realms of authority and submission taught here: that of a husband and wife, that of Christ and the church, that of parents and children, and finally that of employers and employees. In no case does submission imply inferiority. Further, submission is to be “in the Lord.” Modern feminism has, if nothing else, taught the younger generation of women to be dissatisfied. A young, Christian couple came to me for pre-marriage counseling and she asked if I would leave out the part about her promise to “obey” in the wedding ceremony. It shocked me that a Christian woman would request such. I immediately replied, I would not perform the wedding if that were

to be the case. Our society is off balance because God's order has been spurned. When Mary Baker Eddy took it upon herself to be a teacher and preacher, the Christian Science cult was born. Ellen G. White wrote out her visions, Seventh Day Adventism took life. When Mrs. Charles Fillmore exerted herself into church leadership, the School of Unity was born. Aimee Semple McPherson became an evangelist and the Four-Square gospel of Pentecostalism came into being. In the mainline churches, it is women who are leading in the Sophia worship; replacing God, in their Re-imagining God Conferences. The sad thing is there is hardly enough backbone left within those denominations to mount much opposition, let alone denounce it.

Because man is given the headship, he has the greater responsibility. His model is Christ, who *loved the church and gave Himself for it*. Nothing could exalt womanhood more than to compare her place to that of the church which is loved by Christ. A careful examination of this section will reveal that those who are in authority; husbands, parents, and employers are supposed to measure up to a higher standard. In each realm there are physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions to consider.

v. 25,26 tell us, as the church is subject unto Christ and Christ loved the church. There is a point to make here, if we may digress. Some teach there is no such thing as anything beyond the "local church." There is no visible church that exists as a body of God's people scattered throughout the earth, who make up the church. The Confession of Faith says, "The visible church, which is also catholic or universal, consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion." (25.3) Verse 24 tells us "the church" is subject to Christ; this can not possibly refer only to a local congregation somewhere. Likewise in these passages; Acts 20:28, *To feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood*. I Corinthians 15:9, *I persecuted the church of God*. Colossians 1:18, *And He is the head of the body, the church*. And Hebrews 2:12, *I will*

declare Thy name in the midst of the church. v. 25-27, *Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.*

### **When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the  
Prince of Glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss, and pour  
contempt on all my pride

See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow  
and love flow mingled down;

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my  
life, my all.”

This section presents our Lord’s relationship to the church in a symphony of three movements. First, was the past, *Christ loved the church*, v. 25. Second, is the present, *that He might sanctify and cleanse it*, v. 26. Third, points to the future, *that He might present it to Himself a glorious church . . . holy and without blemish.*

v. 28-31 Paul reminds husbands of earthly things. Man is born with a highly developed sense of self-preservation, *No man every yet hated his own flesh*. He is to love his wife as though she were his very flesh. In v. 31, note that it is the man who is leaving father and mother. It is his duty to establish a new home, to be the head of that home. This comes from Genesis 2:24, *to leave* and *to cleave*.

v. 32, *This is a great mystery*. Paul is not saying this is hard to discover, but that the implications are so great and wonderful. The institution of marriage finds its perfect anti-type in Christ and His body, the church. This headship and body relationship was not previously revealed to the saints of the Old Covenant.

“Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

In this section we have seen these words: *submit, love, cherish, and reverence*. What a harmony when a home has all these, when a

church family has these operating within. It is impossible to measure the effect for good of God's order for home and family. This book was written when women and children were nothing, little more than cattle. A wife could be discarded simply by the husband writing a "bill of divorce" and she had no recourse, no one to hear her case; she was an outcast. In some Muslim countries, the woman's nose is cut off and she is cast out of the house, disfigured so that no other man would take her. A Roman father wrote to his wife from a distance, where he had evidently gone on business, "If—good luck to you!—you have a child, if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, thrown it out." Christianity changed that kind of godless depravity.

The same thoughts about submission continue on through verse nine of chapter six. The reason we have problems in our homes, that children go astray is,

**First**, the sin problem of the human race.

**Second**, is the world system controlled by Satan.

**Third**, the humanistic society in which we live today.

The appeal in 6:1 is on the basis of the fifth commandment, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*. Four reasons are given here as to why children should obey.

- 1) It is right, v. 1,
- 2) It is God's command, v. 2,
- 3) It is in the child's best interest, v. 3 (*that it may be well with thee*)
- 4) It is that which promotes a long life, v. 3 (*thou mayest live long on the earth*).

v. 4 addresses fathers, *provoke not your children to wrath*. An undue harshness or unreasonableness of demands should not take place. Neither should there be overprotection and overindulgence. Children need to grow up at a normal pace and not be constantly prodded or pushed to excel. One father confessed, after his children

were grown, “I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I’d focus on me.”

### **Susanna Wesley on Child-rearing**

The parent who studies to subdue self-will in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil’s work, makes religion impractical, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies, to damn his child, soul and body forever.”  
(From the Journal of John Wesley)

A child should receive *nurture and admonition*. Here is the idea of discipline and control, instruction and care. Children are sometimes born into homes where there is no Godly influence. This is sad, but God does not excuse these from becoming what they can be in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are numerous examples in the Bible of children who came from a good home, but were cast out early into the world or into worldly influence. I think of Samuel, also of Joseph, Moses, Daniel, and the Three Hebrew Children.

v. 5-9, *servants be obedient to them that are your masters*. In the Christian context there are new rules for servants and masters. Both need: a right attitude, motive, commitment, duty, and good will. *Your Master is also in heaven*. Paul reminds them of their accountability. We are drawn to the account of Philemon and the runaway slave convert, with Paul’s admonition to receive him back *not as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved*. Unthinkable advice in the ancient Roman world, but its was perfectly in harmony with God’s standards.

Let me sum up this section, Ephesians 4:1 to 6:9 with the words from Calvin’s seal, “God, I give Thee all, I keep back nothing.” That expresses the instruction Paul has given us in this practical section of this inspired book. Next, we look at the Christian’s warfare and his “Walk in Victory.” *Faith is the victory that overcometh the world*.

# The Ephesian Church — Its Focus

## A Church Challenged, Ephesus 6

**4 Walk in Unity,**

**5 Walk in Purity,**

**6 Walk in Victory**

### **Chapter 6 • Walk in victory**

#### **6:10-20 Preparing for Christian warfare**

v. 10, *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.* Paul began this epistle with a statement of the believer's wealth in Christ and concludes with the believer's warfare. This letter describes the greatness of God's power toward the believers, defining that power in terms of Christ's victory in His death and resurrection. All this is linked to the blessing of our victory in the lordship of Jesus Christ. James Philip, minister of Holyrood Abbey Church in Edinburgh, Scotland wrote: "The believer must lay hold of, and enter into, the victory that has been won for him by Christ . . . We do not go to this warfare, the warfare of the Christian life, on our own charges; we battle from a position of victory." (Note: I must give credit for material from Mr. Philip's book, the Christian Warfare and Armour, Christian Literature Crusade, 1972, 126 pages. This is a wonderful treatment of Ephesians 6:10-20.)

There is a teaching that has lulled Christians away from the front lines of battle, called the "faith rest" life. It's chief error is that Christians are never to be exercised about anything, that there are no struggles in the Christian walk, one need simply to "rest in the

Spirit.” Sin is no longer a problem, there are no more temptations. I believe Paul looked for the only rest he was going to have out in Glory. Every city, every sermon, every journey was a confrontation with the forces of darkness. What is recorded on the pages of church history? Are they filled with teas and socials, clothing sales and bazaars, rock bands and barking dog charismatics? Never! The history of the Christian church is a record of the blood of martyrs, of the struggle of truth against error, of God’s people marching to victory.

### *Luther’s Hymn*

*“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing,  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe—  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.”*

Today’s anemic Christianity, pale in its doctrinal stand and stumbling in upholding a standard of righteousness, is in retreat. Michael Maudlin, managing editor of *Christianity Today* wrote in a recent issue, “Preserving the fundamental doctrines of the faith is no longer the anxious concern it was a generation ago.” A Methodist minister, weak in character and creed, speculated: “Doctrine is important, but if it blocks us from being able to love others with the same unconditional love that Jesus loves us, then doctrine is in the way.” Not to be outdone in fumbling befuddlement, Paul Crouch of the Trinity Broadcasting Network is quoted, “I sometimes wonder if the whole study of theology isn’t a waste of time.” I am reminded of something I read about the Duke of Wellington, Britain’s brilliant military leader of two centuries ago. When some French officers, angered by France’s defeat, turned their back on Wellington at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, a sympathetic lady of the court attempted an apology for their rudeness. Wellington simply replied, “I’ve seen their backs before, madam.”

*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.* Someone has written, “God has placed five smooth stones in the Christian’s

### J. C. Ryle on Being a Watchman

He that would be safe must cultivate the spirit of a sentinel at a critical post. He must not mind being laughed at and ridiculed, as one who “has a keen nose for heresy.” In days like these he must not be ashamed to suspect danger. And if any scoffs at him for so doing, he may well be content to reply, “the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.”

hands: God is, God has, God can, God will, and God does!” We all meet a Goliath in our Christian walk at some time. We make our preparation in the Lord’s strength. The unprepared Christian becomes the defeated Christian. Has not our Lord told us, *The gates of hell shall not prevail against [His church]*? Satan and his demons shall not be able to withstand the onward march of the Church of Jesus Christ.

“Christ the royal Master leads against the foe,  
forward into battle, see His banners go!  
Hell’s foundations quiver at the shout of praise,  
Brothers lift your voice, loud your anthems raise!”

There was perhaps a time in which Timothy wavered before the opposition. Paul wrote encouragement to the young minister, *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus . . . Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, II Timothy 2:1,3. Hodge says, “The Christian conflict is not only real, it is difficult and dangerous.”

v. 11, *Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*. We face three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In 6:10f, we have a strategic deployment, that is, we go forth, *strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*, Next, we have an unyielding defense, that is, we have *loins girt about with truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, our feet*

*shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the helmet of salvation, v. 14-16. Finally, we have an armed offense, taking the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, v. 16,17.*

The Christian's armor is really a picture of Christ:

1. Christ is the truth - John 14:6
2. He is our righteousness - II Corinthians 5:21
3. Christ is our peace - Ephesians 2:14
4. Christ is faithful - I Thessalonians 5:24
5. Christ is our salvation - Matthew 1:21
6. Christ is the Word - John 1:1,14

### **If Satan is But a Fable**

Charles Hodge has written in his commentary on Ephesians: "If Satan and satanic influence are fables or figures, then all the rest of the representations concerning this spiritual conflict is empty metaphor. But if one part of this representation is true, the other has a corresponding depth and reality of meaning. If Satan is really the prince of the powers of darkness, ruler and god of this world; if he is the author of physical and moral evil; the great enemy of God, of Christ and of His people, full of cunning and malice; if he is constantly seeking whom he may destroy, seducing men into sin, blinding the minds and suggesting evil and skeptical thoughts; if all this is true, then to be ignorant of it, or to deny it, or to enter on this conflict as though it were merely a struggle between the good and bad principles in our own hearts, is to rush blindfold to destruction." (p. 376,377)

The word *wiles* is the Greek word *methodia*, from which we have our English word "method." Here it carries the idea of a scheme, use of craft or deception. It was used back in 4:14, *Carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning*

*craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* The world today is rushing to accept every imaginable scheme from the devil: radical feminism, lesbianism, abortion, gay rights, new-age spirituality, re-imagining God, sophia worship, and lying and adultery in the highest offices of our land.

v. 12, *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.* In Corinth there was every kind of sin and immorality practiced. The expression “to live a Corinthian life,” meant one was given over to lust and self-indulgence. Paul wrote to the Christians in that church, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.* A battle rages in the unseen world that Paul wants us to know about. The verse in Ephesians continues, *But against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* There is a combat that is not against mere human enemies, “but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world,” says Matthew Henry. These demonic categories are not explained. *Principalities* are mentioned in Colossians 2:15. *Authorities* are referred to in I Peter 3:22. Unseen world forces may be in view in Daniel 10:13-20, and 12:1, *The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me . . . but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.* Also, the same idea in Colossians 1:13, *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.* And further in Romans 8:38,39, *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The idea we must grasp is that we are up against an incredibly powerful, and crafty enemy whose entire battle strategy is to defeat Christians. Do you see how perfectly the Apostle laid out this brief letter to the Ephesian Christians when you return and meditate on chapter 1:3-5.

v. 13, *Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God.* We come now to the Christian’s armor. Here is a question I must pose at

## The Greatest Fight in the World

Spurgeon's book by the above title tells us, "We have the greatest Captain in the world. We have the greatest armor in the world. We have the greatest sword that could ever be owned by anyone, and that is the Word of God. We have the greatest promises that are given to you and me, that *greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*"

this point—Why is there no part of the armor called love? Back in 5:2, we were told we ought to *walk in love*. Let me answer this way, It is love that gets us into the battle. It is love that gets into the armor. It is love that keeps us from retreating from the battle—note the word *stand* in verses 11,13,14. It is love that will help us use the *sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*. Hodge has written, "Spiritual conflict is inevitable." We Christians sometimes ask one another about our "quiet time." May I suggest that it is in reality anything but a quiet time, if we understand the unseen spiritual conflict in the world of darkness about us. Do you think Satan is happy to see you reading your Bible? We may say, "When the Christian is on his knees, Satan flees," but you can be sure he will return. Here is another question? Why is prayer, found in v. 18, placed at the end of this discourse on the battle and the armor? Do you see that prayer is part of the battle. You and I go forth with the armor, in prayer. The word *wrestle* in v. 12 means "combat or conflict."

D. L. Moody and another Christian were on a ship when a fire broke out. Lines quickly formed to pass buckets of water to fight the fire. Moody's friend suggested they go to the other end and engage in prayer over the situation. Moody replied, "Let's get in line and help pass the water buckets and pray while in line."

## The Armor: Part 1

v. 14, *loins girt about with truth*. Recall the account of Belshazzar in Daniel 5. A writing mysteriously appeared on the wall which so unnerved the king that *the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other*. The king was *ungirt!* This part of the armor is first mentioned because it keeps all the other parts in place. In I Peter 1:13, we read that we are told to *gird up the loins of [our] mind*.

This verse opens with these words: *Stand therefore*, a word used also in verses 12 and 13.

“Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
While the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.”

Are you sitting or standing? Someone has said every church consists of 100% willing people, 10% are willing to work while the other 90% are willing to let them do it.

What does this part of the armor represent? It is *truth*. Foremost, truth of doctrine. In Colossians 3:16, *let the word of Christ [that is, the truth] dwell in you richly in all wisdom*.

A distinguishing mark of the Christians in the book of Acts, recorded in 2:42, notes, *And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine*, that is, the body of Biblical truth. They were girt about with the Word of God. In Psalm 119:11, we are admonished, *Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee*. Girt about with truth! John 17:17, records these words from our Lord as He prayed in the Upper Room, *Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth*. Put on the girdle of truth. Recall that the serpent's first attack was against the truth when he said in provocation to Eve, *Yea, hath God said....*

We speak of the great Reformers: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, as men who were gripped by truth, controlled by one thing only—the Word of God. Hodge wrote, “To enter on this spiritual conflict ignorant or doubting would be to enter battle blind and lame.” It is really not a difficult thing for the enemy to ungirt us. A slighting word said to us, a rumor whispered comes back to us with some nasty implication, a false accusation against our character and we are ungirt! Two young people are in love. One day he lets slip he still has affection for a former sweetheart. Oh, the turmoil that arises within that young woman hearing those words. A child innocently utters within the hearing of a group of adult friends, “Mommy and daddy had an argument last night.” We become ungirt!

James Philip wrote, “Perhaps no more systematic presentation of the truth of God has ever been given than that given by Calvinism in the Reformed Church. Let me quote for you a judgment passed on Calvinism by a famous writer some years ago.

“The Calvinists attracted to themselves every man in Europe that hated a lie They abhorred, as no body of men ever more abhorred, all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of any kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscious fear of wrongdoing is the remnant of the conviction which were branded by the Calvinists into the people’s hearts,” words by J. A. Froude.

Truth of doctrine produces truth of character. Have you, dear friend, things you hide? In Psalm 51:6, David prayed, *Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Again, words from David, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,* Psalm 139:23,24.

## The Armor: Part 2

v. 14, *Having on the breastplate of righteousness*. To again quote Philip, “The breastplate guards the heart which is the vital organ of the body. If the heart can be got at, then the battle is won; and if Satan can get to the heart, then the battle is won for him and lost for us.” No weapons are more effective than the arrows of doubt and discouragement. No one can do battle if he goes about doubting his salvation. The first part of the armor has to do with truth as doctrine or belief and as that which forms and motivates one’s character and action. Likewise, this part of the armor includes our imputed righteousness in Christ as well as its out-working in a personal walk of righteousness or holiness. The one follows the other. James Philip tells about finding Fisher’s “Commentary on The Shorter Catechism,” in Glasgow. Of this volume, he remarks, “This book has been not only nourishment to my soul and light to my understanding; it has been a breastplate to my heart, to guard me against the attacks of the enemy.”

Romans 6:17 declares, *Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you*. Is not this a striking truth? Romans 10:10 says, *for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*. Paul wrote, [put] *on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*, I Thessalonians 5:8. Matthew Henry says that faith and love include all Christian graces. In Isaiah 11:5, it was prophesied of Christ that, *Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins*. By grace plus no merit of my own, His righteousness becomes my righteousness. In the hymn, “Man of Sorrows,” we have this line:

“Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.”

Philip points out that we should not separate doctrine and duty, as though they fall into different parts. Ministers sometimes utter

these unthinkable words, “I don’t preach much doctrine, I try to be practical.” Please note: there is no doctrine that is not practical. False doctrine perverts, twists, and makes an impractical rule to follow. It is no accident, I suppose, that those who follow cults tend to be impractical people. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith,* I Timothy 6:11,12.

### **The Armor: Part 3**

v. 15, *Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* The force here is that we be “combat ready.” Jonathan Edwards’ text for his 1741 message used by God to bring about a “Great Awakening” in America was Deuteronomy 32:35, *Their foot shall slide in due time.* The state of the sinner is a state of unreadiness, of weakness, of imbalance. The Christian warrior must make certain of his standing, his strength, and his strategy.

We can make evangelism the theme here. In Isaiah 52:7 we learn, *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!* Taking this meaning, then the idea is that our feet are to be swift to take the gospel to lost sinners.

It seems, however, that Paul is awakening Christians to a battle that includes, to be sure, the battle for lost souls; but the whole warfare that engages an enemy attacking from each flank. There is here the idea of both enabling and equipping.

Moses stood at the shore of the Red Sea, the armies of Pharaoh close behind. His feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace as he raised that rod and the waters parted.

Elijah stood on Mt. Carmel as the prophets of Baal worked themselves into a frenzy, but the Prophet’s feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace as he prayed to God and the fire fell and consumed the sacrifice—and the altar, by the way.

Daniel was cast into a den of lions, but his feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, for next morning he was safe and sound.

When the believer sins he loses his peace. But you can also lose your peace if you have allowed doubt to come into your mind, or you have become exercised over something and have not turned it over to God. *Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you*, I Peter 5:7.

“What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.  
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!”

Recall Christian in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” passing through the Valley of the Shadow and those nameless creatures that pressed in upon his soul, robbing him of peace. Pilgrim comes to the Palace Beautiful, and outside, at the gate are two fierce lions: *Mistrust* and *Timorous*. Watchful, the porter advises, “Keep in the midst of the path and no hurt shall come to thee.” As Christian went forward, the lions roared but they did him no harm. How was this? Why they were both chained!

## **The Armor: Part 4**

v. 16, *Taking the shield of faith*. There are four pieces of armor that are fit for one’s defense and now we come to one of the parts that will be used in offense. I don’t much care for the sentiment of that hymn, “Hold the fort, for I am coming, Jesus signals still.” There is too much of a “fortress mentality” by Christians in today’s Church. God has not called us to cower in some monastery or cringe in some cloistered hall. We are to be on the front line of battle—“All present or accounted for, Sir!”

Here we have a weapon of the enemy identified, *the fiery darts of the wicked*. Ancient Israel had fiery serpents that came into their camp and the Christian’s foe has his poisoned arrows aimed at our

hearts. The shield is really a double protection. The shields carried by the Roman infantry were very large and offered good protection. One commentary, notes Philip, says that Homer used this word for shield to mean a stone placed against a door to block it. The shield of faith closes the door against the enemy's arrows. In the old Cowboys and Indians stories the Indians would circle the covered wagons pulled into a tight circle for protection. They would shoot arrows that were wrapped with a flammable material and set the wagons on fire. The effect was that the arrows were swift, unexpected, and deadly

Job was unaware of the conversation in heaven between God and Satan, so that when he is attacked, he cries out, *for the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit*, Job 6:4. Job did not yet know the arrows were from Satan. Some young Christians are told, "Obey instantly each urging that comes to you. Obey quickly those impulses that settle upon your mind." Now, every Christian wants to be obedient and to learn the discipline of ready obedience, so what could be wrong with that advice? It is simply this:

The Bible also warns us, *Beloved, try the spirits whether they be of God*. More than a few Christian young ladies have been told by some suitor who seemed to be spiritual, "It is God's will that you be my wife." So she falls for that and ends up in an unhappy marriage. Carnal short-cuts to knowing and doing God's will have no place in the Christian walk. You are responsible to have the shield of faith to protect your heart and let God give peace within your heart and mind over a matter.

"When Satan tempts, and doubts and fears assail,  
Look to the Lamb of God;  
You in His strength shall over all prevail,  
Look to the Lamb of God."

Philip says, "A blazing arrow will never ignite a wet thatch. Water your shield with the water of the Word and with prayer. Saturate it and Satan's darts will simply fizzle out."

## The Armor: Part 5

v. 17, *Take the helmet of salvation.* I Thessalonians 5:8 has it, *an helmet the hope of salvation.* The warrior of Isaiah 59 is similarly fitted: *For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head,* v. 17. This part of the armor protects the head, including the Christian warrior's thoughts and motives. On January 4, 1995, I conducted my father's funeral and used as a text a favorite Bible verse that was his comfort at age 92: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee,* Isaiah 26:3. In Philippians 4:7 we note this truth: *The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* Do not fail to have ready the antidote to Satan's poison in the next verse in Philippians chapter 4, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report . . . think on these things.*

“Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
the Man of God's own choosing.”

Remember the first thing the Babylonians did when Daniel and his friends were prisoner was to condition their minds by having them turn away from their own beliefs and customs and begin to accept the thinking and ways of that heathen society. The enemy knows if he can get us to give in just a little at first, we will be open to greater steps. Dr. Allan A. MacRae, late and distinguished president of Faith Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, used to say, “When you take one step in compromise, there is no place to stop,” meaning you will continue to slide down the slippery slope. A former prisoner who suffered greatly in a Chinese Communist prison told friends of his, that even after six months out of that prison in Chungking he could not even say the Lord's Prayer with any meaning, his mind was so bludgeoned and dazed. The attack was on his mind. Modern society is engaged in a battle for the mind.

We are seeing a generation coming along filled with knowledge but unfeeling, faithless, and without a moral anchor. *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them,* II Corinthians 4:4. In Paul's defense before King Agrippa, he reveals a deep spiritual truth, given him by God: *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,* Acts 26:18. In Revelation 17:13, the mastermind conspiracy of Satan is revealed, *These have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the lamb.* Satan's attack is on the mind.

John was exiled to the lonely Isle of Patmos. I stood in a cave in a mountain side on that Island one day and wondered what it would be like to minister lovingly to people all one's life, then to end up exiled and forgotten. Well, let John tell us in his own words, found in the book of Revelation, what filled his mind: *I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore,* 1:18. And, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,* 5:12. He thought upon the Lord.

## **The Armor: Part 6**

v. 17, *And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* Here is the warrior's final piece of battle equipment, an offensive article. Our weapons are *mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds,* II Corinthians 10:4.

In battle, attack is the best form of defense. I read once that General Patton, in the great World War II conflict, seldom allowed his troops to dig foxholes. His thinking was that an army dug in and protected will be loath to get up, go out, and join the battle.

Is this sword trustworthy? In Hebrews 4:12, we are told, *For the Word of God is quick [living] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and*

*spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, three times He answered the tempter with God's words from Deuteronomy: *It is written, It is written, It is written!* The shed blood makes us safe, the written Word makes us sure.

Above, we said the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word, is given us for attack. Now, consider in the second place that it is given for service and witness. John Knox asked that Isaiah 33 be read to him each day as he neared death. On the day of his death, he called to his wife and required of her, "Go, read where I first cast my anchor," meaning the Scripture at which he was saved. She opened to John 17, noting especially verse 3, *And this is eternal life, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*

Veteran Bible Presbyterian medical missionary, Sarah Hosman, took Deuteronomy 31:6,8, as her stay in her ministry in the Arabian world. J. Gresham Machen valued Isaiah 40 as one of the sublimest chapters in the Bible. Billy Sunday claimed the great text that opens Isaiah 61 as his anchor in time of trouble. Perhaps you have a favorite chapter or Scripture portion that has become your retreat in times of need. God's Word is important. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to My Word,* Psalm 119:9 *I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil,* Psalm 119:162. In Ephesians 6:17, *rhema*, rather than *logos* is the word used. The idea is a specific word for a special need. Wield the Word to strike at the very point needed, as a physician might do with a scalpel, cutting at the point where needed.

In Acts 8, when the Christians came under intense persecution, they went forth with the Sword of the Spirit, going *everywhere preaching the Word*, Acts 8:4. Paul, at the end of his ministry, penned these words to Timothy, *Preach the Word . . . the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,* II Timothy 4:2,3.

## The place of prayer

v. 18, *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* Although prayer is not one of the parts of the Christian armor, it is prayer that comes after the armor is donned. It is prayer that becomes part of the battle because none of the pieces of the armor work without prayer. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,* James 5:16.

There are four parts to consider:

First, we are to pray always—*Pray without ceasing,* I Thessalonians 5:17.

Second, we are to pray in the spirit—*the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought,* Romans 8:26.

Third, we are to watch—when in prayer we become like the watchman on the wall, Ezekiel 33. Paul wrote to the Christians at Colosse, *[We] do not cease to pray for you,* Colossians 1:9. When Israel was working on rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah said, *We made our prayer unto our God and set a watch,* Nehemiah 4:9.

Fourth, we are told to pray *for all saints and for me*—in Hebrews 13, we are told, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls,* v. 17. Pray for them who minister to us, our parents, our pastor, our teachers, and others. Then Paul adds, *pray for me,* v 19. The same request was given to the believers elsewhere, *Finally brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified,* II Thessalonians 3:1.

Please note: Paul is not asking for personal things, he is not pleading for material wealth as modern tv preachers. He is asking for prayer that his ministry, his preaching will be effective, that he will overcome opposition to the extension of the gospel. Robert Law said,

“Praying is not getting man’s will done in heaven, it is getting God’s will done on earth.”

### **6:21-24 Personal greetings for the saints**

The closing four verses remind us that we are not in the battle alone. There are others who are part of the fight. Tychicus was an encouragement to Paul. Paul was an encouragement to the Ephesian believers. In v. 20, he said he was an *ambassador in bonds*. Nero sat upon the gold and marble Roman throne, and Paul was shackled under guard in a house in that city. Who was richer?

### **Summary and application**

“That Roman prison has long since given up its noble inmate. The great Apostle has entered into his reward and seen the face of his Beloved. But the letter is still with us—as fresh and alive as the day it came from his heart and pen. In the twentieth century it still speaks to us.” (William MacDonald, Commentary)

The focus of this church as we come to the end of this epistle is that God will give the victory. Walk worthy, walk in purity, and walk in victory.

### **Am I a Soldier of the Cross?**

Am I a soldier of the cross? A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?  
Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend of grace, to help me on to God?  
Sure I must fight if I would reign—Increase my courage, Lord!  
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word.

## The Ephesian Church — Its Failing A Church Chastened, Revelation 2:1-7

In 1934 Adolf Hitler proclaimed a “Third Reich” [empire] that would last a thousand years. In eleven years it was smashed into the rubble of history. In 1989, the Berlin wall crumbled and fell almost overnight, and with it the might of the Soviet Union. How suddenly the course of history changes. We have before us the account of a church that was the centerpiece of the evangelistic and pastoral labors of Paul, Timothy and John. Now it is called to account before God, for something had gone terribly wrong. Someone has said the sin that marked the church at Ephesus is the first sin of the church. *Thou has left thy first love.*

### Seven Churches Receive Seven Messages

“All the seven messages of the risen Lord are composed according to a certain structure,” explains Donald Grey Barnhouse. “Careful analysis will reveal that an identical pattern is to be found in all seven. **First**, they are addressed to the messenger of the individual congregations. **Second**, the title of the writer is given, each title being one of the descriptive elements of the vision of the risen Christ as recorded in the first chapter. **Third**, to each church the Lord begins by saying, ‘I know thy works,’ (*all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*, Hebrews 4:13). **Fourth**, the heart of the message is a joyful word of praise, a searching word of blame, or a combination of both. **Fifth**, the message closes with an allusion to His coming.”

The Ephesian Church had lost its way, it had turned away from first things, so what was to be the outcome? Alice in the classic, *Alice in Wonderland*, asks the cat, “Would you tell me, please which way I ought to go from here?” “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” replied the Cheshire Cat. “I don’t much care where,” said Alice. “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the cat. Sadly, many modern churches have lost their spiritual bearing as they have grown cold not only in doctrine but in taking a militant stand for Christ.

## **The Holy Spirit’s Address to the Church at Ephesus**

Each of these letters to the seven churches has a *primary association*; that is, a direct bearing upon the church named. These were real churches and factual details are presented about each.

The letters also have a *personal application*; that is, individual members in each assembly are called into account. *He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. Many believe, in addition, there is a *prophetic anticipation* associated with each message. Some detail this into seven periods of church history while other commentators believe that the description of each church as to strengths and weaknesses are present in every generation. For example, there have always been Philadelphia churches with love and zeal, just as there have always been Laodicean churches that are neither hot nor cold.

## **A Review of the History of the Church at Ephesus**

In Acts, Luke records this church’s formation and its foundation. There the apostle Paul saw God bless in his extended ministry. In that place, *the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and there, mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed*. To the Ephesian elders, Paul testified, *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*.

## FAITH, HOPE, LOVE

From a broken heart, George Matheson penned the words to his hymn, “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go.” His promising life and ministry suddenly turned to disaster. He lost his sight and then the lovely girl to whom he was engaged left him. His life was shattered. Everything he loved had left, so he thought. Then he remembered the greater love, God’s love. That love hadn’t changed, nor would it.

The words he penned are true, not only for him, but every child of faith as well. This promise of unchanging love is the guarantee of faith and hope

*O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee:  
I give Thee back that life I own,  
That in Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer fuller be.”*

Paul’s letter, the book of Ephesians, pictures this church’s fulness and its focus. The first three chapters detail the standing of God’s people, while the last three chapters outline the service of God’s people. First doctrine, then duty. The believers at Ephesus are called saints who *were chosen before the foundation of the world, and who are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ*. Truly they could testify as to God’s grace and fulness unto them. Then, we learn of God’s assignment for His people: in Ephesians 4:1, the Ephesian Christians are called upon to *walk worthy of the vocation [calling] wherewith ye are called; to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*.

John, writing in Revelation 2, is assigned the task of recording this church’s failing. Even in this message, there is an introductory record of commendation. *I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil . . . and*

*hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored and hast not fainted.*

What do we make of all this? No other New Testament Church was so blessed and was held up to such close scrutiny. If any church should have continued on in great strength it should have been the church at Ephesus. Consider also that Paul, Timothy, and John each labored there. It should have continued as a vibrant soul-saving light house for the Lord. Not only did this church not continue, but neither have any of the other of the seven churches of Asia. Sometimes, God raises up a work, then He is done with it and it fades away. We do not have the “date of death” of any of these churches in Revelation 2 and 3, but we can go to the spot where they once existed and view the ruins of those places. “The cost of doing God’s will will never be as great as the cost of not doing God’s will.”

## **1. The Approach: Christ in the midst of His Church**

v. 1, *He that holdeth the seven stars in His hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* In Revelation 1:20, the stars are seen in Christ’s right hand. Christ bought his church, Acts 20:28, *the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood;* He builds His church, Matthew 16:18, *I will build my church;* He blesses His church, Ephesians 5:25,27, *Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* Our Lord not only holds stars in His hand, he knows the the stars in the heaven by name. If He has intimate knowledge of a countless multitude of stars above, how much more does He know about and care for his ministers in the churches. Matthew Henry says Christ “takes pleasure in them [the candlesticks or lamp stands], as a man does to walk in his garden.” And further, “Though Christ is in heaven, He walks in the midst of His churches on earth, observing what is amiss in them and what it is they want.”

The church is important to Christ and it ought to be important to us. There is good reason why our Lord has commanded His people to assemble together, Hebrews 10:25. Here are some reasons why God wants His family to come out from the world and gather together:

1. It is a family gathering. We are a family of believers coming together for mutual love and support. God's Word calls upon each of us to bear one another's burdens.
2. It is a court appointment. I come with my guilt, my sins of omission and commission. "My Lord use the Spirit and the Word to awaken my slothful soul."
3. It is a memorial service. Imagine that a dear family member has passed away and a memorial service is set—would you even consider missing that service? Jesus is my Saviour and it is His death I remember when I partake of the Lord's Table.
4. It is a celebration of victory. As we meet each Lord's Day, we do so on the basis of the finished work of Christ. Our Lord has triumphed over sin and death, He is risen indeed!
5. It is a staff meeting. I am called to be part of a great enterprise and I need to know how I fit in. Christ is head of the church and I am remiss if I absent myself.
6. It is a classroom. My preparation to go forth with the good news that Jesus saves is part of my walk in Christ. I am enrolled in a course of study titled "Christian discipleship." My graduation will not be until I go to be with the Lord, whether by rapture or by death.
7. It is a retreat. My church is my place away from the world. It is a sanctuary for me from the busyness of my daily life. It is a place to let God speak directly to my heart and mind. It is a place for me to stand in awe of my Heavenly Father who loved me enough to send His Son to die on the cross for my sins.

Gary Cohen, in his book, *Understanding Revelation*, notes that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are historical, that is, they actually existed; then that they are representative of the visible church at that time, inasmuch as the churches in Colosse, Corinth, Antioch and Jerusalem, for example, are not mentioned. Furthermore, the conditions described are those that will be found in the visible church in any age. Therefore, the commendations and condemnations apply to today's church. (Cohen, p. 44,45)

## **2. The Affirmation: a church to be commended, v 2,3**

v. 2,3, *I know thy works*. Just as a loving physician calms and consoles before breaking serious news, so God softens the blow of the needed reproof by first giving some approval. They were a) productive, b) persistent, c) principled, and d) perceptive. There were their *works* and *labor*, they had *patience* and they had *not fainted*. Also, they could *not bear them which are evil*, revealing a good standard about them. Then, they were perceptive: *thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not*. Donald Gray Barnhouse, suggests, "We are told to bear one another's burdens and to bear with the weak (Galatians 6:1, Romans 14:1). But we are told just as specifically that we are not to bear with the false."

## **3. The Admonition: a church to be blamed, v. 4**

v. 4, *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love*. Walter Scott says, "Here is disclosed the root of church and individual failure: departure from Christ." The writer in Ellicott's commentary on Revelation says, "It is no trifle which is blamed, as the word 'somewhat' (which is not to be found in the original) might be taken to imply; for the decay of love is the decay of that without which all other graces are as nothing." Louis Talbot warns,

“Declension and backsliding, soon to become more and more pronounced, until it reaches the climax in utter apostasy, has already commenced.” “Our Lord told His disciples, concerning the last days,” notes Lehman Strauss, “the love of many shall wax cold. First love is the love of espousals (Jeremiah 2:2); the tender love of a bridegroom for his virgin bride (II Corinthians 11:2). It is the one thing [Christ] asked of Peter before He went away (John 21:15-17).” Continuing, Strauss says, “Like Martha, we can become so occupied with doing *for* Christ as to miss becoming *like* Christ.

First love—Three steps for Christians to take in renewing a sense of first love.

First, **recall** what was once there. When you have the privilege of leading someone to the Lord, you recall the tears of joy at that moment. When the ministers stands before a young man and woman at the marriage altar and watches as they look into each other’s eyes in total devotion, he may think, “I would like to pull them aside just for a moment and whisper to them, ‘Don’t ever lose that.’” Remember that soul-cleansing, heart-filling love at the time of your conversion?

Second, **renew** things before the Lord. Ask God to rekindle that proper spiritual relationship you have neglected.

Third, **repeat** those things that draw you close to the Lord. Sometimes we forget basic things such as prayer, time in God’s Word, being a faithful witness in word and deed.

## **The Deadly Disease Afflicting Fundamentalism**

Ephesus had her creed and her credentials, but what of Christ? First love has grown cold, apathy has set in. “Things may appear outwardly fair and promising,” writes Walter Scott in his commentary on Revelation, “and none but an Omniscient eye may see the lack inwardly; coldness of heart to Christ.”

G. Campbell Morgan has written, “There is a toleration which is treachery. There is a peace which issues in paralysis. There are hours when the church must say no to those who would ask communion with her, in the doing of her work on the basis of compromise. Such standing aloof may produce ostracism and persecution; but it will maintain power and influence. If the church of God of today were aloof from the maxims of this age, separated from the materialistic philosophies of the schools, bearing her witness alone to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the perfection of His salvation, even though persecuted and ostracized and bruised; it would be to her that men would look in the hour of their heartbreak and sorrow and national need. The reason why men do not look to the church today is that she has destroyed her own influence by compromise.

There are four reasons for failure within fundamentalism:

- a) some thought they had won the battle and sat back,
- b) some gave up and quit,
- c) some were willing to continue questionable associations, and
- d) some preferred being thought tolerant more than being faithful.

James Skene was a young convert in Scotland who was martyred during the killing times of 1660 to 1688. These words were spoken by him at the time of his death by hanging:

Now farewell dear friends! I hope the Lord will have a glorious church in Scotland, and that He will raise His glory out of the ashes of the burnt covenant. Now, farewell sun, moon and stars! Farewell Holy Scriptures! Oh! I am going to a life where I shall be no more troubled with a body of sin or death. Oh! I am going to a mansion of glory that my Lord has prepared for me. I shall have a crown of life; because I have been, by my blessed Lord’s assistance—though I stepped aside—made faithful to death. Now, welcome Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thou has redeemed me by Thy price, and by Thy power. Oh! Lord God of hosts, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.

#### 4. The Appeal: a church called to repentance, v. 5-7

v. 5, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent.* What is the first-named fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22? It is *love!* Remember first love. Repent and turn back to first love, kindled there within your breast by God. This factor alone will bring back the backslidden heart or church to God. The only proof of sincerity in this delicate business is a returning to first things. It was to the Ephesian church our Lord wrote, *grieve not the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit,* (Ephesians 4:30, 5:18) What is revival? It is nothing more than God's people learning God's will and obeying it. Count it a fair blessing when someone warns you about that which has entered in to your life to separate you from God. But what if there is no repentance? God says, *or else!* Faithful missionary servant in India, Amy Carmichael, wrote these lines:

“Oh God, the awful need of those who feel no need of Thee! Who wake and sleep and drink and eat and toil and talk while careless feet tread heedlessly the road that leads to eternity—keenly alive to earthly needs, yet feel no need of Thee!”

*Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick.* Matthew Henry observes, “If the presence of Christ's grace and the Spirit be slighted, we may expect the presence of His displeasure.”

#### **Calvin on Calling Upon the Lord**

“Assuredly it is not without cause our heavenly Father declares that our safety is in calling upon His name, since by it we invoke the presence of His providence to watch over our interests, of His power to sustain us when weak and almost fainting, of His goodness to receive us into favor, though miserably loaded with sin; in fine, call upon Him to manifest Himself to us in all His perfections.”

v. 6, *the Nicolaitans*—hated by the Christians at Ephesus and by the Lord. Who were they? We only have the word itself to go by. Divided into two parts this name literally means in part one, victor and part two, laity. Undoubtedly this points to the sin of clericalism, that is, the clergy overthrowing the rightful place of the laity. When looking for the devil in the church do not neglect to look in the pulpit! We may point to the Church of Rome, but what of fundamental churches where the minister cracks the whip and keeps the officers in line by threats? I heard one minister announce on a Monday morning, “I just fired my whole deacon board yesterday, and I’m going to put in the ones I want.” Shameful conduct for a servant of Christ. David Otis Fuller once said, “Modernism ignores what it does not want to believe, while fundamentalism ignores what it does not want to obey.”

v. 7, *He that hath an ear and him that overcometh*. “We can never employ our faculty of hearing better than in hearkening to the Word of God,” says Matthew Henry. To those who overcome, a promise is given: *him will I give to eat of the tree of life*. This is confirmation of that holy and happy state yet future. This is nothing other than that perfection of holiness that was so carelessly discarded by our federal head, Adam when he and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. The overcoming here is not about personal salvation, but has to do with our place in the paradise of God.

**Conclusion:** Revelation 22:7 has these words, *Behold, I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book*. In order to keep something, the following three things must be true:

1. It is must accessible. The Holy Spirit has set down the messages of this book, indeed all of Scripture through inspiration and has preserved the whole for us in an understandable form.
2. It must be apprehended. The Holy Spirit has the ministry of opening divine truth to God’s people and help us to hide it in our hearts.

3. It must be appropriated. The Holy Spirit does the work of enabling and empowering the believer. *Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee, Psalm 119:11. And from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, II Timothy 3:15. When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth,” John 16:13.*

The Ephesian Church was a testimony of the grace of God. The thrilling story of its formation in Acts and its fullness in the book of Ephesians is a matter of record. But sadly the story ends with a note about its failing here in the book of Revelation. The church invisible includes the saints of Ephesus whom we shall one day meet when we take our place in the heaven.

The seven churches of Asia no longer exist, however, the traveler in today's Turkey will learn that the number of Biblical sites there number second only to Israel. On the day of Pentecost many were there who had traveled from this part of the world. Mentioned are Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, and Pamphylia. No doubt there were small groups of Christians scattered in remote parts of Asia Minor.

Words from Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 are a fitting close.

*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*

## About the author and his wife

**Our Ministry.** . . Morris and Reta McDonald have been active in service for Christ since Morris' ordination in 1964.



Pastoring churches, evangelism, children's ministry, and working with missions and church planting at home and abroad have kept them very busy. Morris has traveled to eleven countries outside the United States and preached in five of them. He has preached in almost every Bible Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and attended the dedication of each new BP church since 1985. He marked 40 years of preaching in 1997, since opening an unpastored country Presbyterian Church in North Dakota, the summer of 1957. Both Morris and Reta hold degrees from Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

They were asked to help form a new missions agency in a meeting of Bible Presbyterian ministers, elders, and missionaries on January 16, 1985. A Missions Council oversees the work, which involves church planting at home, missionary support, and assistance for churches, Bible schools, and a Bible college overseas.

They have overseen the distribution of more than \$220,000 worth of Bibles, produce a monthly newsletter, *The Missions Banner*, and visit churches for missions conferences and other speaking engagements.





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