

# Plain Talk on Ephesians

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## Chapter 1

# THE BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

(Ephesians 1:1-14)

Paul is writing this letter to Christians who have heard the Gospel and have accepted Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. He is eager to help them to be strong and to grow intelligently as believers. He begins his letter by reminding his readers how rich they are because of spiritual blessings bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ. The more they realize how graciously God has blessed them in Christ the stronger they will be.

## THE APOSTLE'S GREETING

*Can you understand why a minister of the Gospel would want to send a message to persons who are already believers in Christ?*

We speak of this as Paul's letter to the Ephesians. "The Ephesians" is the general name for Christians who lived in the community or in the area around Ephesus. Ephesus was a large city, and as we know, any city has a large area around it that could be spoken of as "Greater," so we speak of "Greater New York" or "Greater Los Angeles." So also we can speak of "Greater Ephesus."

This letter was sent out to the Christians living in the general region of the city of Ephesus, and the first two verses are the apostle's greeting to his people. This is in one sentence:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1).

This is the greeting with which Paul approached the people who were going to listen to him, or read this letter that he sent to them. We would normally say: "Dear John" or "Dear Mary" as the case may be; but notice how the apostle begins: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." We remember that when he was born he was named Saul. He was a Pharisee. Some time after he was preaching as an apostle of Jesus Christ, a minister of the Gospel, his name was changed to Paul. We have no particular reference as to why his name was changed, but at a certain point in his career he was named Paul. That is the Christian name by which we know him.

The word "apostle" means "a sent one." It means the one who is an authorized spokesman, a representative. Paul understood himself to be commissioned with the high responsibility to minister the truth to believers.

Why should that be? Why should believers need to know more of the truth than they already know? It is a good deal like asking you why you need to eat today? You ate yesterday, then why do you want to eat again? Simple? Yes, but very important. A person in this world would not last long if he ate only on Monday. Or if he fed the children breakfast and then said, "Well, that's enough for you for the day." It would not do. Yet that is the way so many people go about their spiritual life.

We know that if a person has any spiritual life at all it does not come as a result of strong will power. No, to have Christian faith means that a person seeks the will of God and receives it for himself. Knowing the will of God comes about by reading His Word, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Thus a person who is a Christian, is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and feeds his faith to strengthen it. If he fails to do this, after awhile it will get dim. Soon doubts creep in. He stops

reading the Bible and thinking of the things of God. And soon that person will wind up with no faith at all.

All around us are those who once upon a time went to church, counted themselves Christians because they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today they do not believe anymore. It is said: "They started out, but it didn't last." This is misleading. They failed to feed themselves. They just starved to death spiritually. God has arranged to have His people: apostles, ministers, pastors, evangelists, teachers share with other Christian people the truth in the Gospel. This is done so as to feed the heart and soul that the person might grow in grace and knowledge.

The apostle was sent on a special mission to tell all the Christians how they could receive the truth that is in Jesus Christ; so that they might be strong in faith giving glory to God. The Apostle Peter writing to Christians said, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

We have some people who speak about spiritual things, yet never talk about Jesus Christ. They may talk about missions, or other needs such as widows and orphans, but never mention the Lord Jesus Christ. When the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is left out in discussing living as a Christian, it is like trying to run a car without gas in the tank. So the Christian needs to have the things of the Lord Jesus Christ in him and with him. It is "Christ in you" that is the hope of glory.

Thus the Apostle Paul, when he talked to people, spoke to them of the truth of Christ Jesus and His wonderful Gospel so that they might grow. He calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is not an apostle of virtue, politics or good living. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul never counted himself to be one who knew all the answers, even though he was a very learned person. He was a dedicated messenger who had been entrusted with a message. He had something to say from Jesus Christ to the people. This truth was his by the will of God. It was not his own idea, nor was it the idea of any other man. It was Almighty God, the one who rules over providence and all affairs who prepared Paul for this ministry. God also prepared the situations in which he was to witness, in which he was to teach. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints.

The word "saint" means "the one set apart." The saints were people set apart by God the Father, saved by Him and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. There is a popular use of the term "saint" which is of recent origin. It is popular to refer to the spiritual or moral character of exceptional people – those who are very fine, good, and holy – as being saintly. We speak of them popularly as saints. This is not what the Apostle Paul meant. Anyone who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who had committed himself to Christ Jesus, was included in the term "saints which are at Ephesus" and to the faithful ones in Christ Jesus. The faithful ones are the believing ones. Paul does not mean the tried and true and in that sense faithful, because they have always stayed steadfast. No, they are the believing ones. Actually the faithful were those full of faith marked as the believing ones: "To the faithful in Christ Jesus." They exercised their faith in whom they trusted. "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2).

## ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

*Have you any idea why spiritual blessings are so important?*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (1:3).

When we think of the word "blessing" we probably think of it as some benefit, something bestowed upon us by the good grace of someone able to do it. Thus, someone who gives us something of value for our benefit or our advantage is blessing us. As a result we are better off than we were before because of what was done. The word is used also to refer to anything we receive that we could not have earned nor paid for. We speak of that as a blessing. When we speak of a spiritual blessing we refer to the kind of

blessing it is, the context within which this benefit occurs; i.e., a financial blessing would pertain to money matters; a physical blessing would refer to the physical body; so a spiritual blessing would refer to the spirit of man.

What is meant by "the spirit of man"? This phrase refers to that aspect of the human being that is not physical, that is unseen, inward. When a person thinks of himself, he does not always have in mind his outward appearance. One could have in mind a picture of himself as a boy, or as a young man. One could remember how he has been with young children or how he will be in the future when he has grown older, and finally stands before God. Man thinks of himself in the presence of God as one person. His own different ages and stages all belong to the same person. That consciousness is different than thinking about his body. With reference to the body, if a person were to lose an arm, he would not have as much body as before. But the loss of an arm would not lessen the spirit. When the body dies, when it stops functioning, the spirit goes on. If the body were taken away the spirit would still be. This is what you mean when you speak of "the spirit of man." Sometimes "the soul of man" is used. The Bible uses the words "spirit" and "soul" interchangeably.

Our Lord emphasized the fact that the soul was the most important part of man. You remember how He used those words: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Mark 8:36, 37)? The soul of man, the spirit of man, permeates all that a man is, and lasts on through death into the very presence of God. The body can be destroyed but the soul, the spirit is everlasting.

In the Book of Ephesians you will find that spiritual blessings included being "chosen in him." That is, the Christian has been called by God to share the life of God, and this is a great blessing. This is unchanged day in and day out, as long as the Christian lives in this world, and beyond that. When a man dies the soul continues; it will never die. "Predestinated . . . unto the adoption of children" is the plan of God. If you accept Christ you become a child of God, and this is permanent. It does not stop when the body stops.

"Made . . . acceptable in the beloved" is another blessing. The Christian is made acceptable to God in Christ. This simply recognizes the fact that a human being is not acceptable to God as a human being, because he is a sinner. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. When a person believes in Christ, Christ makes the believer acceptable to God. He takes away his sin and provides a new life for the Christian. This is why it is written that we are made "acceptable in the beloved." "The beloved," of course, refers to Christ Jesus, who was the beloved Son of Almighty God: we are made acceptable in Him.

Another blessing is that we have redemption through His blood. The Christian is redeemed because of the death of Christ. We were guilty, we had sinned, we were under condemnation from God. Christ Jesus, by dying for us, carried away our sins, and so we have been redeemed.

These spiritual blessings do not change – today, tomorrow, as long as you live, and on into eternity. It will always be true that your sins have been forgiven. The Christian has received an inheritance. He receives from God that which makes him rich, not in money, but in spiritual things. He receives from God a home in heaven; and he is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

God has given us all those things in Christ Jesus. These spiritual blessings have been given in Christ by God as our Father. They exist in heavenly places in Christ. Referring to the phrase "in heavenly places," there is no word "places" in the original language. In the original language this phrase could be translated, "in the heavenlies." This points to that sphere in which these blessings operate.

What do we mean by "heaven"? That is where God is. It is not subject to time or space. There is no physical aspect. A believer cannot see it, nor handle it. These things occur in the realm where God is; that is, in heaven. Thus we say that these blessings have been given to us "in heavenly places," viz., in the presence of God.

"In Christ," refers to their origin or source. Not in "Jesus," but in "Christ." The name "Jesus" is

properly used for the earthly career of the Son of God. It refers to Him being incarnate as the man, Jesus of Nazareth. He was the Babe in Bethlehem, in earthly form; but these blessings did not derive from Him in that form. They derived from Him as Christ. This term refers to an eternal relationship with God. For He is the anointed Servant of God who came to do God's will.

When you think of spiritual blessings, look up. Look up into the presence of God. These benefits are certain and everlasting. They are rich, and they are enriching because He is God. They are perfect and complete; there is nothing lacking in them. They are free; you can never earn them as wages. They are gracious; the believer does not have to be worthy to receive them. They are available to all because God is no respecter of persons. The Gospel announces that these benefits are free to all who believe by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

#### CHOSEN – PREDESTINATED – ACCEPTABLE

*Do you realize that the plan of God to save sinners through Jesus Christ is not an emergency measure?*

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (1:4-6).

The Book of Ephesians was written to Christians. Anyone can come to God and become a Christian. "Whosoever will may come," but we must always remember that whosoever won't, don't come.

There are three things mentioned in this passage that God does for Christians. Let us examine them. First is the statement, "Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Many understand that word "chosen" to imply the making a selection of one out of many. Actually, the word "chosen" as used here, does not mean chosen "from," or chosen "before" others; or chosen "in preference" to others; but rather, chosen *unto*, chosen *in order to*, chosen *for the sake of*, chosen *for the purpose to*.

The idea is that of being called *to* something that God has in mind. We are not chosen because we are better than other people. It is not a matter of preference. It is not that God prefers one over another, because God is no respecter of persons. And the qualifying condition is not chance; it is not a matter of "luck": "I am in and he is out." And it is not a matter of reward, because of something I have done.

What it means is that the believer is chosen "in him." Anyone may come, "whosoever will"; he can be in Him, can be called to, and can be chosen for this blessing.

"Before the foundation of the world," means to say, this was the eternal plan of God. Before God ever made this world, or created Adam, He had in mind that since Adam was created of the dust, he would fall because of the dust out of which he was created. Adam would at the same time have been given a call. Because of the spirit that was within him, Adam would hear, understanding that he was being offered eternal life in exchange for the human life that he had, and respond. God always had in mind to arrange it so that whosoever was in Christ should have the blessing. Anyone who was in Christ should be "holy and without blame before him in love." We who are in Christ are called to, and chosen to this end.

God had this in mind from the beginning. When He created the world and made man in His own image, He had in mind that when man sinned, He would send His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. His Son would fully obey the law of God, and would open the way into His presence, and share with whosoever would come, the eternal life of God. The result of that would be that such persons would be holy and without blame before Him in love.

The word "holy," comes from the English word "wholly," i.e., the whole thing, 100%. We should be

genuine; without reservation, singleminded, wholly 100% turned to God and without blame.

How can a sinner be without blame? Christ Jesus came to save sinners. Yet there is no man who sinneth not. To be without blame does not mean to be without sin. Then what does it mean? Because sins are taken away, they are forgiven. The sinner is pardoned and his soul is cleansed. We are washed whiter than snow. We should be 100%, totally clean and without blame before Him. "In love," in the presence of God; in His sight. This is the communion of blessed fellowship with God, the plan of God, into which we have been called.

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." In trying to understand predestination, the person should focus his attention on the main part of the word, "destination." The Christian knows what is meant by the word "destination." It is "where he is coming out." It is his future. The word "predestination" always points forward to the future.

It is a fact that many people are troubled by predestination. They have trouble accepting or believing what they think it means. What they fail to realize is that often men have been pointed backward to the beginning of time, because of the phrase. "before the foundation of the world." This view implies that before the beginning God predetermined who was going to be where. John is in; Tom is out; Harry is in; Jim is out! But no! There is nothing in the Bible to indicate this. The word predestination *points forward*. It is a word that belongs to *every* believer. If a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ his future is settled. He is going forward into the presence of God to be in Him. As I write this I am reminded that my wife in talking to me about my discussing predestination, has insisted that I repeat this truth at least three times. The word predestination is *never used about an unbeliever*. It is never used about a sinner. Not one time, not anywhere in the Bible is the intimation held that God ever planned that any person go to hell. Never! We are predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. That is the future of the believer. This would not be a reward, it would not be something earned. It would be entirely a matter of God's will, His own good pleasure. Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has this for his future. This person can be a child of God to the praise of the glory of His grace because of His grace.

"Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." That word "accepted," can well be translated "acceptable." He has made us "acceptable in the beloved." "The beloved," of course, is Christ Jesus. "Acceptable" means reckoned to be worthy of being received. Because of sin, we would have been ineligible, we would have been left out, but He makes us by His grace to be worthy in Christ. God in His grace freely makes the believer acceptable in Christ. Whoever is in Christ is acceptable with the Beloved. In these three blessings, the believer is placed in the family of God sharing communion with Him.

## REDEMPTION – FORGIVENESS OF SINS

*Did you know that the forgiveness of sin for a Christian is due to what God sees in Jesus Christ, not what He sees in the Christian?*

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence (1:7, 8).

The Book of Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians who lived at Ephesus. This book began with thanks to God because of His grace toward us in the work of Jesus of Nazareth. just now we are looking at 1:7, 8: "In whom (speaking of Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Paul has just pointed out that God plans to bring us to glory, indicating that this was His purpose before the beginning of the world. He intended to bring believers to Himself to be His children forever and ever.

One barrier to such a work of God was the guilt and sinfulness of man. God is holy, and is of purer

eyes than to behold evil. And man is sinful. There is no man who does not sin. How then could man ever be in fellowship with God? God arranged it. He planned to send His only begotten Son, His beloved Son, into the world to seek and to save the lost. Man because of his sin was under condemnation. He was doomed. Sinful man is not fit for the presence of God. We were under condemnation because we had sinned. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). Thus we were doomed to die because of the sin that was in us. Now in God's way of ruling He will accept the payment of a debt by another. The settling of an obligation can be done by a third party. The Bible tells us that there is one Mediator between God and man; and that is Christ Jesus. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8), opening the way.

What we call the Christian Gospel is set out in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These are precious words to the believer, gracious words to the Christian. They give the assurance that Almighty God had in mind to do this very thing. He came to redeem. He sent His Son into the world to redeem.

"Redeem" means to release from penalty by removing the penalty. Once when I was going to school, a classmate of mine was fined in a traffic court "\$30 or 30 days." He did not have any money. He called me and asked me if I had the money. It happened I had exactly \$30. I returned to the school to get the money. When I returned to the police court, everyone had gone: no judge, no lawyers. The only person there was the cashier. So I went up to the cashier and I asked whether or not I could pay this person's fine. I will never forget how this cashier just looked at me and said, "What name?" When I started to give my name, and began to spell it, she interrupted: "What is the name of the guilty man?" "Remple." She took the money and wrote a receipt; and in a bored way told me to go down the hall and show the man standing there the receipt.

So I was sent out. She never did ask my name. She wasn't a bit interested in me. All she needed was \$30, and I gave the money to her. I went to the jailer and showed him the receipt. He never asked my name. He turned around and called out "Remple." Remple came forward from about eighty men there. I remember the happy look on his face when he realized that now he was going to be set free. It was my \$30, but he was set free. He had been put in jail because he had done wrong. I put up my \$30. But the debt was now paid, and he was free.

Here can be seen an exact pattern of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for each believer. The sinner is guilty, standing before God. The penalty for sinning is death, to be shut out from the presence of God. Christ Jesus stepped in; and He died for the sinner. Because He died the sinner can now go free. This is the basic truth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." He did this by what has been called "the forgiveness of sins." The root idea in the word "forgive" is "to give." When the Bible tells us that God will forgive us, we are to understand that He will forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: to the same extent and in the same way that we forgive others.

How does a person forgive others? Suppose a man owes me \$40. If I want to forgive him, I can cancel his obligation to pay the \$40. This would cost me \$40, but I can do it. Thus the man is released to the extent of that \$40. To forgive a person does not mean to condone or overlook or approve what he does. No, wrong is wrong and sin and debt are real. To forgive means exactly what the word says: the debtor is given release. The debt is cancelled.

Why would Christ Jesus do this? He forgives according to the riches of His grace. Grace means the undeserved kindness and favor of God toward man. This is the one great truth all through the Gospel. Man does not deserve to be free. He does not earn his pardon. He might not ever be worthy of the mercy of God. But if God shows grace toward him, the man receives it. "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
Freely bestowed on all who believe!  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

We read in the Bible "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20) toward us. Again, let me say very kindly, this is not for everyone. It is for *anyone*. Whosoever will believe will receive this. "In all wisdom and prudence," which is to say, everything is all paid up fair and square! What a wonderful salvation we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### AN INHERITANCE IN HIS WILL

*Did you know that a Christian has something very important coming to him after death, after he leaves this world, that no one else can have?*

Paul reminds these Christians at Ephesus of the spiritual blessings that had been given freely in Christ Jesus. It is such a common thing among professing Christians to assume that all benefits and blessing from the death of Christ are for all men. This can be a very dangerous error. It is wonderfully true that anyone can come, but it is only those who will come and those who will believe who will receive blessing.

Every man has a future. It is "appointed unto man once to die," then comes the judgment when every man shall stand before God. There is no other God but one. All men shall come to stand before Him. However, of the people who stand before God, there are two classes and only two. Those who are with Christ, and those who are without Christ: those who are in Christ, and those who are outside of Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). To be sure all men are together here in this world. The wheat and the tares grow together. Each will leave this world via death. If they go before the Lord comes, it will be appointed unto them once to die. In dying they will all be alike, but after death comes the judgment; and in the judgment comes the separation. The wheat and the tares grow together in this world. When the harvest comes, then the separation will take place, and there will be just two classes – the saved and the lost.

Now someone may say, "I don't like that." May I say gently, it is not going to make any difference. It is not given to us to judge. God knows those who are His. There is a difference between men, and in their fate.

As we read Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we note many benefits prepared for the believers who are in Christ. We have noted that they are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before Him in love. They are predestinated unto the adoption of children. They are made acceptable in the Beloved. All this is true in Christ Jesus. They have redemption in Him, the forgiveness of sins. There is another benefit that they have: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Not everybody has this inheritance. Those who believe in Him have it, as well as blessings that are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. These benefits, these blessings, so wonderful, so free, are all offered to all men. They could be had by anyone, but again plainly and I hope clearly, they are *not available to the unbeliever*.

It is like saying that the lady comes with a tray with the coffee to offer to her guests. She stops, first at one chair and then at another. Who will get the coffee? It was provided for all. The person who takes it will have it. What about the person who does not take it? He simply does not have it. The blessings that

are in Christ Jesus are reserved for those who believe in Him.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ (1:9-12).

There will be items in this Scripture that will be obscure to some of us. To begin with there is this word "mystery." Simply put the word "mystery" means "something that is hidden." It is something which is true, but which cannot be seen and immediately understood. This is the hidden truth – the mystery of His will. I have been helped to understand more about this when I think of an extension cord such as you have in your home. Alone, it is much like a cord with which to wrap a bundle. Put to its proper use, with the plug in the wall and the other end in an appliance, it serves another purpose to man. The electricity provides the power. A person cannot see it, since there is no bulge passing along the cord, but the electricity passes through invisibly.

Paul would call that a "mystery." This means it is out of sight. There are things about a Christian that God has in mind for believers that are not evident at once. There are things that are true about a Christian that you would not know by looking at him. Is there anything about his eyes or ears or his nose that would show him to be a child of God? It is true there might be something about his conduct that you would think is like a Christian, but only God knows his heart, where the truth is operative.

In the same way the Holy Spirit is now in the heart of the Christian. Can you see Him? No! If you saw three people walking down the street and knew that one of them was a Christian, you would not see any glow about him. There would not be any phosphorescent gleam coming out of the inside that would show up something in him because the Holy Spirit was there. No one could see it but the Holy Spirit would be there; and that would be a "mystery." The Christian now has fellowship with the living Lord within his own soul.

Some years ago, the whole world took note with a rather pathetic regret of the cosmonaut who said when he came back to earth from his space flight that he looked out of his space capsule and he could not see God. No doubt. Very true. But does that deny that God is there? Can one see radio waves or television impulses before they are picked up by receivers? Yet they are there. Yes, they are true, but they are hidden.

The Christian will one day be in the presence of the Father. The Christian will one day have a glorious body. This is also true and this is not because there is something about his body now that you could recognize by looking. All these benefits and more are the result of God's work. He has made known unto us "the mystery of his will" according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself. It was in His mind that in the fullness of time He would gather together in one, all things in Christ. This will take place. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The future for the Christian is guaranteed because God will do it. God is the one who is in control and He is absolute in His sovereign control. He is God. He is going to do these things; and if we are believers we will receive them because God does them. We can rejoice in that.

## SEALED – THE EARNEST

*Did you know that there is a way in which you can know for sure that you really are in the Lord Jesus Christ?*

All that has to do with being a Christian is invisible to the human eye. It is always a risky thing to judge whether another person is a real Christian by just looking at him.

A person may feel he is a Christian, in the sense that he is not a Mohammedan nor a Buddhist or one of the other religions in the world. The Christian believes in God and believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He understands that Christ Jesus came for sinners.

A person can have all those things in mind and still have an inward, uneasy feeling that maybe all is not as it should be. A Christian realizes that he is saved by faith, but sometimes questions continue to haunt him.

Paul indicates to these Christians at Ephesus what it is to be a real Christian. He writes:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (1:13, 14).

A wealth of assurance is to be found in these two verses. These Christians could have assurance, because of what God had done in sending them the Holy Spirit. Apparently there was a time when these persons in Ephesus were ignorant of the Gospel. In those days they could not believe because we read "in whom (in Christ Jesus) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth." Before they heard the word of truth, they could not have believed. It was only after they had heard the Gospel that they believed. This emphasizes that no one becomes a believer in Christ by himself. The notion that any person could naturally in his own strength be a Christian is simply not true. We sometimes call a person a "good Christian" because of his virtue. It is not your virtue or your goodness that makes you a Christian. It is the believer's faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. One must hear the Word of God and believe it. Paul says, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14b).

Now, what was this word of truth? It was the "gospel of [their] salvation." It was the message of Jesus of Nazareth dying for sinners. To tell that story, the believer would have to tell about Jesus of Nazareth, who He was, under what circumstances He came, and what happened to Him. The Lord came to seek and to save the lost, to give Himself a ransom for many. He died for sinners that they might be saved. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." After he believes, a person is sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Something happens to believers after they believe. Are you one of those who by the grace of God believes in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know that the Bible says that He is the Savior, yet you feel in your own heart also that He is your Savior? The next step is to be "sealed." We have all sealed a letter. Most of us lick the flap to seal it. Others heat wax and let it drip on the back of the envelope, then press it down, thus sealing it with sealing wax. "Seal" means some sort of security so fastened to insure that the letter will remain closed. The word can be used when we "seal" a bargain. For example, when one agrees to pay \$10 for an item, how can it be "sealed"? Give the man \$2 of the \$10, and that seals the bargain.

In preaching the Gospel, when we tell about the Lord Jesus Christ, a promise is made. We promise to anyone, anywhere, "whosoever will may come," and whosoever comes will "in no wise [be] cast out." We offer this to everyone: whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. When a person accepts that offer as true, God has a way of confirming His promise. To show that receiving this offer is an acceptable response, God sends the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit sent as evidence of God's approval is the indwelling presence of God. This will affect different people in different ways. Some people, because of what they have heard or been taught, will have an experience of great excitement. The receiving of the Holy Spirit may be accompanied by a sense of personal excitement. Some believers will shout, some will cry, some will sing. Others will pray. Such persons suddenly realize something has happened to them inside. They are changed. I can remember a person saying he was in darkness and confusion; when he prayed to God everything was quiet. Suddenly it was as if the shades had been pulled up, and the light shone in. Now everything was at peace. The presence of God is real. The person cannot see nor touch Him, but He is real.

A believer can be certain about God, and about the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. The Christian can trust Him. The believer will find himself wanting to help other people. The believer will be inclined to deny himself. Such feelings are evidence of the Holy Spirit working in the believer. The seal, the presence of the Holy Spirit, indicates that the transaction as made has been approved.

The presence of the Holy Spirit constitutes what is called "the earnest" of our inheritance. Here also is a term of the market place. When one speaks of the "earnest," "earnest money," it is used as when one is buying a house or a lot. If the cost is \$5,000, a partial payment of \$500 binds the contract by showing good faith. Part of belonging to God is to have His presence in your soul, and to be in His fellowship. This fellowship will continue gloriously in heaven. This fellowship will never be changed in all eternity. Fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit will be our experience while we are here and it will be true until we are passed through this life into the very presence of God.

## Chapter 2

### PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

(Ephesians 1:15-23)

Having outlined the spiritual blessings the Christians have because of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, Paul tells the Ephesian Christians of his pastoral praying for them. He is aware of the dimness of the human heart which can hinder an appreciation of the blessings that come to the believer in Christ. So he sketches to his readers the requests he is bringing to God constantly on behalf of these believers, whom he loves dearly.

FAITH – LOVE – THANKS

*Christians should thank God for other believers who witness to the Lord.*

To a Christian it makes a difference when others also believe in God. To be sure it is a very personal, intimate thing when a person accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. What happens in the heart of a believer is seen and known only by God. The believer puts his faith in One who is invisible, whose ways are beyond him, therefore doubts in his human heart are quite normal. A person can doubt himself, his faith and his understanding of God. There are times when faith is abundant, being a time of joy. But sometimes there is less faith, to the heart's distress. This is why when I know of another's faith and belief, I can rejoice.

I suppose any of us would feel that a person like the Apostle Paul could certainly stand alone. If ever there was any one man who believed in Christ Jesus, who did not need anyone else to support him, we could immediately say such an one was Paul, the apostle. Yet when he wrote to the Ephesians, Paul expressed his appreciation of their reputation as believers in words like this:

Wherefore I also, after I beard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers (1:15, 16).

The word gets around when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Others will know it, because accepting Christ involves more than just an inner mental consent to a proposition. Simply to change one's mind about Christ is only the beginning. It is when one changes his ways and conduct that others can see that something has happened. Stop and think for a moment. Among your friends do you know someone who is without doubt a Christian? Do you know of anyone whose faith is talked about? Ask yourself, what is that one doing for Christ that is worthy of mention?

Paul writes, "After I heard of your faith." How would anyone hear anything about another that would indicate his faith? We cannot look into the heart of the believer. Then how would we know? Let me offer a few suggestions. If one became a missionary, people would feel that he must be a real Christian, by looking at what he did. Or, if a Christian were to go to some leper colony, people would talk about it to say, "What a wonderful sacrifice that person is making!" It is true these are exceptional instances and would be rare. But what of each one of us, where he lives? We have our homes to keep, offices to go to, and families to rear. How would anyone know that the average Christian is a believer?

One of the least things that would show a person to be a Christian would be what that person says. In this situation, actions speak louder than words. Words are cheap. How would anyone know? He could watch the actions and the life of the person in question. What about that person's conduct? Is there

anything in that person's daily walk that would indicate he is walking with the Lord? Does he pray? Even the simple practice of bowing one's head in a restaurant to quietly give thanks – people will know. In addition to that, is there a family altar in his home? There are opportunities for family prayer and devotion if one will seek them out, making time for them, however short. Does each member of the family pray for one another? Does each one carry and read a Bible? This may sound artificial but it is a valid sign. It makes a difference when you see a man who is carrying a Bible. It would make a difference in any church if all the people who came carried their Bibles. I remember when it was my privilege to be in Brazil, that it was very noticeable and very touching to see how regularly Christians there carried a hymn book, as well as a Bible. Carrying a Bible, reading a Bible at home or at work, can make a difference in the opinion of others.

Another quiet thing a Christian can do is to attend church services. It is distressing to see so many families dropping the children off at Sunday school. How wonderful it is when the whole family goes regularly to worship the Lord! It is impressive to go to public prayer meetings, to take time for Bible study. If you join a Bible study group, invite others to join you in your joy in the Lord. Men you let it be known that you are interested in people coming to church and to the things of the Lord, these things will speak.

But a person can do more. He can be openly kind to the poor. He can support the work of the church. This will let it be known that he is for it. Men the church is trying to promote missions, he can give! When they are trying to promote the Sunday school, he can go! He can support the things of the Lord, and this will be noted.

A Christian's conduct can be an inspiration to others. There are always some who will be blessed by what a person does. It is so easy to say: "For me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four, no more." That would be very human, very natural. However, when a believer shows an interest in the welfare of others, he is testifying openly that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. With God Almighty as his Father, he looks out upon all men and remembers that God is no respecter of persons, he remembers that anyone can come. Paul wrote: "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." He constantly thanked God for the witness and testimony of other believers, and he named other Christians in his thanks to God. It is my earnest prayer that you will yield to be a witnessing Christian in your family. Then you will be a witness for Christ Jesus whose testimony will help and lead others. It is good to thank God continually name by name for those people who openly show that they believe in Him.

#### SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION

*Do you realize that the ability to know the Lord is actually given to believers?*

If a person knew that his pastor was praying for him, that each day the pastor lifted to God the souls of his people, what would the pastor be praying for? Perhaps he would pray for their health and well being. Yet there is something much more important than that. Let us notice what the Apostle Paul wrote about his praying for his people in Ephesus. Paul prayed:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (1:17, 18).

This is to say that Paul wrote in effect "I would pray from the bottom of my heart that God would give each one inwardly the grace, the ability to see and to believe the things of God."

I have the privilege of having in my family two sons. The second of these is what you would call a space engineer, a specialist in electro magnetics. For a number of years he was on the faculty of a well-known university. There, he was considered a puzzle by his fellow faculty members as he let it be known

in a very simple way that he believed the Bible as it is. He told me of a conversation he had with a fellow faculty member. This person said to him, "Well, Gutzke, you don't mean to tell me that you believe the Bible?"

John said, "Yes, I do."

"Well, you certainly don't believe the Book of Genesis."

"Oh, yes," he said, "that's part of the Bible. I believe that."

"Well, you certainly wouldn't believe the creation story as it is told in Genesis."

"Why yes, that's exactly the way it is."

"I could never believe that."

"Of course you couldn't."

"Wait a minute. Why do you say I couldn't?"

John replied: "You're just looking at it from a human point of view, aren't you?"

The man said, "Yes."

John said, "As long as you look at it from a human point of view, you will never believe it."

Then this man said to him, "Well, what can I do? How do you believe?"

"Well," John said, "I have the grace of God, and the grace of God helps me. I am able to believe."

"Are you something special that you have this grace of God?"

"Oh, no! Anybody can have it. You can have it."

Sadly the man turned away.

Each person needs the grace of God in his heart to believe. The grace of God enables the willing person to believe. God gives it. Every now and again I come across people who say, "I don't understand about all these problems people have. I have never had any problems in believing." When I hear something like that, I always think – fortunate, blessed person. It has been given to that person by the grace of God. It is not something one can cultivate. Paul does not imply that God will give you direct knowledge of Him. No, that is something a person gains. A person can read, think, examine and discuss. The Scriptures are right there to learn from. As a person studies and reads, it is God that grants the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. God puts something into the heart that enables one to believe: the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

The word "wisdom" is a good word. What does it mean? It simply means a person has good common sense. Sometimes young believers are not wise. They can have a real, urgent faith, and yet not be wise. But if a believer has strong faith, God will give him wisdom. Who, then, is wise? When is a person wise? The Bible will tell you "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). This tells us wisdom begins in being aware that God is! "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). That is to say, when the heart has an awe, a deep reverence for Almighty God, this is wise. That is the beginning of good sense. One has the spirit of wisdom, begins to have good common sense, when he appreciates the fact that God is great. God is Almighty and in His majesty He is present. The believer bows his heart down and Almighty God permeates the whole mind. This is the beginning of wisdom.

Paul prayed that these Ephesian Christians might have this spirit of good common sense about God and revelation. What is meant by the word "revelation"? The word "insight" would help. It speaks of a person having an understanding of something that can't be seen from the outside. It is revealed from within. An understanding about God is not based upon a logical argument put together with rational considerations. The believer has an inward awareness of God's presence. There is an immediate awareness of God's person and power, when deep down in his heart he realizes that he is standing in the presence of Almighty God, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

This is tremendously important. The Apostle Paul wanted believing Christians to have this basic conviction in their hearts. Thus he prayed to Almighty God that God would give to them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. When a believer gets to know Christ, Christ will grow in

his heart. This is what Paul wants; this is what the wise, intelligent pastor wants for his people. As a believer, he yearns that others should know about God.

I can remember as a father thinking, when my own boys and girls were growing up: "What do I really want them to have when they go out in the world?" Above everything else I wanted them to be aware of God. The awareness of God and the appreciation of God will shed light through all the heart and mind of a man. Paul wanted his people to be inwardly illuminated in thinking and feeling by the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, that they might be wise in understanding and strong in faith.

## THE HOPE – THE GLORY

*Can you see why it is so important that a Christian should appreciate the great things God will do for any person who accepts Christ?*

It is always very stimulating and encouraging to remember what Christ Jesus did when He died for me. When I think about the cross of Calvary, I think about His suffering and that the Son of God would die for sinners. This moves me to want to praise Him.

It is even more powerful to keep in mind what He has promised to do for me in the future. The Christian is a person who has a past. He looks into his past and knows that he is a sinner. He also looks back into the past and sees that Christ Jesus died for sinners. The Christian remembers the Gospel, that God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost. All of this is wonderful.

The Christian also looks forward to a golden future. This could be missed if I become too preoccupied with the present. I can get so involved in what I am doing now that I may forget, and neglect to lift up my eyes and look forward to what God will do.

In helping them to avoid neglecting this prospect, the Apostle Paul in writing to the Ephesian Christians, outlined an aspect of the glory which is promised in the Gospel. Paul has already prayed that the believers might be given the spirit of good common sense and true insight into the nature and power of God. When he has concluded this part of his prayer he goes on to say, "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." The apostle has prayed that God should give to the believers the spirit of good common sense and true insight into the promises of God. With this grace, the believers might know what is the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and the exceeding greatness of "His power to us-ward who believe."

The Greek word translated in English as "know," means much more than simply identification: to recognize it by title or by tag. This word "know" seems to gather up all that is significant about that which is named. When a person says that he "knows" anything, he is saying he appreciates and understands what it means. We have heard the inquiry, "Do you know John Smith?" And the answer, "I know who John Smith is, but I don't know him." That means the person has not had any dealings with John Smith. He does not know what to expect from him. When the Greek uses the word "know" it means really to know what to expect – to appreciate – to realize the full import. Paul wanted his believing people to know, to realize, to fully appreciate what is the hope of His calling.

When the believer speaks about "the hope of his calling" what does he mean? What is "his calling"? Would this mean His calling a person to come to Him that he might be saved? Christ Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). So He calls the person to Himself that the soul might be saved, that the person should be redeemed, pardoned, forgiven. The plan of God is that the believer should have a new birth and be adopted as a child of God. All that is in "the hope of His calling." These are the things that Paul wanted the Christians to "know" and to appreciate that they could answer the question for themselves: "What am I expecting now that I have

come to Christ?" This is what the Apostle Paul wanted them to have in mind. In order that they might have this in mind, he prayed that they might be given the spirit of wisdom and of revelation. The believer needs to be wise, and have true insight into the nature of God to really understand what is prepared for him in Christ Jesus.

What is "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"? Let us take it up bit by bit. Start at the last phrase "in the saints." Who are they? The saints are the people who belong to Him, those who are set apart to Him. They are the saved persons. What would be the inheritance of Jesus Christ in those saved persons? It will not be in the kind of people they are, nor in anything that they have done. It will be something that God put in them, which He gave to His Son. Thus, "*his* inheritance in the saints." What is it that Christ Jesus has in the believer? When a person becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and gives himself over to God, he accepts His promises. The believer becomes a child of God. The believer obeys by His grace. In His strength the Christian is able to believe. God is working in the believer "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). This is His inheritance in the believer. Christ Jesus died for this. Thus as Christians our disposition is to serve God, to praise God, to obey God. God has produced in us this inward disposition to want to be well-pleasing in His sight. This is "*his* inheritance."

The glory of it, the fulfillment of that seen in the life of the believer, is what the Bible calls "righteousness." The Christian comes before God as he is. He will confess his sins constantly and he will be dependent upon Him at all times for all things. The believer will be "right" in His sight because God is within keeping the believer righteous. With this working of God in the soul there will be peace in the heart – the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

This is "the glory of his inheritance" that will be in the heart and in the life of the believer. There will be joy. The believer could not possibly have such joy and peace in his own strength. The joy in the believer is the joy that is experienced when Christ Jesus is actually working to move the believer into the will of God. In fellowship with God, the Christian has joy. This actually is the "riches of the glory," of the fulfillment "of his inheritance in the saints." Great things will be done in the believer through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wanted the Christians to realize this, for it would strengthen them.

When the believer knows what has been done for him, is being done in him, and what will be done for him through Christ Jesus, he will be encouraged and strengthened in his faith to walk in Him. May God grant to every believer that this may be so by the grace of God.

## THE GREATNESS OF HIS POWER

*Do you have any idea of the significance of being saved?*

Becoming a Christian is a much greater work than is commonly realized. Much of what we learn about becoming a Christian is gained by listening to sermons in church services. Preaching at best is styled to suit the public mind. As a result the public has little knowledge of God. They have limited knowledge of the will or plan of God. Their knowledge of the Scriptures is sketchy. In general the public has no appreciation of heaven or of hell, and they do not know what is meant if anyone talks about "the Spirit and the flesh." Commonly speaking men in public do not have any expectation of judgment by God. People normally have little feeling of guilt in His presence.

It is almost impossible for a preacher to honestly and adequately present Jesus Christ as the Savior. There will be preachers who, one way or another, will present Him as a great person. They will talk about Him as a good man, a great teacher, although they may not tell what He taught. Others will offer Him as a leader, yet they do not note to see where He leads. Christ Jesus is presented vaguely as Someone a person can turn to and get help from.

This situation is tragic but true. I personally grew up in church and I listened to preachers. I think those

preachers arranged their messages with the idea that what they presented was all their people could take at that time. Yet, if a person had asked them privately, "Isn't it true, to get a person right with God things will have to be done God's way?" Most of the preachers would say, "Yes." "Well, wouldn't the Bible tell you what God has in mind?" I'll warrant you the great majority would say, "Oh, yes, you study the Bible to find out." Ask many preachers frankly, "Do you think there is such a thing as heaven or hell?" Many of them would say, "Oh, yes." They would agree that God is the judge of all the earth. Then one wonders why this is not preached? A person could go to church Sunday after Sunday, and it would be practically impossible for him to find out why Jesus Christ came into the world, or to discover what actually was done when He died for the believer.

So often preaching, teaching, implies that a person should try to be good. He should try to do good. This is what the Jews understood. Here we are reminded of what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:1-3:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

It is true salvation is of God. It is by God, in God, and through God. Salvation is the work of God. A Christian needs to know that and to believe it. For a Christian to be strong in faith, he needs to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to those who believe.

Paul had prayed for these Christians in Ephesus that they might know:

What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (1:19-23).

That is a long sentence and it contains much truth. It sets out in full description how the Apostle Paul wanted these Christian people to know the "exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

There is a great power of God displayed everywhere. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). The sun, moon and stars, even the earth itself all indicate the greatness of God's power, but there is more than that true. God is not only the Creator, God is the Savior. In salvation God does something just as big and just as original and just as demanding of power as in creation. Paul points this out when he writes.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

That statement "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" takes the reader back to the Book of Genesis. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). Paul said God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, in His creative power, has "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" in His recreative, regenerating power. Paul wanted the Christians at Ephesus to understand the power which God manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The raising up of Jesus of Nazareth is what God did. He actually worked in Jesus Christ to make Him the One who would be able to share eternal life. God raised Him from the dead, and Christ will never die again. Those who believe in Him will be with Him forever.

"And set him at his own right hand." God raised Him up and set Him at His own right hand. The living Lord Jesus Christ now is interceding on behalf of the Christians. Christians have an Intercessor, an

Advocate in the presence of God, even Jesus Christ the righteous. "And hath put all things under his feet" – because God has given all power to the Lord Jesus Christ. Later the Lord could say. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). This simply means that all power and authority is given to Jesus Christ to exercise. God has put all things under His feet. He is in control. He is over everything "and gave him to be the head . . . [of] the church."

This is what the Christian needs to "know." He needs to know that when he believes in Almighty God, and puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God will raise him from the dead and God will set him at His own right hand. The Christian needs to know that Jesus Christ, His Son, will lead him on into glory. The Christian knowing and believing this will be strengthened to be able to obey, to praise God and to serve Him while here in this world. The believer needs to know the almighty power of God.

## Chapter 3

### SAVED BY GRACE

(Ephesians 2:1-10)

As Paul proceeds to discuss the benefits to be received in the Gospel, he emphasizes that all that happens in, to and is by the grace of God. There is no ground for anyone to boast of anything he did to cause the power of God to be active within his own soul. Every believer is a work of God and is "created in Christ Jesus" that he might serve God in doing "the good works" which God in His providence has already prepared and now gives the believer the privilege of doing.

### DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SIN

*Can you understand that any person who is not a Christian is actually unable to respond to the will of God?*

It is natural to think that if a person wanted to be obedient to the will of God he could do it. But there would be so much less frustration and guilt if a man would just realize that it is not possible in his own strength. The natural man does not have it in him. No doubt we commonly feel our main problem is our own unwillingness. To a large extent it is true that the natural man may not want to walk with God. Then, generally, we assume that anyone could, if he only wanted to badly enough. This is an error.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The natural human cannot be subject to the will of God. Paul wrote this again in I Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The truth of the matter is that natural man cannot respond to God. While it may be true that some do not wish to respond to God, there is however a hunger among so many to get help from God. They may read the Bible and find that God will bless them if they will obey Him. But when they undertake to obey Him, soon they are cutting corners. They are superficial. From the bottom of their hearts they simply do not want to obey God. The human nature of man has been blemished by sin. Because of sin, the natural man is rendered incapable of obeying God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). The effect of dying is immediate. In the Old Testament where it was first written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," the construction of the language implies: "The soul that sinneth, dying it shall die." This means the dying will begin at once. Sinning inside of us is inborn, the word is "innate."

Paul writes to Christians:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (2:1, 2).

These believers in Ephesus had been that way. This does not necessarily mean they were vicious or crude or vulgar. They may have been, but that was not necessarily the case. When it comes to dying, refined cultured people can die. Dying does not have any favorites. Everyone comes into it. All people are dead in trespasses and sin.

That is the natural condition of everyone everywhere. What does it really mean to be dead? Can you recall an instance when you were in a room with a dead body? Perhaps as you viewed the body, people

around talked. Voices fell on those dead ears with no response. The lights in the room aroused no response. Being dead, the body is insensitive. It will not respond to stimuli of any kind. When we speak of a person being "dead in trespasses and sins," we are speaking of a person whose heart is not touched by anything from God. The soul that sinneth, dying it shall die. Inwardly, it will become insensitive. It is more than calloused. It will simply die because of trespasses and sins. This is the effect of sin. The body is so that it does not see, hear, nor feel the things of God.

"Wherein in time past ye walked. . . ." Any natural person is sensitive to things of this world, aware of all the things about him in this world, yet he is not touched by the things of God. "Wherein time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Is it clear what the course of this world would be? In 1 John 2:16 are written these words: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." These words are rather stern. What do these words mean in everyday life, in the language of one's kitchen or office? They mean appetite, imagination, and pride. The "lust of the flesh" is anything which makes a person feel good. The "lust of the eye" is anything that looks good to the person. The "pride of life" is anything that makes a person "somebody." Now that was the way in which the believer walked while he was still dead in trespasses and sin.

"According to the prince of the power of the air." How often we have used that phrase without ever stopping to pin it down! What is meant by "the prince of the power of the air"? Simply and plainly that is "the devil," Satan. Whenever one is concerned about how he looks or feels and is proud, he is playing right into the devil's hands. "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." There are people in the world who must do everything their own way, even though by this they will be disobeying God. There is a spirit that moves them. It is not just that they are mean, or careless or cruel. We can know who or what motivated them. The Apostle Paul would say, "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

This makes us aware that it is wonderful to have the Spirit of God working in one as a believer. We are not perfect, but God is. When God is in the believer, He will move him into His will. How we can praise God for this!

## CHILDREN OF WRATH

*Do you realize that when a person is not being led by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God, he is actually being led by others into disobedience?*

In the course of our Christian living there is no such thing as standing still. There is no such thing as being in a state of suspension with one foot up in the air. We are like the waves of the sea, never at rest, but are rising or falling.

It is a mistake on our part to think that the issue of living is a question of whether we will or will not do God's will. It is rather a question of doing God's will or Satan's will. We seek to win souls to accept Christ that they might be saved. It is a wonderful thing to win a soul to Christ as this brings him into blessing and delivers him from destruction. Christians are much like fish swimming in a flowing stream. The fish has to do some swimming to remain where he is. So it is with the believer. The man who will relax and "take it easy" will be swept out to sea, as surely as he lives. Every day he will be taken further away from God.

Paul reminds the Christians at Ephesus:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (2:3).

I remember some years ago hearing Dr. R. A. Torrey preach a great sermon on "What To Do To Be Saved." When he was finished with that sermon, I remember he said, "You would naturally feel that the

next time I preach, I would bring a companion message on 'What To Do To Be Lost.' There is nothing to say. You won't have to do anything. That is where you are now. The question is whether or not you are going to be saved."

This is how it is with believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ephesians were fellow believers with Paul. He reminded them "among whom also we all," all of us Christians, "had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." When the word "lust" is used, we need not think only of vulgar and crude things. Paul means all desires and wishes of human nature.

Paul writes: "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation." The word "conversation" means "manner of life." It is the way one lives. This implies this very basic truth: No man lives to himself alone. Actually, we live with people. I was born naturally in this world among people. Growing up among people I learned their language and ideas. A person learns his ideas and way of life in his home and his neighborhood. Any person will live the natural human way. When a man accepts Christ Jesus as his Savior and Lord, the result is that he is being born again. The born-again believer has a new society. The born-again believer has the Holy Spirit who will now walk in him, with him, and will lead him into the will of God. The Christian is no longer limited to human companions. The Christian has inside himself the Holy Spirit, who is closer than any human companion.

"In times past in the lusts of our flesh." Again we should remind ourselves that "flesh" in Paul's writing means human nature – all that we got when we were born into this world from our parents. "The desires of the flesh," the interests of our human nature, were things we never needed to learn. We have them naturally. The "flesh" in me, the human nature in me is motivated, inspired to action by the desires that I have. They are the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

John writing about this says: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" ( 1 John 2:16). My actions as a human being are moved by my appetites, my imagination and my personal interests. This is the very place where the believer has to meet the issue of living. So much of my heart's desire as a Christian is to want to be well pleasing to God. This desire to be pleasing in the sight of God is from Christ by His Holy Spirit. The choices a person makes are guided by inward yearnings. If those yearnings are in the flesh, and so are human, the response is to do a human thing. However, if those yearnings are spiritual, if they are of the Lord, the person will want to do that which is in the will of God. The outward, overt behavior is always a fulfilling of my choice.

All of this is very natural; we do not have to learn it. As human beings we do not learn to get angry when we are provoked. That just comes naturally. Nor will the Christian need to learn to turn to God. The Spirit that is within the believer will turn his heart to God the way a flower turns its face to the sunlight. It will just happen naturally.

Paul is pointing out that in the former experience of these Christians at Ephesus, in the days before they were believers, they were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. In Romans 1 Paul sets out the results of the wrath of God. He points out in verse 18 that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness among men. Then he points out in verse 24 what that wrath of God brings to pass: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts." This was a consequence of God's judgment upon them because they turned away from God. They also served the creation more than the Creator, and so "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections" (Rom. 1:26). Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:28). This was the fate of those who did not wish to honor God in their minds. If a person shuts his eyes to the Lord, turns his back on God (and he has that privilege as a human being), there will be results, there will be consequences: he will be left on his own to walk in darkness.

## SAVED BY GRACE

*Can you see how the grace of God is manifested in this fact that He sent His Son to die for sinners while they were still disobedient?*

The kindness and mercy of God toward sinners is one of the most precious truths in the Bible. When a believer can make that truth personal he can feel deep down in his heart that God has been kind and merciful. There can be nothing more wonderful than that. We bow down in worship before the Holy God who is so good to the children of men. Kindness is always appreciated, but we are overcome when we realize that God came in kindness to persons who did not ask Him to come, nor did they make Him welcome when He came. Our hearts are deeply touched. This is when the word "grace" is so wonderful.

Paul expressed it in Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is so easy to forget this wonderful truth. We often fall into the trap of thinking the Christian life is some big effort on our part, something we do. No! It is something God has done and is doing, and will do in and through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Apostle Paul makes this so clear:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (2:4-7).

Let us look at several phrases: "But God, who is rich in mercy . . . hath quickened us together with Christ . . . hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." How wonderful! And it took mercy. We were so utterly helpless and worthless. We need to be very careful to let His mercy shine before our eyes and our hearts. There was no reason for Him to act the way He did, sending His Son to die for the sinner. Yet He wanted to do it. Why? He is rich in mercy. "God, who is rich in mercy." However much mercy was needed, He had it. He "hath quickened us," made us alive. We were dead in trespasses and sin but He has quickened us together with Christ.

At the close of chapter 1 we read of the great power of God which He showed when He raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. He quickened Him. Marvelous! God has done for each sinner that would come to Him as He did for His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased, who had never done anything wrong. If God had raised only Jesus Christ from the dead, we could feel that was right and deserved. After all, the Lord Jesus had perfectly obeyed His Father in every way. But when He does that to one who did not obey Him; when He does this for the believer even as He did it for His Son, it is no wonder we praise Him! It is no wonder that in heaven itself there will be a great chorus of hallelujahs going up to God. The angels desired to look into this thing. It is the most wonderful thing heaven can behold, that God would treat sinners who put their trust in Him as He would treat His own Son. This is hard to grasp. Yet it is absolutely true, and it exalts the greatness of God.

It is no wonder that Paul praises God for His great love wherewith He loved us. This is something no one can earn. God does beyond anything we could imagine, when He shows His great love wherewith He loved us.

Paul continues: "For by grace are ye saved through faith." It is almost as if Paul were repeating himself. Paul underscores it so that we might not miss it. "By grace are ye saved." This is so basic. All that God does in Christ is what we mean by "saved." The fact is He forgives, pardons. He receives us as His own. He regenerates us and adopts us into His family as a child of God. All this is done in Christ Jesus out of

His grace. We cannot earn it, nor pay for it: this is something God does. We receive it and praise His holy name. "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

We are not only saved *from hell*, we are saved *to heaven*. It is not only true that Almighty God is going to deliver us out of condemnation; He is also going to bring us *into* communion with Him, *into* fellowship with Him. It makes one think of the fact that we are to be counted as members of His Bride. The Bride sits with her Bridegroom. He was a prince and she was a peasant, but the peasant girl who has become the bride of the prince sits on the throne with the prince. We are with Him. We have the same place that He has and all heaven itself will behold us. We will be sitting at the King's table.

I am reminded of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, in the Old Testament. David brought him into his palace, although he had been an enemy and there had been war. David remembered the promise he had made to Jonathan and sends Ziba out to find this man. Mephibosheth was a cripple, lame in both his feet. David brings him into his presence, rules that his property shall be restored, and that he will be taken care of all the days of his life. In addition, there is to be a place set at the king's table for him. The believer can be in the presence of Almighty God, knowing very well that he is "crippled in both feet." All of this was done that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us. His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus is an evidence, a manifestation of the grace of God, and of the richness of His grace. Throughout the coming eternal ages, all the beings in heaven and glory will behold the amazing wonder: souls of sinful men saved into eternal glory through Christ Jesus. We actually will be the trophies of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). The believer is blessed in Christ Jesus because God is the God of all grace and mercy.

#### GIFT OF GOD

*Can you feel the importance of keeping in mind that salvation is not by our own works but comes as a gift from God?*

I was a grown man before I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. It was not so much that I was a rebel, or against the Gospel. Very frankly I was ignorant. I became interested in the possibility that God might be real when I was a senior in high school. I soon felt that the answer to the question "Is God Real?" might well come from the church. Later I came to feel that the answer to my question would come from reading the Bible and from praying. Every day for several years I read the Bible, prayed and waited on God. I attended a church service whenever I could, at least once a week for several years, but no answer came. Why?

Perhaps the answer to that was implied when the Lord told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man in hell asked Abraham to send someone back to earth to tell his brothers not to come where he was, Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Then the rich man said to Abraham, "But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Abraham answered him and said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31). We know from history that is true even down to the present time.

In my search to find out what could help me I continued to study the Bible, and memorized Ephesians 2:8, 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." It has been many years ago since I came to know the Lord. And I continue to be more and more persuaded that anyone who knows the meaning of those three words: *grace*, *saved* and *faith*, knows the Gospel.

"By grace are ye saved." In this we refer to the kindness and favor of God toward man. Actually, a

better statement is, "the undeserved kindness and favor of God toward man."

I can remember how an old farmer with whom I was talking tried to help me understand this word. He asked me one day if I could tell him what "grace" meant. Since I was a schoolteacher, I opened my mouth to tell him what that word meant. I knew perfectly well that the grace that a woman shows when she walks across the floor is not the grace that he had in mind. Or if one asks grace at the table, that is not what is meant. Suddenly I was ashamed of myself, a schoolteacher, that I did not know what the word "grace" meant. But the old farmer kindly said to me, "You don't need to feel badly about that. Scarcely anyone knows what it is."

Then he went on to say, "Suppose on the farm where you were reared, a tramp came by about eleven o'clock in the morning and asked your mother for food. Your mother probably was the kind of woman who would not turn him away. It would be true that he bothered her. He interrupted her work, since she had something else to do. And even though he had no money to pay for food, she probably would prepare him several sandwiches, and give them to him. Now let us suppose that on another day at eleven o'clock a man of the community, who was very well-known and very well liked, came to your farm. Your mother would urge him to stay for lunch, which he would not pay for either. He would not pay any more money than the tramp did; yet in this case your mother invited him to come, with grace. She not only offered him a free meal but she did so with a willing and gracious spirit, hoping he would accept. This is the way it is with God. God wants men to turn to Him. He wants the person to come to Him and He is hurt and grieved if he doesn't come. "By the grace of God are you saved."

Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ does for believers is in the word "saved." By grace our sin and guilt are removed. By grace we are born again, regenerated, changed. By grace the believer receives the Holy Spirit in his heart from Almighty God. When the Christian passes out of this world, the Lord will take the believer to Himself. It is a truth to say, by grace the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven will take the believer to Himself.

"Through faith." When we say "faith," we mean that we receive the Word of God as true. This is not just any kind of faith. This is not faith in machinery, or in some natural process. This is not the faith wherein one believes that water will freeze if it is down to 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and that it will boil if it is up to 212 degrees. When the believer has the promise of God that "whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," or that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost, does he believe it? When the Bible reveals that men are sinners because they have broken the law of God, do we believe it? When the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ died for sinners, do we take this to be true? If we accept such things to be true, we have "faith." Faith on my part is believing and taking as true what is in the Word of God, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Paul wrote "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:13, 14). Then Paul goes on to say later, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." By the grace of God, Christ will do in the believer everything that is promised. When a person believes in Him, it is not of himself; it is the gift of God. I have heard a great many of my friends discuss what is actually meant here: Is it the grace that we have which is the gift of God? Or is it the faith that we have that is the gift of God? As far as I am concerned, all of the salvation process is the gift of God.

Paul includes the words "not of works, lest any man should boast." This seems to imply that there is not going to be in heaven anyone who is going to strut around with a feeling of "See what I did. See how I managed it. I was just that good. I got here." There will not be anyone up there talking like that. The only people who will be up there will be people who will be able to say, "Just think of it. God for Christ's sake forgave me. God for Christ's sake kept me. God has for Christ's sake brought me here. God has provided me a home here." Our hearts will be filled with praise and thanksgiving, and we will unite in all the

hallelujahs that there are in heaven. Whoever gets to heaven will be in Christ, and he will not get there by his own efforts. He won't get there by his own wisdom, and he won't get there by his own virtue in that he is so good, but he will get there by "the unmerited kindness and favor of God toward man" by His grace.

## HIS WORKMANSHIP

*Did you know that a real Christian will not need to figure out for himself what he ought to do?*

Most Christians want to do something for their Lord. I expect almost anyone on a good day, and when he is feeling well, would be grateful to God. Also, it would be natural if he would want to do something for his Lord – if it did not cost too much and would not take too much time. For instance, almost any man would feel that perhaps he should go to church, or maybe even give a little bit to mission work.

I am thinking of a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, a person who understands that his sins are forgiven. When he comes into the presence of God he is going to be without spot and without wrinkle, because Christ Jesus made him so. He will be there because Christ Jesus appeared for him and bore away his sins. Christ Jesus is right now at the right hand of God confessing him to the Father. Such a person will naturally, in his heart, wish to do something extra for the Lord.

It is the most natural thing for a person to plan what he is going to do. On Monday he will do this, on Wednesday he will be doing that, and on Friday the other. It is a natural thing for a Christian to want to know how he can live and act and do, to be well pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Yet in a very real sense, all that is largely unnecessary. The believer needs only to turn to the Lord, and seek what He has in mind. Paul has clearly stated in the second chapter of the book of Ephesians that the believer is saved by the grace of God. Continuing in chapter 2 we read:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (2:10).

"We are his workmanship." We, believers, are something that God has made. He made us the way He wanted us to be, for now and for the future. This is why some are tall and others short. This is why some speak English and others French. We did not decide that: God did. I was born in a certain family, went to school and lived in a certain community. All of this was under the hand of Almighty God. Almighty God knows each one and He is going to make that person in Christ Jesus what He wants him to be.

If He wants the believer to be a teacher, He will put it into his heart to teach and will provide an opportunity to teach. If He wants him to give generously to missions, He will see to it that there are missions to be supported and that money is available. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

"Created" means that we did not just happen. We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). He created us in Christ Jesus as something new and different from our heredity. The ideas, desires, ambition a Christian has, are created in that person through Christ Jesus, quite apart from heredity or environment. "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." When we look at a field with a number of items – an oak, an apple tree, a rose bush – we can see this truth demonstrated. The soil is the same for each, yet each grows according to its kind. It is the seed, not the soil that makes the difference.

So it is with reference to the person in Christ Jesus. The seed is the Word of God and I became a Christian because of the Word of God. This is not because of the church nor the preacher. I became a Christian because I believed in God and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

There is a sense in which the believer is rootless. His family, community, school affect his situation,

but not his salvation. It is Christ Jesus as He is set forth in Scripture who saves the man. He functions in the believer by the power of God, created in Christ Jesus "Unto good works." Believers are "good" when they are acceptable to God. Anything a man does can be a good work. It is anything that you do for His name's sake. Illustrations of this can be seen when the believer exercises himself to witness, teach, minister to the needs of neighbors or the poor. In this way a believer can support missions or projects. These are good works.

Paul is saying that such good works were before ordained. This word "ordained" means prepared. These good works were arranged, and were set up, so that we should walk in them. For instance, we could take a neighbor child to Sunday school. We had no part in bringing that child's father and mother together. Someone else built the church and perhaps teaches the class. Yet our part is to bring the child. Thus this would be a "good work" which "God had before prepared that we should walk in [it]." Paul emphasizes to us that we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has before ordained or prepared, that we should walk in them. We say that Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the whole business of living for a believer.

## Chapter 4

# OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN

(Ephesians 2:11-22)

Paul wants the believers to realize that God is creating something entirely new and different in His dealing with them. Since the believer is born again as a child of God when he accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, he is translated out of this world where he lived as a child of Adam and is brought into the heavenlies where he is no longer a stranger or alien, but is "a fellow citizen with the saints" and "of the household of God." This is made possible by the work of Jesus Christ when He died for us and was raised from the dead in the newness of life.

### ALIENS AND STRANGERS

*Can you understand why it is, that if a man does not believe in Christ, he has no hope and is without God in the world?*

It is a good thing for anyone who is a Christian to remember what it was like before he accepted Christ. I realize this can be a problem if a person has been reared in a Christian home. For many people however there is no such blessedness. They did not have the privilege of having Christian parents. They grew up as natural men living out in the world. The Gospel was brought to them. They were told that Christ Jesus came to die for them. They came to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, and may now be walking with the Lord. It is a good thing for such a person to call to mind what it was like before he believed.

The Christians at Ephesus to whom this letter was written had been Gentiles in the flesh. The word "Gentile" means anyone who is not a Jew, in the sense that the Jews are people who are living in the covenant with Abraham. They take the promises of God as they are set forth in the Scriptures to Abraham, and, believing them, are committed to God. We call them Jews. Everyone else is a Gentile, an outsider. Paul points out, that because they were Gentiles, and so not Jews, they were called "the uncircumcision," i.e., those who had not had the ceremony of circumcision performed upon them.

Paul writes:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye 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 (2:11, 12).

This is the way Paul puts it before them. He wants them to remember what it was like in the days before they accepted Jesus Christ as Lord. The people of Israel practiced circumcision as a ceremony. It was a surgical operation performed on boys and men that marked them as belonging to the company that believed in the God of Abraham.

Circumcision was a sign that they belonged to God, having been committed to God to obey Him that they might receive His promised blessing. All other persons were called "the uncircumcision," which indicated that such persons had not been included among those fortunate ones who had been called to obey God. Now, in this state, before he was a Christian, the believer had not really done anything to separate him from God. This is one of the tragic facts about being an unbeliever. He does not need to do anything to be away from God.

During that time before one is a Christian he is without Christ. He has no mediator between himself and God. The word "Christ" does not mean a thing, unless there is a God. Also, the word "Christ" does not mean a thing unless God has a law, and unless man had broken that law. But if man has broken the law of God, man is a sinner. Almighty God is holy; He is the judge. And man is under condemnation and is doomed. Now is the time for the Mediator to come in between God and the sinner. This is what Jesus Christ does. If a person is without Christ, he has no one between him and God. He is alone in his guilt and sin. He is alone in his own weakness and darkness. It is a miserable state in which to be.

Paul continues by saying that many were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." Before a person accepts Christ, there is a sense of not belonging. There is a sense of being shut off from the glorious promises of God. In such a state, outside of Christ, a person is in the dark. God has made some wonderful promises. He has promised He will bless anyone who will obey Him. These promises are rich and they deserve notice. It is wonderful to have them. Believers are in the fortunate situation that God has already promised to bless them. The person who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting Him as Savior, does not have to wait, nor does he have to be good before God will bless him. The moment the believer puts his hand in the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ God will bless him. No work is involved. He must only believe and receive. Yet, if one is outside of Christ, good or bad, strong or weak, nice or ugly, he is a stranger from the covenant of promise. The promises will not be his because he has turned his back on Christ Jesus. God has put all things in the hands of His Son. He has given to Him the privilege to share these with anyone who will come to Him.

Paul goes on to say, "having no hope." This is perhaps the hardest to endure. A person can do without things. One can even do without blessing, if only there were some prospect. As long as a person is a believer there is hope. He may falter, fail, or stumble. All his work may be straw, hay and stubble, but if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ his soul will be saved (1 Cor. 3:15). God will work it out.

In the last word Paul said about this condition, "without God in the world," he points out the fact that the unbeliever is without protection, assurance, help, or deliverance. This is an awful state! The unbeliever is alone. He is in the dark. He can be weary and weak and frightened, and he is in danger. Certainly one would think that if a person had any sense at all he would turn to God and come to Him that he might be saved by the grace of Christ.

#### OF TWAIN . . . ONE NEW MAN

*Do you know how the Christian Gospel overcomes personal differences and personal conflicts?*

It is a common thing to expect that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will bring people together. In cases of quarreling between persons it is felt that such instances would be cleared up if these people would just hear the Gospel. Newspapers and editorials will now and again hint that a particular issue is up to the church and the preacher. Like so many other errors, this is misleading in that it is half true. As a matter of fact, it is the work of Christ to bring together those who are separated. The tragic aspect in such public references is that the *way* in which this is done is ignored. There are often fine messages about how wonderful it would be for people to be together. But these make one think of a beautiful automobile with no engine under the hood: attractive but without power. I grew up in the country, where we had flower and vegetable gardens. If you have ever tilled the soil you will understand me when I say that sticking flowers into the ground will not produce a flower garden. Hanging oranges on a fence post will not make it an orange tree. It is hard to feel at ease when one knows the truth of the Gospel, and is aware of how people are misled. They are urged to try to do something which may have some merit in itself, but the procedure suggested is totally futile.

In the country around Ephesus there were two groups of people, Jews and Gentiles. These were

different from each other, separate from each other. And they were hostile and antagonistic to each other. Thus if they should be brought into the one congregation of the Lord to live peaceably together, it would be an impressive demonstration of mutual love. Paul pointed out this had happened: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

Jesus of Nazareth lived in this world, was crucified on the cross and died. Then He was buried. He was raised from the dead in the newness of life, living a different life afterward. The Jews who believed in Jesus Christ identified themselves with Him at Calvary's cross and were there crucified with Him. They died to self and were buried in Him. They became Christians in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, emptying themselves, then being raised from the dead in their own personal experience, and becoming new creatures. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Gentile, whoever he might be, hearing about Jesus Christ dying for him, could identify with Him on Calvary's cross. There he would die, and joining Him in burial would empty himself, and then would be raised from the dead as a new creature. Now the new creature that the Jew became) and the new creature that the Gentile became, were each now in Christ Jesus. Thus these regenerated persons in Christ Jesus could get along in mutual love and esteem.

There is not anything in the Bible that indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ would attempt in some wise, clever, virtuous way to work things around to bring a Jewish Jew and a Greek Gentile together. Not in this world! The Jew that would come to Him would be regenerated, a child of God. The Gentile that would come to Him would be regenerated, a child of God. These two children of God would live together in Christ. Paul goes on to explain. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one [both are regenerated and so are one in Christ], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity [How did Christ Jesus accomplish this? By dying!], even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14, 15).

Two persons may be bitter enemies. The Gospel of Christ Jesus can bring them together. But in bringing them together they will not be the same men. They will have been born again, as new creatures in Christ Jesus. These two new creatures can come together in Christ Jesus. That he might "make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross" (2:15, 16). Thus it will be done not by some clever management or some brilliant teaching, but by the cross. Christ reconciles both in one body by the cross "having slain the enmity thereby."

If I am really annoyed with someone so that I cannot possibly get along with him, and the person dies, then I can get along with him all right. I can get along with his corpse. He could get along with my corpse. There will be no trouble between the corpses. So there will be no trouble between that man and myself when we each reckon ourselves to be dead.

"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (2:17). He could offer peace to each of them, the Jew and the Gentile, who would be coming unto Christ Jesus by way of the cross, since each would be raised in the newness of life. Both in Christ are different than they were before, making peace possible. Such peace is always between the born again soul of the Jew and the born again soul of the Gentile. Paul goes on to write, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (2:18). Note well, the phrase "through him." This is the example of men who were enemies and were brought to Christ. Both of these yielded to Christ, came from His presence as new men, being born again. They could now be friends, and more, brothers in Christ. Keep it in mind that it is "through him" that enemies have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

I have often used the illustration of a woman who wished to entertain two friends in her home. One was a mechanic from a garage with his mechanic's clothing – his garage clothing. The other was a lawyer who was dressed in his new knit suit. The woman wanted to have both of them at her table at the same time. There was one way she could get them together and have them to be comfortable. She would have each of them "join" the Marines, and have each put on a Marine uniform. Now they could sit down at her table and could have fellowship together, without strain or embarrassment. This clearly pictures the

procedure by which it can be expected that the Gospel of Christ can promote peaceable unity in the world.

## FELLOW CITIZENS

*Can you see that Christians can be together and live together because each is living in the Lord?*

One of the wonderful benefits in becoming a Christian is that the person is now a member of a large family who has one Father. However, nothing but confusion and hurt will follow if we try to treat every natural human being as if we belong to each other. If we undertake to treat everyone as if he were our brother and want him to treat us as his brothers, we are going to be disappointed. Truly, there is a sense in which all men are related. Cain and Abel were related and we know what happened. One killed the other. Often when people come to me and urge me to preach about "brotherhood," in my heart I ask, "Which brother is he? Cain or Abel? Because that makes a difference."

The natural human relationship that we have with all men everywhere is marred. It is spoiled, broken, shattered by sin. From the time persons are babies we see evidences of grasping, pulling, tears, cries of "Mine." Even before babies can walk, if they happen to be near enough to where each reaches for the same spoon or for the same toy, there is the beginning of a war. There is always competition, one person trying to get ahead of another. We see it as we drive on the highway. There is always someone trying to get ahead of us. Contention, many wanting the same thing, arguing, conflict, fighting and struggling with each other goes on among all men.

Is peace then possible? Of course, but there is only one way in which peace is possible. We can have peace in Christ Jesus. Paul describes this new status of believers:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone (2:19, 20).

This is a wonderful fact. This is experienced by Jews and Gentiles when they are believers together in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We speak of "togetherness" a great deal today. Think of the togetherness of a baseball team. There may be fifty boys on the school playground but the nine boys who make up the team, who wear the same uniform, have a togetherness as no one else has. Or take the example of a club, or a Boy Scout troop. The boys that are in that troop feel closer to each other than they do to boys outside the troop. The same is true of people who belong to a state or nation. As an American there is a sense in which I belong to all other Americans. If the person happens to be a Frenchman, he can appreciate the American and respect the Americans, but when another Frenchman comes along that is a different matter. Now he is much closer, more involved.

This is true with Christians, and this is a wonderful thing. I am with other Christians, alone no longer. I am one with other Christians in the kingdom of God – "fellow citizens." "Of the household of God." The word "household" is used to mean largely the family – the family of God. Remember the language used by the Apostle Paul that we have been adopted into the family of God. Believers have experienced adoption as the children of God and so are fellow citizens with other children of God. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." We normally think of a wall as a dead, rigid thing. However there is a difference between a stone in the wall and a stone in the gravel pit. It is the difference between a brick in the wall and a brick that is in a brickyard. The brick in the wall *belongs* to that group of bricks. It has its place in there. So the person, the believer, has a place. He is part of a structure larger than himself. The believer is taken and placed in the kingdom of God where there are others, and he is a fellow citizen with them. He is adopted into the family of God where there are others and so he is in the household of God.

Peter writes of "lively stones" in the wall of the temple, "living stones." Each believer comes together with other believers so that he belongs in with those who belong to the Lord.

When you are a Christian, you belong in the family of God. You belong in the kingdom of God. You belong with the others who built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. The brick in the wall is like the brick in the yard. You could compare them brick by brick and one is just like the other, but the brick that is in the wall has a special place, because it is in a wall. It is related to the others, and it is far more than just a brick because now it belongs in the wall; it is part of the wall.

The Christian in his new role as a believer becomes a member of the body of Christ and now rests himself upon Jesus Christ. He is now a fellow member of the body of Christ, he is a fellow citizen of the kingdom of God. He is a fellow member of the family of God. He is now built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Everything that is good comes to a Christian because Jesus Christ died for him, rose again for him. This is what Christ Jesus does for others who believe in Him. One of the greatest things the believer will ever have in the Gospel is that he will have fellowship with other believers and with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, his Savior.

### AN HOLY TEMPLE

*Do you understand why each Christian has his own personal responsibility?*

No doubt many persons accept Christ Jesus, become Christians, and join the church without ever really knowing all that is involved. It is similar to getting married. Any number of young people get married and do not realize what they are getting into. I can remember when I became a Christian. It was like coming home to God. I was rescued from destruction. I was pardoned. I was forgiven. I was glad to be saved. I still am. I thank God. Like a drowning man at sea, I got into the boat with joy. It was sometime later that I realized that I was saved to go to heaven. This was much more profound and sobering.

Now at that point in my life, I began to realize more fully that I am here to serve. I am here in this world where I can witness for Him and can serve Him. The living Lord Jesus Christ wants to use me now to the glory of God. Paul stated this much more definitely by using a figure of speech. In Ephesians 2:21 he is talking about believers and says about them, "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." He had just said in verses 19 and 20 that these Ephesian Christians were no more strangers and foreigners but now were fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and they were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

Christians are different just as people are different. Each one is as God made him, yet not one of them will ever be alone. No Christian will ever stand alone or ever need to work alone. Yet he will not be directly subject to someone else. I work with other believers but other believers do not "boss" me. Christ is the Lord. He is the Head of the Body. God puts these believers together, as they are. In His wisdom He calls together those whom He wants to serve Him. The phrase "fitly framed together" is used as in a building. For example, a house has walls. It is not all walls, for then one could not live in it. It has a floor but it is not all floor, or it would be a pavillion. The illustration could be extended to windows, doors, and a roof. There are so many things in the house, and it takes all those things together to make a house. This is how it is with the church. It includes all kinds of people. just as it takes all kinds of people to make the world, so it takes all kinds of people to make the church.

I think back to the time when I was pastor of a church in Dallas, Texas. I had a fine congregation of wonderful people. Some of those dear saints have gone home to be with the Lord, but still I can remember them so well. There comes to my mind one man about whom the one thing outstanding was that every

Sunday morning he was in his place in church. He was old, so he did not come out at night. He did not take part in any of the activities, teaching or supervision. He was not an officer. He was just a church member. I came to love that old man. Why? Because every Sunday morning he was there, sitting in front of me to hear the Word. There might not have been anyone else there, but that man would be there. When I had been pastor for a length of time, I became very grateful for those members of the congregation who just came and sat.

I can think of another man who served as superintendent of the Sunday school. He was an upright character, and I can remember how strong he was in his testimony. Any time he spoke it was the clear, plain word of wisdom. He was a man of great understanding and deep dedication to the Lord. Another man was the clerk of our session. He was often the secretary of almost any group of people he ever was with. Why? Because he was a faithful, careful man. He seldom ever spoke. I do not think he ever taught a Sunday school class. Yet, he was there, and he was attentive in the services. He paid close attention to everything that went on; he was faithful to the last item. You could depend on him.

I can think of another man who rendered us a great service by his cordiality. He was, I think in some respects, the greatest greeter I ever saw. He could greet a person at the church door and make him feel as if he was a king coming into a palace. He had a smile about him and a courtesy all through his being. He was a large man, but he handled himself gently with people. His voice was considerate, and I think that he was a living example of the welcome of the Gospel for any person coming into the church. One after another the men, women and young people come to my mind. All of them so different. All of them different and yet working together that the will of God might be done.

So we read that they were all "the building fitly framed together" growing "unto a holy temple." The word "temple" simply means that it was a place to worship God. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst" (Matt. 18:20). And the worship of God is normally in the fellowship and communion with other believers.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught what we commonly call "The Lord's Prayer." It begins: "Our Father." This is plural, in the presence of others, and it is "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." "A holy temple." This temple would be holy because it was consecrated to only one use. It is holy in the sense of 100% for God's sake. We must remember that as imperfect as it is, it is the church in any given community that is the only group of people in that community banded together for the single purpose of helping others in the things of God. No one else may care, but the church cares, for the sake of Christ Jesus. The church will teach the children. It will invite people. It will send money to the poor and to the sick. It will send missionaries to the foreign field to spread the Gospel. The church actually seeks to win other people to God. We may criticize it. However, if the church were removed from the community, there would be a big gap in the lives of people.

"Groweth" – that term as used here is a strange mixture of ideas. One might feel that a temple does not grow. We are reminded that Peter speaks about Christians as being the living stones – "lively stones." "The living stones in the temple." The "temple," a building in which "God is," is made up of believers who are alive. If they are alive they grow, and if they grow, they will glow. The believer will not want to hinder in any way or hold back the growth of the temple of God in him.

## AN HABITATION OF GOD

*Are you aware that Christians generally do not seem to realize that God is dwelling in their hearts?*

To be sure we cannot know what thoughts occupy the mind and hearts of others. We do feel certain however that there would be some *evidence* if a man were conscious of the presence of God. For example, if a person were in a room with the lights on, he would know it. If he looked out the window, there would

be some evidence if it had rained. In the same way, if a person has in his heart and mind a consciousness of Almighty God, there is going to be something that can be seen.

It seems clear that if a believer keeps in mind the fact that God is present, and is blessed in his heart while he is conscious of the presence of God, there should be JOY! There should be the desire to shout "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" Then again if a Christian has the presence of God in his heart, there should be a feeling of peace: peace like a river, that flows gently through his soul. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" is an amazing thing. Being aware of the presence of God, the believer can have a quiet confidence no matter what happens. God is, and He can be trusted. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you." Sickness, accident, even death can be faced. The believer knows that one day he is going to die. Almighty God is there telling him, "You don't need to be the least bit concerned. Nothing shall by any means hurt you." Because this is true, when one is conscious of the presence of God, there is a great quietness that settles over his soul.

Also, when a person is conscious of the presence of God he feels like walking softly. There is a mood of reverence; he can go quietly before Him. When the believer is conscious of the presence of God, he can be considerate of others. He can with the help of God refrain from judging others and simply turn them over to God; as He is the judge of all. It does not make any difference what they are like. The believer is not their judge. God is pleased when we are considerate of other people, particularly the poor. With an awareness of God in his heart, the believer longs to be pleasing in His sight.

With hope the believer can have expectation of something better. Things are going to turn out better, although this need not be so much in this world. As far as this world is concerned, it may be that night is coming. We may be living in a time of storm. However, the believer's eyes are on God and as far as eternity and his soul is concerned, he is in God's hands, and God's plan will not fail. It is not because the believer is wise, or clever, or good. God is good. God is able and the Christian anchors his hope in God and His will.

Paul wanted the Christians at Ephesus to know of God's plan for them. God would bring them together and dwell in their midst. The Lord Jesus Christ promises, "I will not leave you to be orphans. I will come unto you." And again, in that striking instance in the Book of Revelation the Lord Jesus was standing at the door of the church of Laodecia, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The Bible teaches that the living Lord wants to come and have fellowship with His own. His promise is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst" of them. So we can have the joy of the Lord, the communion of the Lord, and the power of God right here because the Lord Himself is with us. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). This is a marvelous truth. His presence would be just that wonderful.

In Ephesians 2:22 we read. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." That word "habitation" means "dwelling place." Believers are actually fitted together, brought together because God Himself wants to be right there with the Christians. Thus abiding with other believers our faith, hope and trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ. His Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is there insuring His presence. He has promised: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). His Holy Spirit will comfort the soul as He knows all things. He will teach the believer what He wishes him to know.

The Lord will guide the believer through His Word. In the Old Testament there is a word that says, "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. 32:8). He will watch over us and be in us, as He says, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21). He will be a Companion, and He is a Comforter. God has given His Holy Spirit to be with the believer, not for a little time, or on occasion, but always. He will never leave you nor forsake you. It is true that in his foolishness, a person can grieve the Holy Spirit of God. But He is long-

suffering, not easily provoked. He will wait and work and direct the believer as He is gracious. He is meek and lowly and He is humble. Oh, God is so wonderful If the believer would but yield all to Him, He will take him by the hand and abide. "I will hold thee by thy right hand." The Christian can actually walk with God. God will protect.

There are forces against us. There is an enemy that walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We have an adversary in the devil. He is constantly finding fault and pointing out our weaknesses; but we have a Savior. He is pleading in glory and the Holy Spirit of God makes us conscious of the living, praying Lord Jesus Christ making intercession on our behalf. God will keep us. We can trust Him. The Holy Spirit will guide us as we go along from day to day and we will have the sense of His constant presence and His abiding love. Believers are the dwelling place of God. God will actually live in us and guide us along the way.

That is one reason why it is so important to go to church and to prayer meeting. It is so important to join other Christians in any act of devotion, even in your own home; "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The Holy Spirit will guide and will fill the believer with His love. The believer's heart and mind will overflow with a sense of His presence, power and love, as well as His grace and mercy.

## THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

(Ephesians 3:1-13)

And now Paul sets forth a profound truth which has not been known before, but which was given to Paul in a special way to be shared with all God's people. The real secret of the functioning of the will of God in the lives and the conduct of Christians, so that believers can live together in blessed communion with mutual love and esteem, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). It is the indwelling Christ who enables believers to live in the will of God with love and good will toward all men, so that all human distinctions and earthly categories are gone.

### GRACE GIVEN TO PAUL

*Can you understand that each Christian as a member of the body of Christ is given something to do in His will which no one else can do?*

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus that they might know the meaning of the grace of God in Christ. Sometimes Paul uses himself as an example:

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward. how that by revelation be made known unto me the mystery (3:1-3).

Let us note more particularly what he has said – "For this cause." Paul uses this along with the term "therefore," pointing back to what he has just said as well as pointing forward to what he is going to say. It is as if he had said, "This is why I am obligated in a special way to preach to you." We continue in chapter 3: "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." Paul was in prison for preaching that the Gentiles were to be equal in the fellowship that there is in Christ Jesus. This was so contrary to the opinion of the prevailing authority that he was imprisoned. Paul therefore counted himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He was preaching Christ for their benefit. For an earnest believer, there is always a very personal sense of responsibility.

When Paul says, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," he is going to say something important. While I was a seminary professor, our home had a large picture window at the back of the house. Most picture windows reveal scenes when you look out. In our case the window framed a beautiful picture of woods outside, that changed with the seasons. We had a spotlight focused on that scene and it was strikingly lovely. This reminds me of the way the Apostle Paul felt about himself. He was one of those who was builded into the foundation of Christ. He was builded into a temple for the Lord. He was part of the habitation of God. Paul is for many a window through whom a believer can look into eternal truth. Through his words believers can understand something of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his teaching they would come to know more about the grace of God that was in Christ Jesus. This in itself is an important message for any Christian.

Just as Paul would say, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," some of you are going to learn to say, "I Mary, the wife of John," or it may be, "I John Brown, the neighbor of Bill Smith." Each one has something special to benefit another. No one else can take that person's place. The Lord knows each one's name. He or she is a window through whom another person can see the things of the Lord. Paul says, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." I've got something to say and I'm responsible

to say it.

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Paul had been entrusted with an understanding of the grace of God which he was to share with other believers. On occasion a person must use himself. The Apostle Paul is a mighty good example. He had been entrusted with the Gospel. The Lord has shown me the Gospel and He has shown me that sinners can be saved. Those of us who have this wonderful news have a burden to pray and to tell others. The Gospel can be told by anyone, that is true, but each witness has his own grasp to share with other people. You may have something to do, something to say, something to show, something to suffer, something to give that no one else has. This assignment you have from God is specific. Each believer has a task that is uniquely his. It is vital that this person do what the Lord has in mind for him for He may wish to reach many through that one person. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery," Paul says. God does reveal to individual persons their individual responsibility. Each believer must learn how to receive the message from God, how to hear it with his own heart, and there may be words, thoughts and events that especially affect each person.

I remember when a woman in my congregation had been asked to be president of the Women of the Church and she felt she could not be. She turned down the suggestion that she be nominated as president. She was walking away from the phone and a mirror fell off the wall at her feet. It might not have affected anyone else but for her it was vital. She knew she had been wrong. She went to the phone and called the lady and said, "I've changed my mind; I'll accept it." She became one of the best presidents we ever had. At one moment, that change of mind came to her in that way. We may not all respond to mirrors falling, however we must be sensitive to the way and the will of God for those whom He sends our way. As a Christian each of us has a task. Listen, heed and respond to the light given from the Lord.

#### THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

*Do you realize that the blessings promised to the believer in the Gospel do not come by magic but there is a real reason for each one?*

Many wonderful benefits and blessings are promised to the believer through Christ Jesus. It is this that makes the Gospel so gracious and welcome. These benefits however do not come out of the blue. Christian blessings are results, they are consequences. They are a maturing result as apples are to an apple tree.

It often is implied that if a person were a Christian, he would be good and he would do good. Unconsciously perhaps, yet nonetheless, it is felt that the person, the believer, is the *doer* all the way through. This whole line of thought is wrong. If this were true, the person who seemed to do well would become proud. We have seen many a church member who is just as proud as the devil. In this connection, if such a person seems to be obedient, seems to be doing the right thing, he may well become smug and self-satisfied. If he seems to fail, as sometimes he will, he becomes depressed and frightened because he thinks it is all up to him. This person feels his life to be barren, without results, and begins to doubt. He feels there could not be anything real about his faith because he is not *doing anything*.

All these things are the result of a great big mistake, a massive error. It is natural to feel that if one is ever to achieve anything he has to strive and do his best. We are so slow to realize our natural pride. The natural person feels it is up to him. No! Paul speaks of this wonderful truth in Romans 10:1-3:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

That is it in a nutshell. So many well-meaning, fine people strive, try, work and get more discouraged each day. They will never do it; "not by works, lest any man should boast." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves. it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Paul wrote to the Galatians to say that "by works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). Paul emphasized to Titus when he was writing about this, that it was not by works of righteousness that which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us.

It is true that the first phase of this whole spiritual experience is to hear the Gospel. Christ died for us, and we must accept that to be true. For faith to become real, we must obey the Word as it comes to us. If Christ died for the sinner and paid it all, the believer is no longer his own. He has been bought with a price. The believer now yields his will to Christ Jesus and obeys. There is more to it than "agreement." What happens in the soul, when the soul accepts Christ Jesus, is the very thing that Paul called "the mystery of Christ." Paul was given special strength and understanding to preach this to the whole world.

He writes:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (3:3-6).

The word "mystery" of which Paul writes means "the hidden truth." We can understand this if we consider an extension cord. The movement of the electric current through that extension cord is invisible. The power surging through it from the source to the appliance makes no bulge, yet it is there. It is real and significant, yet one cannot see it.

This is what Paul is talking about with reference to the Gospel. Bringing different people together as one, in unity as is done in the Gospel, is not done by skillful tact, or clever diplomacy. It is done by drastic recreation of each one into new creatures through the Gospel. They become the children of God, and therefore brothers one of another in whom one Spirit prevails. That one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. This is how it is possible for these people to be together. They are not brought together because they decide to overlook each other's differences. They are not brought together because either one of them is so fine or sweet. It is not that they are so pious in their attitude that now they will overlook the faults and failings of the others and get along with them in spite of that. No! It is because each one has personally committed himself to Christ. They no longer compare themselves with each other; each one belongs to the Lord. "Christ in you the hope of glory," is the same in each one. This is the hidden truth that is in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the invisible reality that Paul was specially shown and which he was to preach to people. This is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is what brings people together.

This is how Jew and Gentile can be one, and this is how we can get along with other people. There is an element of unreality about that. If I am now dead in myself and believe in Christ, and my brother is dead in himself and he believes in Christ, what we two people were, humanly speaking, are now corpses. In Christ we are alive and we are brothers. Neither one of us knows what he will look like when the end comes. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). We know when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is, and when we are like Him we will be *alike*. That is the wonderful mystery of Christ that was shown to Paul and which he preached in his Gospel everywhere.

#### THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

*Have you ever wondered how anyone can preach among all men everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ?*

So often when we talk about the things of the Gospel and the Christian life, we are inclined to say about some blessing, "It was beyond anything that one can imagine." If this is so, how can a person talk about it? Again, if it is beyond my wildest dreams, how could I know it? So let us pause for a moment and consider this word "*unsearchable*." Is the reality of the "unsearchable" beyond us? We speak about knowing the love of God "which passeth knowledge." How is that possible? I expect everyone has stood on the seashore and looked beyond the horizon. Out there are other lands and peoples. Yet they cannot be seen. Although the ocean goes beyond one's sight, we know that it is all salty. If a spoonful of the water gets into your mouth you will know what the whole ocean is like, even though you cannot see it all nor taste it all.

This is the way in which we come to the Gospel. We taste some aspect of the Gospel, but Christ Jesus is far beyond that. For instance, Christ Jesus is rich in faithfulness. He was personally faithful to His Father. He said, "I do always the things that please [my Father]" (John 8:29). He was rich in obedience. He said: "The Son of man does nothing of himself." "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5:17). He was rich in love toward man. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Christ Jesus was rich in His love toward all men because He gave Himself for us. God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, "Christ died for us." Christ is rich in grace, in unmerited favor and kindness toward men. Christ is rich in compassion. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:13, 14). The list is endless. There are so many traits of character to show that Christ Jesus, as He is presented to us in the Scriptures, is personally far beyond what we can see. His faithfulness, obedience, love, grace, and compassion in the sight of God were total and complete, far beyond what could be demonstrated on the earth while He was in human form.

It was given to Paul to tell the whole world that Christ would in His grace and mercy, through His love, forgive the sinner and accept him. In writing to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 1:12-16 Paul writing about himself said:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

This is a remarkable statement. In the short history of the early church, which we call the Acts of the Apostles, the conversion of Saul the Pharisee is told three times. It was repeated three times over because it was such a typical case. The real truth of what happened to Paul when he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ can be felt in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

In this account of the experience of Paul we can know how wonderful it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He can do. Here is a person, Paul, who was against Him, opposed Him, persecuted Him and caused Him suffering; yet, Paul was won and completely changed. Here is how the change took place: "I am crucified with Christ" – this is the secret. "Nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." This is a widely known verse of Scripture, yet I fear that among many of us who are believers it is commonly disregarded. We know what Paul has said is true, and we commend him for his achievement. Many people speak about what a great man Paul was! The greatest of the apostles He was great in this, and great in that. It seems words never fail us to applaud him and to praise and to magnify him. We note

what he said about himself; he said he was dead. We appreciate it that he said he was dead, but it appears as if we do not believe it to be the experience we personally should have.

The gift of being a minister of the Gospel was given to Paul, not because he was that smart, and not because he was that good. This gift of being a minister of the Gospel was given to Paul by the effectual working of the power of Christ Jesus.

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:7, 8).

He was made a minister of the Gospel, not because he said these things, but because when he spoke, souls listened, believed and responded in obedience to the living Lord. When Paul preached men listened, men heard, men believed and they were saved. This is seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 to 2:14. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thess. 1:5). It is no wonder then that we read in the sixth verse, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord." It is written in verses 9 and 10 that the Thessalonian Christians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven." That was the consequence of Paul's preaching, the consequence of a man who was a minister of the Gospel by the effectual working of His power. Paul esteemed himself to be less than the least of all saints yet he received the commission to preach and teach the riches of the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world.

#### FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

*Can you understand why Christians who are very different from each other can live together in harmony and peace?*

The Apostle Paul had been writing to the Ephesians of how Almighty God gave him a special task to perform. He was to tell the world about the special plan of God for getting people together in unity through Jesus Christ. He put it this way:

Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ (3:8, 9).

Keep in mind the fact that the mystery is that the Jews and Gentiles were to be together in Christ Jesus. Paul's special assignment was to tell the whole world how such fellowship was possible.

This was no easy task, for perhaps the worst trouble anyone ever has is with other people. I remember when as a lad how it first came to me, almost as a shock, the problems that people create. I lived on a farm. It was wonderful to look out on the whole world. There was beauty in nature, in animals, in the seasons as they changed. I would walk in the woods, and see the trees and hear the birds and watch an occasional squirrel or rabbit. I would think to myself how pleasant life is in the world created by God. Then when I thought about the problems I realized it was not the world, but generally it was the people in the world that caused the troubles. To be sure there are times that being with other people can be an enriching privilege. One can be happier with other people than he can be when he is alone. Yet, quarreling and contention takes place between people. Opposition, conflict, envy, strife go on between people. One begins to wonder why people are as they are? Why did God make them like that?

Perhaps an illustration may help. If all sounds were of the same pitch, there would be only one note on an organ or piano and there would be no music. There would be only a monotone. If the notes were all the

same length, there would be no rhythm. That would be tiresome. If all the notes had the same accent, the effect would be very unpleasant. As far as music is concerned, it is only in variety that enrichment is possible. Is that possible among people?

But variety means difference, and does not difference lead to separation, and this to conflict? A chord, as we know, occurs when three or four notes are struck at one time, so that they blend to greatly increase the beauty of the tone. In a chord several different notes blend forming a pleasant sound we call harmony. The same illustration could be seen in color, form, proportion, symmetry, in building and in architecture. Difference would not need to produce dissension or conflict.

Perhaps the most impressive example of where a number of different things work together smoothly is the human hand. The human hand is an amazing structure. The flexibility of what the hand can perform is awesome. Each finger and its function is different. If this were not so, a man would not have a hand, but a flipper. Five different fingers are set at different places, each a different length, each of them of different strength, yet they function in unity to enable an infinite number of uses of the hand. This is true when the hand is normal and healthy.

These examples show that unity in diversity can make for improvement in a number of ways. There will be problems of course, especially where human beings are concerned. Take for instance singers. A number of human voices can be joined to make a choir, but not without a choir director. The choir director works to make this one a little stronger, that one a little weaker, this one a little longer, that one a little shorter, and so guides them to bring them together. Athletes are individuals. Each one has his own ability, but these athletes can be blended into a team if there is a manager.

The task of achieving unity is always similar. If individuals are to work in unity, there must be personal discipline; personal choice must be controlled. Paul is talking about the mystery of Christ in bringing the Jews and Gentiles together as one. It was his task to preach the "fellowship of the mystery." Jews and Gentiles naturally were hostile, in fact bitter toward each other, but in the spiritual experience in Christ Jesus they could be in unity.

Paul himself was an illustration of this. He was born a Jew, but he spent himself ministering to the Gentiles. He was known as "the apostle to the Gentiles." However on occasion he did things to prove that he was just as other Jews. He explained his procedure in 1 Corinthians 9:10-23, saying, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Paul was aware of the deep prejudices that some men had, and he humbled himself to show that he had nothing against any custom. On one occasion he shaved his head and shared in taking a vow to show the Jews that he had nothing against their traditions. Also, he would not bring Titus who was a Greek into the temple.

He respected the Jews, but on occasion he would insist that the Christian leaders show that as Christians they could fraternize with Gentiles. In Galatians we read how he withstood Peter to his face as Peter was to be blamed. Peter had been eating with the Gentiles, and then because Jews came down from Jerusalem he withdrew. Paul thought that was wrong, in that he was not acting with consistency according to Peter's own understanding. No wonder Paul often found himself out of line with many. The Jews did not like him because he said they should not insist on being Jews when they became Christians. The Gentiles did not like him, as he was a Jew to begin with and he was with the Jews. However, in Paul's dealing with them, he would respect Jewish custom and tradition, while he spent himself preaching to the Gentiles, living among them, and winning them.

He urged the Gentile Christians to think of the Jews as their brethren. One of the big things he did in developing this fellowship was to have the Gentile Christians in Macedonia gather an offering of money, and take it to Jerusalem for Christian Jews there. I am sure he disappointed and annoyed many people as he urged that this should happen. He said, "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Cor. 9:12). To Paul this was not so much a matter of talk, as it was a matter of walk, living out their faith day by day. It was not so much in

word, as it was in example.

As we live our lives wherever there is prejudice and bigotry among people, the Christian should take any opportunity he has to show that he personally is not guided by such views. If he is rich, he can find service among the poor. If he is educated, he should be glad to be with those who have little education. If he were a Jew he could be with the Gentiles. If he were a Gentile, he could be with the Jews. Since God is no respecter of persons, the Christian can hope that God will help each one by His grace to yield to His will in service. In this connection, I am reminded of a word that I can remember from Dr. R. A. Torrey when I was in his class many years ago. In speaking about the poor he said, "Any church which has no poor in it, is a mighty poor church."

#### MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD

*Can you see the importance of Christians showing by their open public conduct that they will accept fellow believers out of any cultural group?*

This is Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians. We are taking note of what Paul would expect of Christians. In this passage Paul is going to point out that it does make a difference how a Christian acts, where a Christian goes and what a Christian does. The Christian is called to walk a fine line of public testimony in the way in which he conducts himself with people.

Barnabas and Paul had gone to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles long before the church in a public gathering authorized it. The church met together, as we read in the 15th chapter of the Book of Acts, to discuss just what they felt the Gentiles should do if they turned to Christ. By the time the church acted in this formal capacity, Barnabas and Paul had been doing this for some time, and hundreds of Gentiles had already been converted. Paul recognized that he had a special commission to demonstrate in his own personal practice what the will of God was in dealing with other people. Growth in public understanding about these things is dependent upon the testimony of Christians. The world begins to understand as they watch the Christian in word, action, and deed.

Paul was conscious of the fact that Spiritual beings, the angels, would note what was happening here on earth among Christians. There is something here we do not fully understand. We, of course, do not know much about angels since we have never seen them. We realize that they are more powerful than men, but we learn from Scripture that angels do not know everything. They are limited in their knowledge. We are going to see that they learn by watching what is happening on earth. They watch the Christian who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this they learn something of God's way of doing things. Paul understood that his own responsibility was to demonstrate the grace of God in the way in which he dealt with other people. This is seen in Ephesians 3:10, 11. Paul said that he was doing certain things "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus." Paul understood that he was leading the Christians to act in a certain way to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places (i.e., spiritual beings like angels) might be known by and through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus.

God always had this in mind, but it is demonstrated now in the church. In speaking of principalities and powers in the heavenly places, we should remember that heaven is not some place far away. That is a human conception. Heaven is where God is, and God is here. The Lord Jesus said that He was the Son of man who came down from heaven, is returning to heaven, and even now is in heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ, among His disciples, lifted up His eyes and taught them to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Heaven is right here, but it is invisible. I realize there is a certain sense in which heaven is to be the place

where God will be throughout all eternity. Heaven will be a place all to itself, but even right now He is here. We can remember in the Book of Job how Satan appeared in heaven in the presence of God, that is, in the spiritual world, right here where we are. And there he had dealings with God.

The reason I am emphasizing this is that I think it is important to keep in mind that there are spiritual beings all about me who see me in my actions. This will keep a believer humble. When I get upset and angry about some little thing, I need to remember that I am seen by angels, both holy and evil angels. When for instance I act in some selfish way, I am human and sinful. When I hold on to my money, spend it on self, this is natural and human, even as it is sinful, and the angels see this. When I favor my friends and I resent anyone else that may happen to succeed or get ahead of me, I am acting just like any natural sinful human being. The angels know that. They have known what to expect about man ever since Cain and Abel were here.

No doubt the angels saw Jesus of Nazareth, they saw how He acted, and they understood Him. They knew who He was. They knew He was the Son of God. He was in human form, but He was the Son of God. The angels look to see the same behavior in me as that which occurred in Jesus of Nazareth. If they see that same behavior in believers they would have visible, obvious demonstration of Christ living His life in and through His believers. This would be known in eternity. There is a time coming when the mists of time will be rolled away, and everything will be open and seen throughout eternity. Everything will be known then. Paul knew that right now, while he was here as an apostle in this world, the angels were learning what it means to have Christ living in the hearts of His believers.

When we read "by the church" we are to understand this does not mean any particular congregation or denomination. It means "by believers" here on earth wherever they are to be found.

Paul is using the term "the church" to refer to what we call the invisible church, the true church. "According to the eternal purpose," that is to say, this always has been God's intention. From the beginning, He had in mind that His creation of the world and His creation of man, His sending of the Messiah, the Christ, His own Son into this world, was eventually going to result in new creatures. These who are born again in Christ Jesus show in themselves the very likeness of Christ. This will be because it is Christ working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Adam was not the final phase of creation. We read in the Bible that the Lamb was slain "from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Before God ever created this world, He knew what Adam would do. He knew that Adam would fall but He knew what His Son would do; that His Son would come into this world and that He would open the way for the children of Adam, for any of them to be saved by the grace of God through Christ Jesus. As Jesus of Nazareth lived in this world and went about doing the will of His Father, it was demonstrated to the whole world how God would have those around Him to be obedient to Him. There would be believers who were born again, who were regenerated, who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and who were moved to do the will of God in Christ Jesus. This is what the angels see right now, when they see some Christian person doing what he or she ought to do in Christ. This means that when I deal with others – man, woman or child – I must do as Christ does. He gave Himself that man might be saved. This conduct is to the glory of God. This conduct shows the manifold wisdom of God for all to see, even the angels themselves.

#### MY TRIBULATION – YOUR GLORY

*Can you understand how it is that a Christian can gladly endure trouble if he knows that others are being helped thereby?*

How is it that some mothers can be so patient with babies that are so irritating? The mother is actually having an extra thing happening. Her gentleness, sweetness and forbearance may not be her natural way of

doing things. She might not act that way toward every child on her street. Her conduct can be inspired by her love for her child. Is it not generally understood that love as a whole, enables a person to be sweet and gentle in the face of suffering? And it prompts behavior that is actually sweet and gentle and kind in the face of suffering. With this in mind we are more able to understand Paul when he writes about himself as he does in the Book of Ephesians:

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory (3:12, 13).

Those words taken in their context will enable us to understand that Paul is talking about his own personal conduct as a minister, as an apostle. Paul was bold to approach strangers, even hostile strangers. It might result in them resenting him, rejecting him, even persecuting him, yet he would continue. He had a reason for this boldness. What made Paul ready to pray for those who were against him? Why was it that Paul was prepared to go into a strange community and deliberately thrust himself into their lives? Paul sought to change people's lives as he was representing Christ. He was doing exactly what Christ in him wanted him to do, as this is what Christ Jesus Himself did while He was here in the flesh. He came into this world to seek and to save the lost. The people He came to were unbelievers. The people He came to did not want Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). They rejected Him, rebuffed Him, persecuted Him and eventually killed Him. Still He came, for as we read in the New Testament: "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Many people have trouble in their witnessing experiences. They have sensed in their own heart a certain hesitancy, a certain fear. I can understand this. I find it hard to go up and talk to a stranger. I feel as though I am interfering with him, especially when I know right well what I want to do. I want to change his way. I want to stop him in his tracks, and have him turn around and be converted. It is understandable that the person might feel I am interfering with him.

How could anyone dare to risk the rejection and the resentment? Paul makes this clear: "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). By our having in mind how Christ Jesus came, suffered, and how He died in order that some might be saved we as believers can be strengthened to witness. Of course, not everyone will respond, but some will and it is for that reason we should go. Paul was willing to be all things to all men that by all means he might save some. He was not going to win everyone but he would do what he could in the face of everyone that he might win some. Also, he would do these things without expecting to win in every case. If he talked to a man and was rejected Paul did not count that the whole effort was lost. He would persist.

I can remember some years ago when I was seeking to help my congregation to visit unbelieving people in the community and to invite them to come to church. The people of the congregation felt that so much of the effort would be useless. They felt they knew all the members of the community. If they wanted to come to church they could do so. They knew where the church was. I was trying to get them to call, but was having little success.

About this time I went on vacation visiting relatives in California. I went down to the pier in Santa Monica and looked out on the Pacific Ocean. I watched the people fishing on the pier. I counted thirty-one people with their poles in the water. During the time I was there one person caught one fish. They call that fishing? Then I began to realize they do not expect to catch a fish every time they throw the hook in the water. They are fishermen and they expect some time, some way, some fish will be caught.

I went back home to the men of my congregation and I said, "Listen, you must not expect to win someone every time you go." Some of these men were in business, and some of them were in advertising and they knew perfectly well that not every one that reads an advertisement buys the product. They knew that not every person they invited would respond, but some would. Paul would go everywhere and do everything possible because, "hoping to win some," he knew that this was what Christ would do. This was

not Paul's idea. This was Christ in him, working His way in him.

It often is true that the opening of the heart of the person listening does not occur until after the invitation has been made and rejected. It is rejected perhaps in contempt, and then the person may possibly turn around and come. Paul would persist because this is what Christ in him would do. Therefore Paul says in verse 13: "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Paul did not want those people to whom he was writing to flinch because he was being hurt. He did not deny he was being abused, or being hurt. Of course he was. He did not want them to be unduly upset by it, because through this he was actually able to reach some people. He was personally accepting this kind of experience and enduring it with joy because then some would be brought to God, and they were being shown the truth through these events. There may be a deep, dark valley of pain that the witness may need to go through in seeking to win souls. Paul in his letter to the Galatians writes: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). Paul had the experience that a woman has in giving birth to a child; pain and pangs while he was winning men to God. This is the role of the witness who would win others. And may God give us the grace to go out and tell others about Him regardless of the way we are treated. Let it be known that Christ Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

## Chapter 6

### CHRIST IN YOUR HEART

(Ephesians 3:14-21)

To have Christ dwelling in the heart of a believer requires an inward strength of faith which is possible only by the grace of God. Paul earnestly exercised himself in prayer for the Ephesian Christians that they might be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man so that they might have Christ dwelling in them, and that they might be able "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" so that they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

#### STRENGTHENED BY HIS SPIRIT

*Did you know that any natural man cannot in his own heart believe all that is necessary that he might live as a mature Christian?*

The Apostle Paul was very anxious that the Christians at Ephesus should grow in their spiritual experience and become mature Christians. A person becomes a Christian by his faith. Faith is not something innate. We are not born with it. We may be born with the capacity to believe, but we need to be told what there is to believe. Then after we have been told and have come to believe, we need to be helped to grow. In order that each believer may become a mature Christian, he needs to grow in grace and knowledge. The believer will grow as he feeds on the Word of God.

Peter writes "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). Feeding on the Word of God, and digesting the Scripture which has been heard, needs the help of the Holy Spirit within the believer. The Holy Spirit must bear witness with the believer's spirit. There are promises in the Scripture that challenge a faith that a person may not naturally have. The person may read what it says and in himself naturally be unable to believe it. For such faith, we need to be helped by the Holy Spirit of God. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the heart will move the person to action as he prays for help and guidance. God gives understanding, but He gives it in answer to prayer. There must be an opening of the heart and a reaching up to Him for this.

Paul knew that the Christians at Ephesus would need the Holy Spirit working in them if they were to grow and mature as Christians.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man (3:14-16).

Paul wanted the conduct and the activities of the Christians at Ephesus to demonstrate the spiritual power of God. He longed for the result that Almighty God wanted to produce through the work of His Son, Christ Jesus. Paul knew that God had sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to seek and to save the lost so that He might in saving these people reconcile them to God. Paul yearned to bring them into God's presence, have them born again, have them filled with the Holy Spirit to do the will of God in a way that would glorify God. However, the kind of living that was going to glorify God would be possible only when and as far as Christ was working in their hearts. Christ would work in their hearts only if He dwelt in them. The idea that anyone, as he is naturally, can do the will of God simply is not true. The believer needs "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Christ could work in their hearts only if He

dwelt in them. He could dwell in their hearts only as they believed in Him. This brings it right back to their faith, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

Paul set himself to pray that their faith might function in this way. "I bow my knees." Now praying is possible in any position of the body. You can pray standing up, looking into the heavens. You can pray bowing your head. You can pray on your knees. You can pray lying flat on the ground. Any posture is all right, but the commonly recognized posture that is fitting for praying is to be on one's knees for simple sincere, earnest praying. The apostle got down on his knees to ask for this blessing.

"Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Worship and prayer is proper to any Person of the Godhead. It is proper to offer worship to God the Father, to God the Son, and to God the Holy Spirit. The believer prays to the Father, "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He prays in the name of the Son, and he prays by the Holy Spirit. The three Persons of the Godhead are together as One. When the believer calls upon God, he has in mind the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When it is written that Paul prayed unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, this word "Father" brings out the relationship between Almighty God and Jesus Christ. The relationship of Father-Son is what is in mind as we pray to the Father. We have in mind that He sent the Son. When we pray to Him as Father, the praying that comes out of our heart will come as from the Son.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ." The whole name with all that is involved, is used. The central word is Jesus. This brings to mind His earthly form and career, born of a virgin, lived in this world some thirty-three years. In that length of time He was persecuted, finally crucified, buried, rose again, was seen and ascended into heaven where He is now. All of that is "Jesus" and "God hath made that same Jesus, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

*Christ* is His title and His office. He is the chosen One. This is the word out of the Old Testament. He is the One the prophets talked about. He is the One who was chosen of God to do the great work of salvation, the chosen One to do His will. *Lord* refers to His function. He is in charge; He controls. He is our "Lord," the controlling One. Jesus is the One who lived and died and rose again for us; Christ is the One who appears for us in our place before God and intercedes in our behalf. All of this is included in the meaning of the phrase "our Lord Jesus Christ."

And all of this is implied in Paul's words, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that he would grant you." The Christian can never earn this gift. He is not supposed to. He is already accepted. He doesn't have to earn it. He doesn't have to pass any tests. The only way that the believer will ever get this blessing will be as a gift. So, Paul prays that He would grant you, "according to the riches of his glory." It is to the glory of God that He gives in grace. If He just gave a person his wages there would be no glory in that. He gives to the Christian freely without the Christian being worthy of it. Grace is the undeserved kindness and favor of God toward man. It is to the glory of God that He gives; and the "riches of his glory" is to emphasize that He gives abundantly.

The apostle prays, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Any strength I have is from God. All strength – strength to walk, to breathe, to talk, to write – any strength is from God. The inner man has to have strength also. If a person has the strength to pick up a hundred pound sack of some food and put it on his shoulder, that strength is from God. In the same way, as a Christian has faith in Almighty God, that is strength from God. If he has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is strength from God. No person has that in himself. The Christian is enabled and strengthened to believe God. As he turns to Him, the Christian grows into maturity. This maturity comes as a result of being prayed for. The Apostle Paul prayed for these Christians at Ephesus.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man (3:14-16).

This is the way it was to happen by the grace of God.

## CHRIST IN YOUR HEART

*Do you have the idea that Christ dwells in every Christian?*

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love." This is the way the Apostle Paul prayed as he wrote in Ephesians 3:17. You will recall in verse 16 he prayed that they might be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Why did he pray thus? "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The Christian lives among men, but it is hard to know for sure just who is a Christian. We see the Christian in all walks of life, but there is not one pattern of conduct that can be recognized as specifically Christian.

The believer is saved because of his relationship with Christ. But this relationship with Christ Jesus is not determined by externals. It is not where he lives, nor even with whom he lives. It is not the church to which he belongs, that makes him a Christian. What makes the believer a Christian is only his personal relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, anyone, anywhere, who is not in relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ is not a Christian. He may be a good man. He may be thoughtful and kind. But that is neither here nor there in the matter of being a believer. When we talk about a person being a believer we mean someone who has accepted the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as told in the Bible. We mean the Christ that Peter, James and John talked about, and that Paul preached about. We mean that Christ. No natural man, just as he was born, can be a Christian in himself. The word "Christian" has the same relation to "Person," as the word "wife" has to the word "woman." It is to be understood that no woman can ever be a wife by herself. The word "wife" means a woman that has a husband. Without a husband no woman could be a "wife."

The word "Christian" means a person who has Christ, a person who is with Christ. Not "like" Christ, for who on earth is like Him? How can anyone imitate Christ? We do not get a little bit like Christ, and then get a little more like Christ. It may occur after one becomes a Christian that a person may become "Christ-like" but that person doesn't start out that way. No natural man can be a Christian in himself.

Paul says flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God. It cannot be done. "Not by works lest any man should boast." Becoming a believer involves a great deal more than having a pious wish to be good. This blessed result is not up to the natural man, if it were he would be lost. Actually the natural heart is enmity against God. It does not even want to turn to God. The natural man can find every reason in the world for not coming to God.

When a soul turns to accept Christ the first step is to repent. Repentance concerns the individual. The person must judge himself as unfit, deny himself and pick up the cross for himself. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). When the person judges himself as unfit and denies himself he is not going to have any confidence in himself. "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). These words record the testimony of Isaiah, Job and Paul. These men should know. They agree that the individual in himself cannot do it. However, when a person repents, judges himself, and turns to God to throw himself upon the mercy of God, God will receive that person. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). God will regenerate him inside. He will make a new creature out of him.

God must work a work of grace in the sinner to enable him to accept Christ. When one accepts Christ,

he becomes a son of God, a child of God. Then God will send forth His Spirit into the regenerated heart. God does not send His Spirit into an unbelieving heart. He will send His Spirit to anyone who has accepted Christ. Christ is the One to whom we turn. He is the only Mediator. For when a person has accepted Christ in his heart, he can then say "Abba, Father." He will talk like a son, because the Spirit of the Son is in him. God will give His Holy Spirit into that man without measure. In this regenerated, new creature, Christ will dwell in that heart. This is what Paul wanted. The title that is used is "Christ." May I stress the point that never in the New Testament will one hear the statement that the sinner is to receive Jesus. It is not "Jesus in you," it is "Christ in you." The Son of God is not referred to by the earthly name "Jesus." He is named by the eternal name as the Scripture reveals that it is "Christ" dwelling in the heart of the believer by faith.

The believer does not receive His physical presence, but His personal presence, by faith. Thus through believing the truth about Christ, the chosen One of God, I receive the whole story of Christ. That is, the Son of God came to offer Himself a substitution for me. When I believe in Him, I understand my sins are put upon Him that He should carry them away. When I receive Him and believe in Him, my guilt is removed. I can stand in the presence of God forgiven.

It is not that I am worthy. No, but I am forgiven. With that news I can rejoice. "Hallelujah! God be praised!" I am forgiven. I am free. He died and was buried for me and in the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am delivered from the power of sin. Sin will have no more dominion over me. Sin may appeal to me, may tempt me, but cannot really control me, if once I have had this experience of passing through the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, where my whole self was reckoned as undone and yielded entirely to God. He was raised from the dead, so I live in Him. I live in the resurrection life, raised from the dead to newness of life. I am a new creature. All things have become new. Paul could say, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I come to understand, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Scriptures reveal that the believer is "being rooted and grounded in love," thus the whole life of the believer originates in the love of God. John 3:16 tells it very simply: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I heard the Gospel because God sent it to me. I am born again because He regenerated me. I have the Holy Spirit because He sent Him forth into my heart. I have the grace to believe because He gives me the strength to do it. I love God because He first loved me, and I love others because the love of Christ constraineth me. It is all in love, and love is from God, for love is God.

#### FULLNESS OF GOD

*Can you understand what is meant when a person talks about knowing something that goes beyond his knowledge?*

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of Cod (3:17-19).

This is a wonderful statement. Paul was praying that certain things would happen to these Ephesian Christians. He wanted them to know the love of Christ that they might be filled with all the fullness of God. In understanding this, so much depends upon the meaning of the verb "know." We can speak for example of knowing a song. That means we recognize it, or we can sing it. We can speak of knowing a man when we know his name. We can also speak of knowing a man when we know his plans, his actions, so that we can know what to expect. We know how to esteem him and appreciate him.

It is in this latter sense of the word "know" that that Greek word is used here. That you might "know," that you might fully appreciate and esteem the love of Christ. In writing to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul

told them that he was praying for them, that they might be strengthened by might in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Paul feels that all this belongs together. All are parts of one thing. It begins with the fact that the Christians need grace in their hearts strengthening them to be able to believe. No person in himself has the strength to believe the invisible things of God. They are just incredible to him. In order to be able to believe what God has promised, we need inward strengthening by the grace of God. This grace enables the Holy Spirit to show to the Christians the things of Christ. As the Christian becomes conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ and believes the plan of God, Christ will dwell in his heart.

The Christian is aware of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that Christ is his Savior and that He is alive now. The Christian believes the plan of God that Christ should have His presence in the heart, that Christ should actually dwell in the believer. Christ is in command. If He is in the heart, He is in charge. The believer will yield himself in obedience to His will.

The Lord warned His disciples that they would be brought into court and tried; but He gave them a reassuring promise: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:11). When Christ is dwelling in the heart, the believer is blessed: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

So "the love of God," which actually means "the love from God," moves the believer to do certain things. When the believing person has received the Holy Spirit into his heart and lets the Holy Spirit show him the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ Himself will come to dwell in the heart. When Christ Jesus dwells in the heart, He is in command. He directs, and the believer is filled with love which comes from God. This love from God moves the believer toward God. He will worship Him. As the believer deals with man, he will respect those in authority. He will be considerate of others, and he will be kind and charitable to the poor.

The Lord Jesus said, while He was here in the body, "I do always the things that please [my Father]" (John 8:29). Then He could say again, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). This will follow when the Christian has in himself the inner working of the Holy Spirit of God. He will be moved to do everything to please God. The believer will not turn to God because it is the thing to do, or because someone said he should, but he will turn to God because he wants to worship Him.

In dealing with other persons the believer, inwardly filled with the Holy Spirit of God, will have the mind of Christ in him. The Holy Spirit will activate in this believing soul the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what the Lord Jesus Christ said about Himself was, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). Thus the believer will show a respect for those in authority, he will show consideration to those around about him and he will show charity to the poor, always acting as a servant of God. He will hear the Word of God saying to him, "Whatsoever ye do . . . do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). It is in having the life of Christ inside his own heart controlling his own activity that the believer comes to know really what the love of Christ is. The believer will act something like this: as he awakens in the morning, he will turn his heart to God, and let God work in him. He will say: "Lord, what will you have me to do? What is Your plan for me this day?" This has been expressed in song: "My heart awaking cries: May Jesus Christ be praised." Deep inside the heart of the believer he cries. "I am His. He is mine."

As the day progresses the believer goes about his day's work. There will be persons in his home; his attitude toward all will be, "How may I serve you?" One way to do this is to be cheerful. This will not always be easy. It is not easy to be cheerful if the heart is heavy. It is not easy to be cheerful if one is inwardly distressed, but it is a command. Be courteous, gracious, helpful to everyone. Not because they

deserve it, not because they have done nice things, but because the believer is committed to God. The love that comes from God is in the heart toward all men. We may not know about them, but God knows, and in spite of everything God is gracious. There are people in the neighborhood: be thoughtful, avoid making noise for the neighbor may be ill or the baby may be asleep. When all are going to work, the believer could start early enough to avoid competition and the strain of traffic. This is how a person will be doing, when the love of Christ in his heart makes him feel toward other people that he wants to help them. "I am among you as he that serveth." Whatever is the program for the day, the believer will give it all he has.

The Scripture directs: "Servants be obedient . . . in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Eph. 6:5). The believer actually works for his boss as if he were working for the Lord. "Masters, do the same things . . . knowing that your Master also is in heaven" (Eph. 6:9). "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10). "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

When the presence of Christ in the heart is real and effectual in all that the believer does and says, then he can comprehend the love of Christ. This is what the love of Christ means. "Now we know only in part." The ocean goes far beyond our vision. I cannot see it all, but all I see is ocean. Yet, if I tasted only a sip of that ocean, I would find it salty. And because that sip was salty, I would know the whole ocean is salty. So it is with Christ. When all is yielded in obedience to the living Lord at all times, the heart and soul of the believer will be filled with all the fulness of God.

#### ABLE TO DO ABUNDANTLY

*Can you see how it is that God can do so much more than we can ever expect?*

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 (3.20, 21).

These are the words with which the Apostle Paul ends his prayer in the third chapter of the book of Ephesians. This is one of the most challenging statements a person will ever read. It is part of a prayer wherein Paul wants the name of God to be glorified.

For many of us, as we speak about glorifying the Lord, we have in mind to praise Him. We may think that we are going to sing anthems to Him. One hears about large choirs, 3,000 or even 10,000 voice choirs, and the mind is staggered to think what it will be like when countless numbers of believing people in heaven will praise His name! Probably that is what we have in mind by "glorifying." But there is much more that is true and it is so much simpler.

When Paul says that he wants the name of God glorified, he may not mean using words at all. Paul has been thinking about how God blesses the Christian, how God comes to live in the believer. It is sad but true that when God comes to live in the believer He has to be willing to put up with a great deal. Yet, He is ready. He is willing to come. He is always ready to hear and to answer prayer. He is always ready to do more, and He is able to do more than we can ask or think. In this connection, we need to remember that saying many words may not be asking. We ask when we put ourselves in the way to be blessed. If a person were sitting on his front porch on the veranda in a rocking chair, rocking back and forth in the cool of the evening, and he might be asked, "What are you going to have in your front lawn this year?" he might say, "I'm going to have green grass." But if he keeps on rocking . . . it will be evident that never in the wide world would he get green grass on the front lawn by just rocking in that rocking chair. God will make the grass grow, it is true, but man must sow the seed. If the man cultivates and fertilizes that soil, and plants good seed, he is asking for a lawn. He can expect a lawn. When we put ourselves in the way to be blessed, that is asking. We have to ask and believe He will bless. We say, "Oh, Lord, bless me." But would you recognize that blessing if you met it in the open road? Often people do not ask "because they do not really

believe. It is incredible that a person would not ask if he really believed he would receive it.

Tragically we lack faith in God. There are many reasons. We do not read the Bible, so we are unaware of His promises. We have not waited on Him in prayer to find out what He wants to give us. Can He keep the loved ones of a believer? Will He? What is in the Bible? God expects the believer to ask. If the believer asks, God will guide that believer in His will so that he will be blessed.

Paul knew that God would do more than we can expect. We do not know how great God is. "According to the power that worketh in us." What is "the power that worketh in us"? It is the power that can raise the dead. This happened in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is what is going to happen to the believer. This is the basis of our confidence, that God is able to raise the dead.

"Unto him be glory." We would naturally think that means praise. Praise is good, and it enhances His name. God is magnified before our eyes, but there is more. "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8). By that we mean: "May it be that His grace in my heart will actually bring some results. May it be that His will activated in me by the Holy Spirit, guiding me into His will, will actually bring certain consequences to pass." Here he goes on to say it is the consequences, and the results of putting the believer's trust in God that will be to His glory. "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." "Unto him be glory in the church" i.e., in the fellowship of believers, among all the Christian people.

The Apostle Paul wanted God to have the glory of the results which would be as the consequences of His presence in them. If God is working in the believer and His Holy Spirit is being activated in the heart and soul, the believer will worship Him. He will bow down his heart before God in reverence. He will look up to Him as Almighty God. Bow down before Him as the *Creator, Maker, Keeper, Sovereign, Judge* and the *Savior*. Throughout all ages, through all circumstances, in any situation, world without end, as long as time lasts Paul is praying that God's people will obey Him and will glorify Him in the very way in which they live. There will always be fruit in the life, through the working of Christ in His own.

## WALKING WORTHY OF CHRIST

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

When Paul finished his description of the blessings given to believers in the name of Jesus Christ by the grace of God, he sketched the conduct that would be worthy of the privilege they had in belonging to Christ Jesus. God the Father continued to bless by enabling believers to do things for each other so that all might grow into full maturity.

### WALKING WORTHY

*Do you have a clear idea of what a believer could do that would be worthy of his name as a Christian?*

When Paul writes in the epistles he is always interested in two aspects of truth. He first discusses what God has done, and then he discusses what the believer should do. Thus, in his epistles the reader will find first doctrine, and then duty. First Paul speaks of the evangel, and then he speaks of the ethic. First he sets out the principle, then he describes the practices that belong. It is done almost as if it were sketched on a drawing board in the book of Ephesians. Chapters 1-3 deal with what God has done for believers; chapters 4-6 deal with what the believer could and should do for God.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:1-3).

Though Paul is writing "I therefore" in view of all the things that he has said in the first three chapters, he refers to himself as "the prisoner of the Lord." He never forgets the fact that he is serving the Lord. It is the reason why he has been thrown into prison, and he personally counts it a favor and an honor to be counted as the person who was to obey the Lord. He was God's servant. Take note of this word: "I beseech you." One could expect that if Paul were going to tell a Christian his duty, he would say, "I tell you, this is what you must do." But Paul uses no such manner of speech. It is as if a father said to one of his sons in trouble: "Now listen, if you want to be your father's son, you should act like this." The child is his father's child anyway, no matter how that child acts.

It is a glorious truth that when a person puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, he belongs to God. The Christian longs to be good. It would be a fine thing if he were good. Someone from the outside could say he ought to be good, but as far as God is concerned, the important fact is Christ Jesus was good. God's Son was good, and the believer is in His Son. He extends His blessing to the believer for Christ's sake. This being the case, there is never a time when the Christian has to be told what he must do in order to get right with God. He is right with God.

Paul makes clear to the believer what he can do to please God. "I beseech you (I'm asking you, I'm urging you, I hope you will do this for God's sake) that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." I urge you to walk in a way that is fitting for a Christian to walk. Does that mean that the Apostle Paul wanted his people to do some *big thing*? Does he expect the Christian to climb some high mountain or swim some wide river? Even this "doing" will not make one a Christian. The person who accepts Christ Jesus as his Lord and Savior is a Christian now! If he never wiggles one foot, if by some chance he should be stricken, paralyzed right now, he would still be a Christian: not because of what he *did*, or failed to do,

but, because of what Christ did for the believer.

What shall we expect from a Christian who can function? Will we expect him to do something extraordinary? It would be a fine thing if he could, but this he may not be able to do. However, in being a Christian, he can act like a Christian. He can be worthy of being named a Christian, without ever moving out of his community or office. Christ can be in a person's life, and that person can live in a way worthy of being a Christian even if he is not heard of ten miles from home.

Paul says, "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness." Anyone can do that. This means lowliness of mind, humility, each esteeming others better than himself. Do you want to walk like a Christian? Then be humble! Make certain you view others as good or better than yourself. Get that into your heart and mind. If there is any hesitancy on this point, pause until it is clear. Isaiah could say: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). He found out to his astonishment and his joy that God cleansed him. The believer should start out each day emptied of self. He should be humble: "With all lowliness and meekness." Everyone can be lowly. Everyone can be humble, but not everyone can be meek. A person can be meek only after someone has done him wrong. If one person treats another in a way that he should not, the injured person should not try to get even; this is his opportunity to be meek. How can a person be meek? He can refuse to pay back the aggressor; he can be careful not to retaliate. He will not talk about the person who has injured him. Instead he will seek to do something good for him. "But he treated me dirty. I have the right to get even." If he really treated you dirty, and you could really get even, don't! Do something nice – decent. That is being meek. This is what you should do if you wish to act like a Christian! If you want to walk like a Christian – humble, meek, long suffering – you will take good care not to return evil for evil.

The Lord Jesus set an example. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32). When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He was falsely accused, He answered them never a word. He endured all the mistreatment with long suffering.

"Forbearing one another." This word "forbearing" is a very simple word. It plainly means we do not pay back. I sometimes say, "We don't hit him with that brick he deserves." A person may have a brick in his hand, and could really crown the wrongdoer on the head with it, but he does not. He is "forbearing." He could say some nasty word, but no! He will be "forbearing." When we say "forbearing one another," we mean that we do not pay back, we do not retaliate. All of this would be done in love. This does not mean that I like the man who injures me. As a believer I will care for his welfare, for his soul.

"Forbearing one another in love; endeavouring" means trying my dead level best. It means trying by every possible means "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Holy Spirit is in every believer, and the Holy Spirit is One. Thus there is a unity in the Spirit. Christians are different from each other, and because of this they are so often against each other. Because of personal differences, they break away from each other. The way Christians can keep the unity of the Spirit is by yielding themselves to the will of God. "In the bond of peace." As long as no one clashes and contends there will be peace. If a person wants to walk worth of the Lord he will walk humbly, meekly, with long-suffering, endeavoring to keep the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Christians living together in unity because of such personal obedience to the Lord are worthy of His name.

#### ONE BODY – ONE SPIRIT

*Do you know that it is true that all Christians belong together, because they belong to each other?*

Paul yearns to help Christians in their daily walk with the Lord. It will be helpful in understanding

what he writes if we will remember that the Christian lives in two worlds. He lives both in the flesh and in the spirit. In the flesh he may be John Brown, the son of Bob and Mary Brown, but in the spirit he is a child of God, a member of the body of Christ. In the flesh he is a human being. John Brown is an individual, selfish and sinful. But in the spirit, the believer has been born again, and now is a child of God living in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Both John Brown and the born again believer are real and exist at the same time. Even though he is a child of God, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has been born again, the "old man" is in his flesh and is still around him.

The Christian finds he is the battleground of two forces: Satan, tempting the natural man to do as he pleases, and Christ, who leads by His Spirit to do the will of God. Remember, the natural man can be religious, he can be a member of the church, and can even occupy the pulpit. He is a human being, and as such he is a person that Satan can tempt to be selfish, and to be proud, and to be vain. At the same time, Christ leads the spiritual soul by His Spirit and by His grace. The spiritual man, that part of the Christian that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, will inwardly be moved to worship God and to serve Him. The natural man is aware of self. He is sensitive to what "I" want – such things as I can feel, taste, touch, hear, and smell. The spiritual man is aware of Christ, and of what God approves. This awareness of Christ is grounded in the revelation that is in the Word, in the Scriptures. The Christian, who is known to the world as John Brown, feeds the "new man" in himself by reading the Scriptures and by hearing the truth of the Gospel as it is preached. The Apostle Paul speaks of this spiritual relationship: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Let us look at this statement more closely. There is one body: all believers are members of the body of Christ. We are unable to count them or see them, but yet there is only one group. They are known as the body of Christ, and the Bible speaks of them as "the Church."

"There is one body and one Spirit." He is the Holy Spirit of God. There are spirits many, as there are lords many. The Bible warns us not to believe every spirit, because not every spirit is of God. There is one Holy Spirit. We speak of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit of God is One, only One. He comes from God and He is God. So Paul writes: "There is one body (one group of Christian people), one Spirit (the only one Spirit given to them from God)."

"Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." What is the hope of a believer? The hope for the believer is to be raised from the dead by the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer has been forgiven; I can believe it! Christ Jesus did die for the sinner. He has carried my sins away. But I have a hope and what is that which is ahead of me? I can have the marvelous hope that I will be raised from the dead in the Lord Jesus Christ to be with Him forever by the power of God.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

I have the hope of seeing the Lord face to face. I have the hope that there is another life after this one, that when I am through here, I will be there. I will be absent from the body, present with the Lord. The one hope every believing person on the face of the earth, anywhere in the world can have, the one thing he can expect is that he will be raised from the dead. It does not yet appear what he will be like. He knows that when he sees the Lord Jesus Christ he will be like Him. And he will see them all, his brothers and sisters everywhere, all over the world, because they will be in Him.

The living Lord Jesus, in whom each believer depends, and whom each believer wants to serve is the "one Lord," the one Director, the one Person in charge. There was only one Jesus of Nazareth. He was incarnate only once 1900 years ago. He suffered as one Person, and He died as one Person. He was buried as one Person in His one Body and He rose from the dead as one Person. There is only one Lord Jesus

Christ. That which makes a man a believer is the same for everyone who believes. The one faith we have is the faith that the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, and belongs to us. This is true for every Christian.

"One baptism" refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart of the believer. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ will provide. This may be accompanied by various signs. The coming of the Holy Spirit, when He is known and realized, may affect people in different ways, but He is always the same in Himself. There will be some people who in receiving the Holy Spirit suddenly realize that they are totally yielded to God, so their hearts may be filled and flooded with a great sense of elation because they belong to God and God belongs to them. To other believers He may come gradually and steadily until they suddenly realize that they are in the very presence of God. But in all cases the result will be the same. The One Being sent from God to be in our hearts is the Holy Spirit of God, and He comes to us and comes into us by the grace of God.

"One God and Father of all." God is not divided. Where He is, He is God. And there is all of Him. We do not see only a part of Him: there is none else. My awareness as a believer comes from one fact: "Thou God seest me." When that truth comes into a believer's soul in the singular, personal, specific way, you know that God sees you. That will be the start of everything. There are other spiritual human beings. They all serve Him. They were all made by Him, but the one thing that is basic for me is that God made me and God sees me. When the Christian deals with God there is no one else. We are with God. His Word, His plan, His promise is supreme. There is no one else, there is nothing else.

It is natural for me to try to visualize Him, and I can remember that in His humility He became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. He Himself said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). When I want to be looking at the Lord Jesus Christ, I might remember how it happened to Zaccheus. He was the short man who climbed up a tree to see Jesus. He got the surprise of his life. When he saw Jesus, Jesus saw him. The first aspect that I realize is that He came for me. It cost Him His life, but He died for me. The first word I hear from the Lord. "Come unto me and I will give you rest." So this is the first truth that I understand as a believer. It is basic in my soul: "He died for me." I am caught up in His love. I love Him because He first loved me. God does something in me, to me and for me through Christ Jesus. He adopts me as His child. He gives me His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moves me into His will. I tell you, it is a wonderful thing to belong to God in Christ Jesus.

## GIFTS UNTO MEN!

*Did you know that each Christian is given some specific ability with which he should serve God by helping other Christians?*

We are continuing to learn something of what Paul has to say to believers about Christian living. Paul points out the blessedness of being a believer. He reminds us that we have everything in One – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

In Christ Jesus we are one body In that we are in Him. But even though we are all in Christ, we are not all alike. In coming to the Lord, it is true we come through one door, and so are abiding in Him, yet each one is himself before God. In serving God we are different. To be sure, we are members of His one Body, yet the members of the Body are different. just as we have hands, feet, ears, eyes; even so though the members are of one body, they are yet different.

This truth was carefully analyzed and explained by another passage in Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 12:12-21:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not

one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? And now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Different as they are in their individual traits, believers are builded together as a habitation of God, and are endowed with special abilities to serve each other even as they serve the Lord.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (4:7, 8).

Each person receives some gift from Christ. He has some assignment given to him. Some inward capacity, some enablement to serve the Lord, is given to each individual Christian. Even so he will need more than he has. No believer in himself would be able to carry out the assignment that Christ would give him. He will need grace to enable him to obey the guidance of the Spirit.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." In this passage from the Old Testament Paul points out by way of explanation that the giving of these gifts took place through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to the right hand of God. It is important to remember that Jesus of Nazareth when He was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, was then glorified, Peter said, "God hath made that same Jesus, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). God was incarnate in the babe of Bethlehem, living then in the man Jesus of Nazareth. There He lived in human form, taught and worked miracles. He was taken by men and was crucified. He was buried, and on the third day He was raised from the dead. The risen Jesus of Nazareth was then taken up into heaven and there God made Him both Lord and Christ. "This same Jesus" has been put in charge. He is the One who directs; He is the overall Controller. He is Lord. It is He who gives the gifts to men.

Paul recalls that His ascension to power happened at the time of His being taken up into heaven, following His descent into death: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Paul presents the record of the work of Christ as being one continuous action. He came into this world, humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, was raised from the dead and then was put in charge of all things. This had been pictured in the Old Testament times in the life of Joseph. Joseph was sold as a slave. As a slave he was slandered, put into prison and forgotten. God raised Joseph up from prison and made him the prime minister, made him the top servant of the Pharaoh over the whole of the kingdom. In his time Joseph was the top man. This clearly pictures what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ. He came into this world, yielding Himself into being made in fashion like a man, took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, where He was in shame and disgrace before all people and was treated like a criminal. Then God raised Him from the dead and put Him over everything, giving Him a name that is above every name. It is the will of Almighty God that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Now as the risen Lord, Christ Jesus is continuing His work. The first verse in the Book of Acts begins with this sentence: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." The word "began" enables us to know He is continuing "doing and teaching." Believers need to realize that Christ Jesus is continuing to work through His Body. They are the members of His Body, and Christ Jesus is continuing to do the work of God through His Body. Paul felt that in his own afflictions he was filling up in his own body the sufferings of Christ. Christians are given gifts. They are given spiritual gifts, which sometime are called "charisma," as divine enablements for service. There are natural gifts that people have – appearance, temperament, mind, voice. These can be employed in serving the Lord, but

they are not the gifts of the Spirit. There are special gifts in the Spirit – gifts to witness, capacities to testify, ability to teach, pray, interpret, preach, which require grace to become effectual. The Christian in his home may be called upon to show the ways of Christ in humility, patience, faithfulness, and meekness. For this he needs grace. The Christian can serve other people, help them to come to know about Jesus Christ. In order to be able to exercise those gifts, Christ Jesus gives him grace. May the Lord help us to be faithful to our assignment and to depend on Him for the grace to do what we ought to do each day.

#### FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS

*Do you realize that believers are to help each other as believers to perform their tasks?*

Christians are to help each other to grow and to mature. No one becomes a full-grown Christian in a moment. A soul can accept Christ in a moment, and in that sense one can become a believer at once, when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This can happen to the believer in a moment. Such a person is "a babe in Christ." Peter writes to say, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The young Christian needs more of the Scriptures. He needs to read and study the Bible, so that praying to God, having the Scriptures in mind, he may grow in grace and in knowledge. In sharing the Word, any believer can have other people help him to grow.

The Word must be preached, taught and explained.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake (1 Thess. 1:5).

There are four different conditions mentioned in this passage which enforce the Word. The Word itself must be given. This must be the true Word. The Word is like the edge on an axehead: it needs to be carefully presented so that it is sharp. The power of the preaching, the Holy Spirit in the preacher, the assurance of the preacher and the teacher, and the manner of man in such a witness – all this combines to put weight in the axehead. That is what makes the axe go into the log. Actually, it is not altogether what the teacher says; it is also somewhat in how he says it, what he has in mind when he says it, and what kind of a man he is when he says it that way, that makes the teaching and preaching effective. All these things together are included in sharing the Word.

The only way in which any believer can grow is by the Word of God. One does not grow just by getting older. I need the Word of God to guide me. Thus I am blessed by the ministering of the Word of God to me. In this service every believer has a part. Every believer is to bear witness and to testify. All believers belong in that group who are to bear witness to Christ. "Go ye into all the world." The "ye" refers to everyone, not just the apostles. We are all in that sense ministers of Christ. We are all servants of Christ. For the ministering of the Word of God, for sharing the Word of God with other people, believers can grow and become useful. Believers will grow through understanding the Bible.

Someone must share the Scriptures with believers, must minister the Word of God to them, that they might grow and become useful.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (4:11, 12).

The Scriptures will bring them to be "perfect." The Greek word "perfect" does not mean immaculate, having no fault at all; rather it means "full grown," "fruitbearing." When an apple tree grows, it starts out as a little seedling, becomes a sapling, then a young tree, and after awhile it has a few apples on it. Finally it grows into its prime and has a yearly crop of apples. Then it is mature. The Greeks would say it is

"perfect." So it is with the saints. Believers in Christ Jesus can become mature by growing into maturity. When a believer grows into maturity he bears fruit in the work of the ministry. No believer has been saved to simply be on exhibition. The believer is to serve. The believer is to be a servant of Christ. He is a member of the Body of Christ. Since Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost, the believer has a share in seeking and saving the lost. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ must seek to win other people to Christ.

If the believer is a mother, there will be people right there under her hand – her children. A wife has her husband. Perhaps they do not want to listen. God can move them to listen. God can do more than we can ask or think. The parent who is a believer has a precious function to perform. How can this be done? By attending church services and letting the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors deal with you and teach you, you will be helped to develop for the work of your ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. All believers are to serve in building up the Body of Christ, and for that service they need to be equipped. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," could well be translated, "for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service to the building up of the Body of Christ."

The only way that souls will ever be won is when Christians witness and testify. If we fail to tell others, they will never know. And the way we tell them is important. How will you ever know what to do. You could listen to the apostles. Certain people are given the gift of being able to interpret to you the full meaning of the Gospel authoritatively. There will be some people who handle the Scriptures as those who know. They will speak to you as persons who really know the whole thing. These will be apostles, prophets. When you say the word "prophet," you can have in mind the word "preacher." Prophets are preachers: they proclaim and emphasize. They do not always necessarily explain. They may not be able to explain all parts and aspects of the Gospel, but some of it they know and they talk about that and exhort you to respond to it.

Sometimes a preacher may say only one big thing: "Get right with God!" He may say it repeatedly. He will emphasize the fact that you are to get right with God. That man renders a real service. He is your prophet. Then there are "evangelists." These men get up before the whole world and tell the story of Jesus Christ: the facts of Jesus Christ, and the meaning of the Gospel. Then there are "pastors." These are men who have the capacity to help other believers to understand the Gospel and to apply it to their lives. Then there are "teachers" who can teach the revelation. They can tell it in a clear way. All of these handle the Word of God for believers, in order that believers may grow in faith and understanding so that they can serve. This they do to help the believers, the Christians, that Christians may learn what is involved, and understand what they should do to obey the Lord. In our day and time, much of this is being done in what we call "counseling." This practice is being done in this very area and some believers do help other people. This is more than just giving advice. Counseling includes giving explanation to people about living. This can be done as you witness for Christ Jesus. God arranges that certain persons should help us to be ready to serve by using the gifts that He gives to the church.

#### UNTO A PERFECT MAN

*Can you understand that when believers grow in their understanding they become more and more effectual in their witness?*

Paul was most anxious that the believers at Ephesus should mature. He explained to them that God had provided for their growth by giving special ability to some that they might help others to grow. Growth and maturing as a believer would be the result of knowing the Word of God, and learning what the Scriptures really say. To this end God gave certain gifts to the church. These gifts were apostles, prophets,

evangelists, pastors, teachers. Each one of these servants dealt with the Word of God. God gave these persons to the church with special ability to interpret and to explain the meaning of the promises of God in Scripture. All of these ministered the Word of God to their hearers.

Paul describes the plan of God for the maturing of believers:

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: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (4:13-16).

Let us look at the passage in depth. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." The plan of God is the same for all believers. This is the unity of the faith. The Ephesians believed in Jesus Christ, and believing in Jesus Christ meant much more than just believing the record that it happened. It is a matter of taking the promises to themselves. When Paul says "in the unity of the faith," he means they all believed the same thing, "and of the knowledge of the Son of God." The knowledge of the Son of God refers to the events in His life. The knowledge that believers have is that of Jesus of Nazareth who died for them, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God interceding for them and is coming again. As the believer thinks on these things, he will grow into a perfect man.

The word "perfect" does not mean that this person is without fault, but it means that he is full-grown. This is the state of an apple tree when it bears apples, or a peach tree when it bears peaches, or a wheat field when the wheat is ripe. This is being "perfect," full grown and mature. This state of a believer's experience is described in Galatians 5: 22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." This is the life into which the Christian grows. "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." This is the goal, the full growth of a person who is filled with the fullness of Christ.

Paul talks about how God had arranged, by giving the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the church, to minister the Word of God to the Church, so that as the believing people fed on the Word of God they would grow in faith and knowledge unto maturity. When would they know when a believer was full-grown? When he had the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. When we speak of "the fulness of Christ" we are not referring to something strange or occult. It is when the heart is completely filled with the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and the person is ambitious to be well pleasing in the sight of God. This is the goal toward which the Christian grows. When we speak of "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," we mean that each one is completely filled in his consciousness with Jesus Christ. There will be an awareness of Him. There will be an attitude in the heart put there by the Holy Spirit, of being conscious of Jesus Christ in every situation of life.

Paul goes on to say "that we henceforth be no more children." The mature person in the fullness of Christ will no longer be a child "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." This is very important. This implies that if a person has not grown up into the fullness of Christ, he can be shaken and tossed to and fro. This is to say that one time he may think like this, and another time he may think like that. This is the way of a child. Paul wants his readers to be established so that they won't be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by what someone may say, or by the sleight of men and the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Paul is pointing to the way some men preach. They try to get a person to think something else than what he has been thinking. Paul wants the believers to be "speaking the truth in love,"

and themselves growing in the truth and witnessing the truth, being able to tell anyone of the truth of Christ Jesus.

Paul has the aim that the believers "may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." As the believer grows in Christ Jesus he becomes more subject to Him. Christ is the Head. He is Lord. In our everyday language, He is "boss," and the Christian yearns to serve Him. "From whom the whole body [all believers together] fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," means the whole group of believers actually suited to each other and fitted to each other, and compacted, made strong. "By that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," means that every believer in the company has some function to bear. Every believer has something to do, and when each believer does what he is supposed to do, the group as a whole will grow "fitly joined together" and made strong.

Paul knew that when believers lived together in this way the result would be that this fellowship "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "Edifying" is the building of the whole body in love. Each believer in himself is built up in love. This is his relationship with God. love toward God, love toward man, love toward the Lord Jesus Christ, love toward the lost. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). When the whole body is moved this way, edifying itself by the love of Christ, it becomes more and more effectual. Growing in numbers is the meaning of "making increase of the body," as well as growing in understanding, growing in strength. Such growth must come from the inside and will be made easier when the believers are working together harmoniously.

"The whole body fitly joined together." Our bodies are strong as each part of the body works together. It is just so in the believer's experience. As far as the church is concerned, each denomination has a contribution, each person has something to do, and as each one effectually does his part, the whole will prosper. Each has only part of what is needed, but taken altogether all is being done. This was what the Apostle Paul worked for: that believers both individually and as a group might grow in the things of the Lord and become strong and unshakable in their confidence in Him that they might bear a firm witness and a true witness to the world outside that souls might be saved.

## PUT OFF THE OLD MAN

(Ephesians 4:17-32)

The living of a Christian would follow certain principles as Paul outlined. These principles would be grounded in a simple basic formula of denying the natural and obeying the Spiritual. The Christian will need to maintain constantly a negative attitude toward all that is natural while wholeheartedly embracing all that would be prompted by the Holy Spirit.

### NOT AS OTHER GENTLES

*Have you ever noticed how selfish people can be when they live apart from fellowship with God?*

In trying to understand what Christian living can be, I think it would be helpful if we looked soberly at those who admit that they are not believers. They are all around us, and we may have them in our own family. It is a very common practice to criticize the church, and probably no one does that more candidly than believers themselves. It may be true that the church and believers should be criticized. This would also be true for those who are not believers. These are also responsible to God. It is such an easy thing to hear people say something like this: "I don't see how there can be so much sin in the world and so much injustice and so much immorality. Hasn't the church been here nearly 2,000 years? The church has just failed." Wait a moment. Let us note at once the New Testament does not emphasize "the church." The New Testament talks about Christ and the believer. It deals with what believers do. So let us examine the question. Is it true that there have been Christians in the world for 2,000 years, and yet there is sin? Of course. But in addition to the fact that the believers were here, everyone else has been here too. If there is sin, the fault must be shared by believers and non-believers. It is so easy to dismiss the church as no good, but what about the rest of the people? Are they to go free? Suppose it is true that believers are mixed up with hypocrites. There are also hypocrites in the world at large. Some may say, "But they didn't claim to be good." Does that make a difference? Is that what the Gospel promises, or what believers claim, that they are good? No! As far as believers are concerned, they will tell you that Christ is good, that Christ Jesus is merciful. The believer knows God will forgive sin, so he has confessed his sin and has been forgiven. He knows God will receive him, but not because of his virtue or piety.

Some think about these 2,000 years since Christ was on earth, and wonder why things are as had as they have been. But we should remember that in every generation there have been souls saved. Many have died in faith and are now with the Lord. The Lord never promised that He was going to turn this world into something perfect. He did promise He would save to eternity anyone who has put his trust in Him.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (4:17-19).

Paul points out that the characteristic of all unbelieving persons: Gentiles, Jews or anyone, whatever their background may have been, is that they are thinking for themselves. "I think this is what I want to do." "I think this will serve me best." They have the vanity of their own ego. "I think this and I think that . . . I. I. I." Such thinking is all so empty, so futile.

The futility of such thinking is made clear. These are people who are past feeling. They have become callous. There is one thing true about sin. If we see it often enough, it does not seem like sin anymore. The poet has expressed it thus:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen:  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

This trend is evident around us today. There are things said now in public, over the radio and TV and in public print that were once unspeakable and unprintable. It used to be against the law to say such things. But we have become careless and callous. It has become almost the thing to do to use profanity and obscenity in our literature, and to use dirty language in public. People have one kind or another of some philosophical and sophisticated excuse to say that such language is some form of art. People have become callous. How did they ever get that way? Because of the blindness of their heart. They were "alienated from the life of God" through their ignorance, and their understanding was darkened. What a tragic condition!

Paul stated it very plainly. It was true in his time and it has always been true. It has not always been revealed, exhibited in public. It is like saying that babies have always been born naked. We are aware that men and women both have bodies. However, we do not always make an exhibition of them. When we begin to make an exhibition of them certain things follow. Now in conversation and in discussion, you can sense this fact. The heart is blind, and what men inwardly yearn for is never openly admitted. They keep it in the dark. They do not recognize the implications of their own choice. Many people will say, "It is only wrong if you think it is wrong." Now I want to ask you, Why do they want it dark when they do it? Why do they sneak around at night for doing that kind of thing? And why would this be done at all? Paul will tell you. Because they are alienated from the life of God.

Natural man, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in him, actually gives himself over to do anything and everything he wants to do, as dirty and unclean as it can be. Paul is emphasizing here that the unbelievers in the world always deteriorate. They will rot. They will just get to be worse and worse. They decay. Paul did not want the Christians to yield themselves into being selfish and self-indulgent. He did not want them to walk as other people who do not believe because other people walk in ungodly ways.

#### PUT OFF THE OLD MAN

*Do you realize that if a person is ever to grow in the ways of the Lord, he must be willing to give up some of his old ways?*

I am sure that it is true for anyone who has committed himself to the Lord, that he has the desire to become more and more acceptable to God. We just wish to God we were better than we are and more acceptable to Him. We are grateful to God that we are accepted by Him in His grace, for no other reason than because we believe in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is wonderful. However, it is true that we would like also to be well pleasing. In order to be well pleasing in the sight of God, the believer must grow from where he is.

Paul tells believers what they should do:

But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (4:20, 21).

When he tells them not to walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Paul makes it clear that believers do not learn the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ out of their own thinking. It is not by going the way of the crowd. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." Here the word "if" can be better understood if we use "since" or "inasmuch as." "Since ye have heard of him and have been taught by him." "Inasmuch as ye have heard of him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." When we say that we have heard of Him, how would that happen? By Gospel preaching. What is meant by Gospel preaching? It is not a matter of preachers telling us to do what is right and what is good. This would not be about the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be about you. Living the truth is something we cannot do. In our own strength we will never get it done.

To hear about Christ, someone will have to tell the facts of Jesus Christ – how He was born of a virgin, how He lived in this world, obedient to His Father, how He worked the miracles that He worked, how He died on the cross for sinners, how He was buried, how He rose again on the third day, how He was seen off and on for forty days, how He ascended into heaven in full view of them all, how He is up there right now praying for us, and how He is coming again in the power of heaven and in great glory. That is Gospel preaching of the facts and the events of Jesus Christ.

Now if so be that you have heard these things and have been taught by Him, that the meaning of these things has been interpreted by the Holy Spirit you can have the faith that brings you to Christ. It is not enough to just hear it, or become acquainted with it; it is when those events are interpreted to show how the will of God would work in our lives that faith is produced in the soul. If we read that Jesus of Nazareth was God Incarnate, that God Himself was in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, that He was in that human body, we can get the idea that God will come down and have fellowship with us. When I read that the Lord Jesus lived with His disciples, and was going around with them teaching and doing works of power in their sight, I am to understand that God will work with me. And if I think of the fact that He died on Calvary's cross, I am to think the reason He died was for my sins, and because He died for my sins, I will not need to die. And I am to think that because He was raised from the dead, I will be raised from the dead. just as He was raised in newness of life, so when I put my trust in Him and count myself as dead with Him, I can expect to be raised from the dead in the newness of life. This is the interpreting of the facts of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit. This is what happens when I am being taught by Him.

Let us note the phrase "as the truth is in Jesus." When we see the name *Jesus* we should think of His earthly career, as Jesus of Nazareth. In all that Paul wrote, or in the epistles of Peter, James or John, after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, after He was glorified, it is seldom that the name *Jesus* alone is used. It is so common to hear people say, "Do such and such a thing for Jesus' sake." I know what they mean. I am sure that God will look upon it with compassion, but I can tell you right now this is a very loose way of speaking. The word "Jesus" refers to His earthly career. When we are talking about the truth that is in "Jesus," we are not referring to all the truth that has to do with Christ, with the Lord, with the One whom God has sent. But "the truth as it is in Jesus," in His incarnation, in His life on earth, in His suffering, in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension into heaven; this is the truth "as it is in Jesus."

We can remember seeing Him as Jesus of Nazareth. On one occasion when He was going to go from Galilee to Jerusalem and He must needs pass through Samaria, He came to a certain Samaritan town and was going to stop there to rest. The Samaritans would not let Him in because He was a Jew. They made Him go on. Remember how the Apostle John was so shocked by this treatment of His Lord and Master, that he said to the Lord Jesus, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" The Lord turned to him and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:54-56). Then again we see Him arrested by the soldiers; wrongfully, cruelly, and harshly abused. Peter was going to defend Him but He said to Peter "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve

legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:53, 54) and so He yielded to that arrest. All this belongs to the truth "as it is in Jesus."

When He was in Pilate's courtroom and the soldiers mocked Him and made fun of Him, when they plucked His beard, slapped His face, and crushed the crown of thorns on His head, He answered them never a word. Pilate could not understand Him, and asked Him, "Are you a King?" "Yes," He said, "just like you say, that is true. I am a King. But my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

When we see Him dying on Calvary's cross, that is the truth "as it is in Jesus." All this is what we learn in the Gospel.

With this in mind, Paul goes on to say that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man. What do we mean by that "the old man"? This is our old way of doing things. "Old" in the sense that it was the "first": in the sense that it is natural. This is your natural, human way of doing things. You are to cut out the habits that were yours at one time. You are to deny yourselves. We know this is hard to do, especially because you are to put off concerning the former conversations in the old man, that which is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." The old man himself in his human nature, in those natural habits, actually is infected with sin. He has certain habits with reference to appetites, imagination, vanity and pride. This can best be seen when we see how sensitive and resentful one can become when it looks as though someone else might possibly be put first. Paul says: put it off, get rid of it. Why is that nature in man so deceitful? Because it claims to be legitimate, to be right. We say we have a right to do this or that. Or again, we claim certain advantages for self. This is not so. These are deceitful lusts, deceitful desires and they are in our old human nature. Paul calls upon the Christian to put them off. We must ask Almighty God to give us the grace to lay aside our own way of doing things and let Him have His way in us.

#### PUT ON THE NEW MAN

*Can you see that in order for a Christian to live worthy of his lord, he must not only stop doing wrong, but he must start doing right?*

Paul continues to guide these Christians at Ephesus as to how to live as Christians. He wants them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. We have just seen that he wanted them to put off their old man, their human habits, which were corrupt. These habits were not good because of being influenced by what Paul calls "deceitful lust." They had the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These elements which develop in any person as appetite, imagination and vanity can spoil a person, and they do. Paul urges believers to get rid of all their old ways of doing things. He does not tell them to change; he tells them to quit! We are minded of what the Lord said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Whatever else the cross means, it means the end of living as one wishes. The believer is to reckon himself dead.

For example, think of a boy with a pail of water, who was sent to get a pail of honey. What is the first thing that boy must do? Of course, he must pour out the water. This happens with us. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians tells about how they turned from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9). This is profound. This is saying that one cannot start on a new road until he leaves the old.

We are reminded of the incident in Scripture of that rich young ruler who came to Jesus of Nazareth to ask what he should do to inherit eternal life. You will remember how the Lord Jesus told him simply, "If you really want what I have, you must first get rid of what you have. Change the ownership of your possessions; and take up your cross and follow Me. Commit yourself to following Me." The young man went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

It is hard to let go of what one treasures. Yet we must let go, if we are to receive. When our children were very small, I had one child who on one occasion asked for something. When I brought the object to him, his hands were full. Each hand held something. When I offered this new object to him, he almost cried because he did not know what to do. It reminds me of another incident I saw happen. A little girl was brought before her parents when she, too, had her hands full of toys. Her parents offered her something like a piece of candy. She did not want to let go of her toys. I can still see that little girl lift up her foot trying to see if she could take the new gift with her bare foot! Cute? Yes . . . but so many of us are like this. How many people there are who cannot start out for the new because they do not want to leave the old! A new job, a new city, a new opportunity may be overlooked, because of reluctance to leave the familiar.

Paul makes it clear. We have to put off the old man if we wish to put on the new man. It is important to put on the new. So many people promise to be different, then do nothing about it. Paul will not accept this. We are going to have to put on the new man. Paul says:

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (4:23, 24).

If there is ever going to be a change in my ways, the first thing I must do is change my thinking. Put off the old – put on the new! We actually must take a step in the other direction.

"Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." That new man is not something we do differently. We do not put on the new man by doing the best we can. That will not do. The new man that we are to put on is *created*, is something new and different, not developed out of the old "you." It is not some part of the person that has been changed, and now is to be developed. Nor is it something to be trained or educated. It is created! "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." This word "creature" can be translated "creation."

The new man in Christ Jesus will be created in righteousness. Righteousness before God on the part of man will include these things: he will honor God, he will respect those who are in authority, he will be considerate of other people, and he will be charitable to the poor. When we yield ourselves to Him and start walking His way these characteristics appear. We put on the new man created in righteousness and in holiness of truth. The word "holiness" means one hundred percent, the "whole" business. It is being completely honest, with no hiding behind or hiding under anything. It is being one hundred percent honest with God. It is being totally dependent upon Him. I must be willing to yield myself to be made over into His likeness, in righteousness of conduct and in one hundred percent holiness of truth, actually honest in every way. In this way Paul would have us become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER

*Can you understand how helpful it would be for a Christian if he could remember that believers all belong together?*

Paul continues to tell the Ephesian Christians what they should do if they want to do the right thing. He has just told them in Ephesians 4:23, 24 that if they want to do the right thing, they should do so from the heart: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Then he proceeds to describe this in practice:

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another (4:25).

This sounds so simple, yet it is so profound. This actually is a classic statement. If a person wants to quit lying, first of all he has to have the desire to stop lying. Put away lying, tell the truth. If one tells the truth he will not lie.

When I was in the Canadian Army in World War I, I was a gymnastic staff instructor. It was my business to help the enlisted men go through their physical training. In preparation for my work, I was sent to the Headquarters Gymnastic School in Ottawa, Canada. The very first day I was there, I learned a classic truth. We were to start our drilling at 8 o'clock in the morning. I remember that I was there early because I really wanted to do well. At 7:55, five minutes to eight, the sergeant called the roll. All the men were present. He told us to stand at ease and we stood at ease for five minutes until 8:00 A.M. I was just a young man at the time, and I thought this was not very efficient.

At lunchtime at the Mess Hall I talked to this sergeant. I asked him what time it was, and said, "Well, my watch is the same as yours." I then asked him about the morning starting time; was it not supposed to be at 8:00 A.M. He said, "Yes." "Well," I said, "it seems to me according to my watch you called the roll at 7:55, at five minutes to eight." He said, "Yes, I did." I said, "If I hadn't been there would you have counted me late?" And he said, "Yes," Then I said, "Now that is not fair, is it?" He looked at me with an almost bored expression as if he were going to instruct a child. He answered, "I'll tell you what, sergeant; it has been found out, established from long observation, that if a man is five minutes early, he will never be late!" He put in a single nutshell something I have never forgotten. Afraid of being late? Be there five minutes early. Want to quit lying? Tell the truth!

Paul continues in verse 26: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." Now here is something that many people need to look at. This is not saying that being angry is wrong. This does not say that anger is sin. As a matter of fact if you read in the New Testament, you will find that on occasion it actually reports that Jesus of Nazareth looked upon certain people with anger in His heart, being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. He actually was angry at times. There are some things going on in the world that we should be angry about. There is such a thing as righteous anger. Paul is saying, "When you are angry, be careful: sin not." One must control his anger. He adds, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The believer should get over it. Is he provoked about something. Let him get it out of his system. The sooner he gets it out of his system, the better it will be. Paul goes on to say a second thing here: "Neither give place to the devil." If you are angry, do not hold it. Do not hold a grudge. The anger may be quite proper, but do not cherish it. When I am angry I am liable to do something wrong. I may harm someone. A Christian parent may be provoked at his child. Discipline the child? Yes, but not in anger. Other times people may slander you, talk about you. Then there is such a temptation to "get even," but beware! Satan is waiting to tempt you. Paul says you should not do wrong, even when you are provoked. "Be ye angry, and sin not."

Paul has a further word:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (4:28).

The matter here concerns property. What about this question of who owns the property? Some people get property by taking it – they steal it. Suppose a man has the habit of stealing, and since he has accepted Christ he wants to quit it. Let us suppose he has to have something. It has always been true that he stole because he needed something, such as money. Paul would say, "Let him labor," let him work, working with his hands for the thing that is needful. Paul continues by pointing out that the way to quit stealing is to start giving to folks. Giving is the very opposite of stealing. All these examples illustrate the same principle that Paul described at the first. If you want to quit lying, tell the truth. If you want to be on time, be early. Paul is giving here a principle that really is the very crux of Christian education. The believer

should train himself to be and to do as Christ would have him be and do. The way to do this is to be careful that in place of doing the wrong thing, he will do the right thing. Christ will put it into his heart. The grace of God in the believer's heart will prompt him to do the right thing. He should then do it that he might be blessed.

### GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

*Are you aware that every Christian has the Holy Spirit in his own heart as he talks to other people?*

Paul continues to tell Christians at Ephesus how they could live that they might be worthy of their calling as Christians. He alerts Christians to be careful in their conduct. It would be as if he would send out the slogan, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Paul is pointing to how the believer's conduct will affect other people. It is not so much a question of "Is it right or is it wrong?" as it is a question of "Is it harmful or helpful?"

Remember, Paul is writing to people who once were lost sinners, who now have accepted Jesus Christ. They are born again in Him, and in Him they have a spiritual life. However, there is in each individual Christian both the old natural self and the new spiritual being in Christ Jesus. Paul would offer this formula for conduct: put off the old, put on the new; put off the evil, put on the good. It is in this vein he writes:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (4:29).

He is continuing this pattern in his instruction to the people. The word that is translated "corrupt" means "impure," "blemished." The word would be better translated as "corrupting." "Let no corrupting communication [let no communication that will corrupt the person who hears it] proceed out of your mouth." We know of people who say evil, obscene things. They can say these things in a way that will stick in the hearer's mind. Thus they arouse all kinds of evil results in the people who listen. For example, they could create suspicion, and that would be a "corrupting communication."

Paul says to them, "Let no corrupting communication proceed out of your mouth," recommending instead, "that which is good to the use of edifying." The word "edifying" means "building up." This is what happens when we speak in a way that boasts and strengthens the good things, "that it may minister grace unto the hearers." There are things that we could say that would strengthen the other person's faith, enabling, him to give glory to God. We could ask ourselves when we talk to others: does our conversation strengthen their faith? Or, do we actually utter expressions that incline men to doubt?

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (4:30).

This brings to our minds what we mentioned earlier, that each believer has in his own soul the presence of God. The Holy Spirit actually is there. Sometimes I tremble when I think how easily some people can forget this. They may belong to Christ, so the Holy Spirit will be right there with them. The Holy Spirit knows what they are doing, and He hears what they are saying. Some things grieve Him. He is grieved when they doubt. He is grieved when they are careless, or unkind to other people. I am sure He would be grieved if they lied. How it would grieve Him if they were rebellious against God. Such conduct actually grieves the Holy Spirit.

I remember some years ago, when I was professor in a college, lecturing a large class of students. I was a young lecturer, and was trying to bring the students along in the study of the Bible. Every professor tries to keep his students interested. One of the ways is by using humor. At a Bible conference I had heard a

story that was very funny. I answered a student's question precisely. I had the temptation to use the story. I hesitated because I had the feeling in my heart and mind that it might not be a good thing for me to repeat that story. But I went ahead anyway. I felt a pang in my heart. It was several days before the pain of that experience left me. Why? Because I had risked displeasing the Lord. The Holy Spirit was letting me realize that my doing this was actually hurting Him and grieving Him. Paul urges, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

In this portion of Scripture there is a long list of human attitudes on our part which originate in "the old man." Paul admonishes, "Away with it." Let there be no more bitterness about people. If it comes, give it up. Forsake it. Let there be no more wrath. The believer should not hold anger unto more anger. There should be no more clamor. The believer should not make a big fuss about anything. He should refuse to talk to people showing any malice, and he should not repeat anything harmful.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (4:32).

Paul suggests this general pattern: put off the natural, the evil, that which is wrong; and put on the spiritual, the good, that which is right; and God will bless you.

## Chapter 9

### WALK IN LOVE

(Ephesians 5:1-17)

In actual performance the Christian would be guided by love, by obedience to God, by light and by wisdom. Such qualities of conduct are not natural but spiritual and would require the operation of the indwelling Spirit of God.

#### WALK IN LOVE

*Did you know that the Christian is called to live his life according to the pattern of Jesus Christ?*

Paul continues to urge his hearers to live their lives as Christians. He urges the believers in just a few words to be followers of God as dear children. Paul does not take much time in this letter to illustrate the application of Christian living, but he does give us a very simple formula for Christians to follow. Put off the old way of doing things: put on the new way of the Lord.

The Christian began in this world as a natural being. He had his own ideas, habits and values. It was a life of self and sin. Then he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Almighty God offered to forgive him, to cleanse him. He put his faith in Christ and was forgiven; he was delivered from his sin. He was set free. Since he would go on living there would still be the old man in the flesh, as well as the new man who was now in the Spirit. Thus the believer's problem is how to live, when he has in him the disposition to do as he wishes, as well as the inward guidance to do what God wants him to do. So Paul is writing to help these people. He states it simply in Ephesians 4:22-24: put off that which is old and evil, and put on that which is new and good.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (5:1, 2).

When a person is born again, one of the things that God does for him is to put His Holy Spirit into his heart. Now the believer is led to do things the way God in Christ would have him to do. The Holy Spirit within cries out to God, "Abba, Father." That is the language of a child. It is the way a child would speak to his father when he calls him "Daddy." Thus, with a child's faith and confidence the Christian is moved to seek the face of God.

We rejoice in the salvation that is in Him. We look up into the presence of God. We know that He loves us and we love Him because He first loved us. We find a joy in following Him. The believer yearns to please God and searches the Scriptures to find what God would have him do. When Paul writes: "Be ye therefore followers of God," he can be understood as saying, "Be little toddlers, toddling after God as dear children"; look up into His face and call Him, "Abba, Father."

Paul urges them to "walk in love." This can be done because they are living in love. They will worship and reverence God. Their hearts bow down before Almighty God. They will respect those in authority. They will give elbow room to those around them, being considerate of them. When they deal with the poor, they will be charitable. This is walking in love.

On one occasion when the Lord Jesus was teaching, He declared that according to the law a man was supposed to love God, and to love his neighbor as himself. A certain man asked "What would that be, if I were to love my neighbor?" Jesus of Nazareth told the payable of the Good Samaritan. As this certain

Samaritan was journeying he saw a man in the ditch who had been wounded and forsaken. When he looked upon that victim, he had compassion on him. Even so Christ, when He saw us, had compassion on us. This same idea is revealed in Matthew 9:36:

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

This is how Christ sees us. This is how He loves us. He sees us and loves us when we are bewildered, and He has compassion on us. This is what "walking in love" looks like.

Also we can think of the occasion when the leper came to Him and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The record is that the Lord looking on him had compassion on him and touched him, saying, "I will: be thou clean" (Luke 5:12, 13). On another occasion when He was on a hilltop overlooking Jerusalem, He was weeping when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). Our Lord Jesus Christ looking out upon mankind is moved with compassion upon lost souls. We are deeply moved to remember "As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us."

Love in the Bible seldom implies feeling. The word "compassion" does, and the word "pity" does, but not the word "love." The word "love" refers to the direction that ones goes and does. If we are doing things in the direction of self there is no love: but if we are doing things for others, that is what "love" would be. To say "God so loved the world," does not mean He liked it. It does not mean He approved it. But it does say "He so loved it." He so cared for it that He gave His only begotten Son. This is what we understand about the Lord Jesus Christ: He "hath loved us and hath given himself for us."

If believers are moved by the love of Christ, they will be moved to give themselves an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor: that is, "a pleasant sacrifice." In the Old Testament the sacrifices of a sweet-smelling savor were those that were offered in praise to God, and God received them with special appreciation.

The Apostle Paul points out that in the living of His life on earth, Jesus of Nazareth gave Himself as an offering. He offered Himself up to His Father when He said, "A body hast thou prepared me . . . Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5, 7). He yielded Himself up to God and His doing that was in God's sight a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor. This is what the believer is led to do. Following Him, walking along with Christ, following God, the believer will be led right down the road of self-denial to yield himself, offering himself to God for the sake of other people. Such obedience will please the Father in heaven.

#### CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE

*Do you realize some people feel that after a person professes faith in Christ he can do as he wishes and still belong to the Lord?*

It is hard to grasp a clear idea of what it means to be a believer when so many different views are presented. People tend to allow anyone to say anything he wishes, and feel that one view is as valid as the other. This is not true. It is primarily true that anyone can come, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16b). This is wonderfully true, but it is not true that anyone can come in any way. Christ Jesus has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life! no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

Jesus Christ lived in this world as the express image of God. Anything not like Christ is not true about God. You don't have to dig around and argue about that to find out new things, to see whether this can be

true or if that isn't true. It can be stated in the simplest language: "Anything that is not like Christ is not true about God." In his discussion with the Ephesian believers, Paul urged these believers to be followers of God as dear children, and to walk in love as Christ also loved us. Now by way of contrast for emphasis, Paul points out how not to walk by describing the children of disobedience.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (5:3-5).

This is plain talk from Paul. As we read those words we are inclined to shrink from them.

"All uncleanness (whatever it may be) let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." Saints are not perfect people. "Saints" refers to believers in Christ. Such believers are not perfect. Though incomplete and imperfect, they are yet set apart. The fact is they belong only to the Lord. Common familiarity with such things as Paul describes may dull our hearts with reference to spiritual things. But the believer belongs to God, and His Spirit is in the believers. It is for this reason the believer should avoid these sinful things. When the Apostle wrote, "Let [these things] not be once named among you, as becometh saints," he means to say, "Never give grounds to anyone that he should doubt that you are a believer."

Paul goes on to say:

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks (5:4).

The words in this translation are hardly strong enough. Another translation indicates filthiness as "dirty stories," foolish talking as "foul talk," and jesting as "coarse jokes," and goes on to say these are not for you. It is an astonishing thing how many people seem to get satisfaction out of talking about some such things. The believer is urged: remind each other of God's goodness and be thankful. Let this be the style of your life.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (5:5).

This is an absolute observation. The kingdom of Christ and of God will never belong to anyone who is impure or greedy, for a greedy person is really an idol worshiper. He loves and worships the good things of this life more than God. Knowing this to be true, the believer will be guided accordingly and avoid such things.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them (5:6, 7).

Anything that is dirty, unclean and immoral is absolutely out, as far as God is concerned. It is shocking how people will talk as though all such judgments are relative. In our own country we are having the amazing experience of seeing the highest court of our land admitting openly that they do not know what to call obscene. Any believer can tell anyone plainly that anything that is offensive to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is evil. Another translation of these passages says: "Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse their sins, for the terrible wrath of God is upon all who do them" (Living Bible). There are those who actually develop and promote the things that are unclean and are dishonoring to God, and these are called the children of disobedience. People will talk about folks being "old-fashioned" as if that were a dirty word. The sun is old-fashioned. Babies drinking milk is old-fashioned. If one stubs his foot against a stone it will hurt today just as it did fifty or five hundred years ago. God is not different, and sin has not

changed. We should not concede anything to anyone in discussion, who promotes something that would not be in keeping with what we know about Jesus Christ our Lord.

## WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

*When a man becomes a believer should there be any difference in the way he lives?*

Paul certainly thought that living in faith would make a difference in anyone's conduct. This is simply put in Ephesians 5:8-10. The apostle is writing to the believers at Ephesus to encourage them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. He wants them to live like believers, thus he writes:

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light (5:8).

For the Apostle Paul unbelief and faith were two entirely different things. The difference can be seen when it is remembered that unbelief is like darkness and faith is like light. We sometimes hear the contrast expressed "just as different as day is from night." Paul felt if a person were in unbelief he was in the night, but if he were a believer in the Lord and looked into the face of God, he was walking in the day.

Paul makes a statement about the fruit of the Spirit that would encourage any Christian. He writes: "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5:9). The fruit of the Spirit is far more than simply accepting the truth of Christ Jesus. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22). All these characteristics will appear in the believer when the Holy Spirit is having His way. These aspects of a Christian walk are not separate. Take for instance the word "love." This cannot be placed in a container. One cannot get a box or a bag of love. Love is a quality of conduct. For example: I give \$5 to a poor man. I could give that in love, as I want him to be helped, and God to be pleased. I could give that \$5 because I want to get rid of him. One would not be able to tell by the \$5.

"Joy" – joy is not something one can buy a bottle and sprinkle around. Joy is an inward condition of the person. "Peace" is an inward state of the human being in his awareness. "Longsuffering" has to do with an attitude on his part. "Gentleness" is not something to be seen in a person by himself. Gentleness is always found in conduct. One can speak a "gentle" word to someone else. A person can touch another in a gentle way. Things can be done for one another in a gentle way. Gentleness is a way of doing things to others. The same is true for "goodness," and so on.

These characteristics are all qualities of the individual believer in action, and they are the result of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. The apostle writes that the "fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." He has just told the Christians that they are to walk as children of the light. They are to manifest the truth of the Spirit at all times, letting these things that are the fruit of the Spirit be seen.

"In all goodness." When is anything good? The Gospel emphasis in the word "good" is upon performance. When we use the word "good," we mean "good for." "Goodness" is the quality of anything that is "good for something" that is right and proper. In your goodness toward God, what in your conduct toward God would be good? It must be good for something. A believer could worship Him by going to church. That would mean fellowship with other believers in the worship of God. "Goodness" toward God could mean being careful how one uses His name – being reverent. This would include a careful use of Sunday as the Lord's Day. If I were going to act in a way that is good, so that there would be goodness in my conduct with reference to God, I should be reverent in what I am doing on Sunday.

What about my money? Is my income tithed? Is a certain portion given to God in recognition of His benevolence? The same is true with reference to praying. If I want to live in goodness before God, is prayer central in my life? What about my witnessing? What about me talking to other people about God, and about coming to the Lord Jesus Christ? As a believer I would certainly take part in that. What about

serving? What about sharing in mission work? What about witnessing? What about visiting the sick and the infirm, the aged? When we consider that the fruit of the Spirit is "in all goodness," does this refer only to my conduct toward God? What would be "goodness" so far as other men are concerned? Would this not mean my respecting those in authority, keeping the Law? What about my neighbor? Is he being allowed "elbow room"? Is there room in my thinking for thoughtfulness and charity to the poor? It is all such things taken together that would be "good" for a believer who is inwardly moved by the Spirit of God.

"And righteousness." Righteousness is a quality of being and doing, which is the result of being "right." For my manner to be "right" means that it is according to certain standards. Here again we could go over the same list as we have just mentioned, and consider that as far as my conduct and speech is concerned, certain things are "right" and others are "wrong." The believing person will want to be right. That will be righteous. There will be respect for other people. There will be obedience to the law. It is keeping the rules whatever they happen to be that will make one a righteous person. To be clean in my conduct is righteous. To be honest in my affairs is righteous. To be generous in the way I treat other people is righteous. In all the judgment rendered by me, I should always remember mercy. That would be righteous. In all plans I would be unselfish. In my outlook I would be evangelical, eager to win others to the Lord.

Paul wrote in this connection that the fruit of the Spirit is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth." The believer will seek "truth" about God, as he reads his Bible. The believer will learn the truth about sin, that it is real and will ruin the sinner. Sin will cost a person his eternal life. Sin needs to be confessed to God, and forsaken. I should keep before my mind the truth about Calvary. Christ Jesus died for me and the fruit of the Spirit will keep me conscious of the fact that Christ died for me on Calvary's cross. I need to remember the truth about the resurrection. Christ literally arose from the dead. And I need to keep in mind the truth about the ascension. Christ Jesus went up into the presence of God in full view of the disciples. It is keeping these things in mind that will enable me to have the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Christ Jesus went into heaven where He is now and He is my Advocate. He is interceding for me right now, and I have the blessed results of His intercession in my daily "righteousness."

The fruit of the Spirit also proceeds from the truth that He is coming again. There will be an end of this world, these things will have an end, and there will be a coming judgment. Heaven and hell are real: these things are and will be.

Paul wrote "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." This is the admonition that Paul made, and this we would recommend to each other. The wonderful fact is that I will not need to remember everything by my own memory. All I will need to do today is to yield my life to the living Lord. His Holy Spirit within me as a believer will move me into these things. As they happen in my actions I can recognize them and know that I am on the right road: walking "as children of light."

#### UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS

*Is it all right for a believer to join in whatever is going on round about him, in whatever is being done?*

The living of a believer is complicated by the actions of others around him. As I live with faith in Christ Jesus, I want His blessing and want to be well pleasing in His sight. Thus the way I live makes a difference. This leads into self-denial, even unto death of self. I have to give up on myself. This is not easy, and the life and actions of those around me make it harder. People can live in such a way as to discourage the believer in his walk. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). How we could wish it were not this way in our culture! But this is exactly the way it is.

Suppose I wanted to pray and next door there was a boisterous party going on. There could be music, with all kinds of noise-making instruments, laughter and singing. It would be hard for me to pray. It would be hard even for a group to conduct a prayer meeting.

Some years ago I was a graduate student at Columbia University in New York. For a few weeks in the summertime I lived in the dormitory. I found study between the hours of seven and ten in the evening practically impossible because of the things my neighboring roommates were doing. The interruption was constant. So I learned to do this: at seven in the evening I went to bed and went to sleep. When I awoke later, usually after ten o'clock, I could do my work. I usually did my best work between two and five in the morning. I learned this from practical experience. This will illustrate how we are affected by what goes on around us.

Paul had something like this in mind when he admonished believers what to do and how to live. He told them plainly that they were to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. One serious aspect of the works of darkness is that they are not always ugly. If only sin were always ugly, dirty, as a festering sore, outwardly, it might be avoided. But some of these works of darkness can be so sweet. Paul calls them however, the "unfruitful works of darkness." This is their significant characteristic. Even if they were sweet, or even if they were gentle in action, even if they were nice, even if they were perfumed, they would yet all be unfruitful.

Most of our activities at work or at home are largely neutral, as far as the soul is concerned. It is what we choose to do with our spare time and money that really counts. For instance, in the line of entertainment, "unfruitful works of darkness" could be parties, week-end trips. They could include reading fiction, watching movies, T.V., or playing cards. All such entertaining activities could easily be "unfruitful works of darkness." Why darkness? Because in such activities, no conscious attention would be given to God.

I am reminded of this passage in the gospel of John:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

That is what the Lord Jesus Himself taught with reference to darkness and light. The things we do because we like to do them, can easily be unfruitful works of darkness.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 2:11, 12).

Peter is admonishing believers to abstain from gratifying the desires of their human nature because these war against the soul. This does not mean that any one of those things is necessarily evil or wicked or crude, but they all tend to lead the soul away from the things of God. All around are nice, cultured people who acknowledge no relationship with God. One fact we can realize about them is that they are not "right" with God. As a believer, I should vote against them, reprove them, for it is a shame even to speak of things which are done in secret by such people.

Paul has in mind certain things being practiced in public that are wrong and hurtful. These can be a real snare. It has become so common to accept anything that is done in public as being all right. In my lifetime I have noted the tendency of public media to use profanity. In fact, this has become so acceptable that unless a person uses a certain amount of profanity in publishing an article, people are inclined to feel the author is not telling it as it is. The same can be said about books, movies, T.V., and other media. Paul would say this is shameful and believers should have no fellowship with such. Other people may talk in

this way but I ought not to have any fellowship with them, but rather reprove them. At this point I remember again something about my father. He was not a believer in the early part of his life, while I was with him as a boy. He did not make any profession of faith in Christ at that time, though he believed in God, and in the things of God. He thought the Bible was true. I remember with appreciation one thing about that man. He kept his speech clean, even before he was a believer. He never at one time used any kind of language that would make my sister blush if she had heard him speak. I mean when he was talking among men. I mean out in the yard, out in the barn, out with men. He never used obscene language at all, and now as I look back on it, I realize how marvelous that was. And I am impressed to feel that for me, as a believer, I should be very careful to have no part in anything that is a work of darkness of any sort and therefore unfruitful. That does not promote the things of the Lord. I am referring to loose talk, careless talk, vulgar talk, crude talk, obscene talk, immoral talk, profane talk; all these things hurt all down the line. A believer should have no part in that.

#### MADE MANIFEST BY THE LIGHT

*Do you agree that the best way for a person to become a believer is to decide to be openly honest about everything?*

It is hard to understand why the majority of people do not want to be believers in Christ. I can remember the time when I was not a believer but I was honest about it. I just did not believe. After I came to know and to believe the things of the Lord, it was an astonishment to me that I could have lived that long without knowing the wonder of His love. Yet, this will always be a real problem until a person recognizes and admits that the heart of man is deceitful. We can be fooled, and we can fool ourselves. The tragedy is that a person can deceive himself to his own hurt. There can be a sense of rest and peace if one denies that judgment will certainly come. If a person could just forget that, shut his mind and feel that nothing is ever going to happen that will hurt, then one could have a certain amount of peace. It would be false peace to be sure.

It is no wonder that Paul urges Timothy:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

There are some people who fall easily into the snare of the devil. They occupy themselves with things that leave them open to his cunning and his deception. There are so many mistaken ideas that seem so natural to a man's own heart. Many a person falls for them easily. For instance, it is very common to feel: "I was born free to do as I wish." But that is wrong! No man lives to himself alone. Then again a person may say, "If I don't see anything wrong, then it is all right." But this will not do: I could be blind. I could took down the road and not see anything wrong, because my eyes are blinded, and then drive right into a hole in the bridge.

Isaiah understood himself and could say, "I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." That expresses the point exactly: I am just not right. Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Then again someone may say: "If others do it, then it is all right for me to do it." They may be wrong! just because everyone else thinks something is all right does not make it so.

Another common idea that someone may express is this: "If I can't see it, I'm not going to believe it." But this is also wrong! Once more let us consider the illustration of an extension cord that you might have

in your house. Plug one end of it into the socket in the wall, and the other end into an appliance, flip the switch and it operates with power to run the appliance. Electricity goes through that wire. But can you see it? Can you see any bulge in the wire? Obviously there are some things actually true that we cannot see. We can see results.

Again someone will say, "If I can't understand it, I shouldn't trust it." That is also wrong! When we go to a doctor, we do not always understand, but we trust. When I take my car to a garage, I don't always understand what they are doing to it, but I turn it over to them. For a person to say, "If I can't understand it, then I shouldn't trust it," is wrong. We can deceive ourselves that way.

Some people will say, "Why worry. I don't believe there is any devil anyway." That is a mistake. There is a devil. The Lord Jesus dealt with him, and he tempted the Lord Jesus Christ. He will tempt us! We could be very foolish by failing to recognize the fact that he exists.

In the same vein some will say, "I don't think there is any hell anyway." How tragic! Our Lord spoke about hell. The one person who spoke more about hell in the Bible, and certainly in the New Testament, than anyone else, and mentioned it more often by name, was Jesus of Nazareth. It is so easy for a person to be fooled.

Paul gives us guidance. Paul says that "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." This means simply all things become visible when they are exposed by the light. Paul says, "Christ shall give thee light." He will give understanding. Another way it could be said: "But when anything is exposed and reprov'd by the light, it is made visible and clear; and where everything is visible and clear, there is light." We do not arrive at insight and understanding by our reason. We do not figure things out. We come to understanding and have insight, because we are shown. Christ Jesus Himself came to show us. He sent the Holy Spirit to show us. Looking at the Lord Jesus Christ will help us to know many, many things. Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, we will not have any doubts about heaven. That is where He came from. That is where He went. That is where He is now. Think about the Lord Jesus Christ. You won't have any trouble about angels. They announced His coming, they announced His going, and they will announce His coming again. Thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, we will not have any trouble in trusting God.

Someone might ask, "Why don't we trust Him? Why don't we just come to Him? What holds us back?" It could be our sin! Thinking about coming into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ may lead us to think, "Oh, well, I am no good. I have sinned." In our guilt we feel responsible. And this is very true. We really have the sin. We really have the guilt. Yet, if we will look at Christ, He will carry away our sins. He will pardon our guilt. God is real. Heaven is real. The devil is real. Angels are real. All these things are because the Lord Jesus Himself dealt with those things.

When we have those things which come into our minds through Him, it is as though we lifted up the window shade and let the sunshine in. One look at Him and we will know. "There is life for a look at the Crucified One: There is life at this moment for thee."

#### WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY

*If a person really believed in Christ Jesus, would he then walk blandly ahead into any situation, trusting Jesus Christ to protect him?*

The Apostle Paul is advising believers at Ephesus how they should live. He is showing them how to live that they might walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. It is true that many new believers suffer disillusionment because they feel their expectations are not fulfilled. It would be so easy for a young believer to assume that he can trust God to lead him no matter what he does and to save him no matter what he gets into. No doubt God does take care of believers many times even when they are

foolish. Yet the believer has a function to perform. He must relate himself to the will of God. The believer has something to do so that Christ may bring His will to pass.

Paul wrote urgently about this:

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (5:15-17).

This is very practical advice. "See then that ye walk circumspectly" means that the believer should look around, study, observe all sides. He should get a clear picture of the situation. "Not as fools, but as wise." Every time the Bible uses the word "fool," which seems rather harsh, we should keep in mind what the Bible says: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 53:1). Any time anyone leaves God out in his thinking, he is doing something that is foolish indeed. Not only is such thinking impractical, but it shows the person is acting like a fool to feel that there is no God.

"But as wise." Among other things the Bible says: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10). The wise person will remember God. The fool will act as if there were no God. When Paul would say, "See then that ye walk circumspectly," he is urging men to be careful how they walk. They should not walk as fools who think there is no God, but as wise persons who fear God. These words can be understood to say, "Look carefully then how you walk. Look around, be careful where you step because all is not safe. Live purposefully and worthily and carefully, not as the unwise and witless but as wise, sensible, intelligent people." These are various expressions of the idea. Paul is urging the believers to be careful. They should be careful what, where, how and with whom they do what they do in living. They should remember God. They should keep Him in mind, so that they might walk in the fear of the Lord.

The phrase "redeeming the time" has been well translated: "buying up the opportunities." As the believer lives he has a chance to go this way or that – to walk with God or apart from Him. Paul would say, "Buy up every opportunity. Take advantage of every opportunity to draw nigh to God. You will not always have it."

Is there a prayer meeting in your congregation? If you are a believer you should attend. At that prayer meeting you might learn something more about God and you could certainly have a fellowship of experience with God. Go! Don't miss it. If special services are being held at your church, go! Redeem the time. Is there an opportunity to talk to someone about Christ Jesus? You might not get that chance every day. That particular man might not come by your office every day. He might not come to your house every day, but he came today. Tell him now about Christ Jesus! You could invite him to your church. Don't miss it!

"Redeeming the time because the days are evil," means to take advantage of every opportunity that you have. Do you have books that tell about God? Read them. Have you seen a new book on how God has used some missionary? Buy it and read it. Perhaps someone has an idea about how to read in the Bible to learn something new. Discover it. As far as your family is concerned, you could pray for them each day. Now is the time. You might say to me, "You don't know what my family is like. They don't have any interest in the things of the Lord at all." I will ask you, are they still alive? Then remember God is in heaven. Why not turn to Him and call on Him and so redeem the time? Take every chance personally to draw nearer to God.

You will be wise to remember God, to keep God in mind. "Understanding what the will of the Lord is." Do not act and think as if there were no God. Do not fall into the trap of feeling, "It's my money, and my time." You could have the money and the time, but it would not be the right thing to do to use it as you please. You need to understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not be so foolish as to think that you can chart your own course. Look in humble obedience on what God has in mind for you. If you will follow it, He will bless you. God is no respecter of persons. The marvelous thing is that even if you do not amount to much (in the eyes of the world) but you do what He wants you to do and walk in His ways, He will

bless you.

A person need not expect that the will of God will be something fancy, fantastic, or strange. It can be very ordinary, and yet very real. He needs to ask, "What is the will of the Lord for my home, my family?" God wants the believer to be considerate of others. He wants him to pray for the members of his family. He can come into the presence of God and ask Him to bless his home, his family. Would that mean that they would never die? Would that mean that they would never be sick? It does mean that in sickness, God will hold them by the hand, and if they should die, He will take them to Himself.

God will be with His people and the believer can know that the will of God will be good. God's will is that they should accept Christ, yield to Christ. They should deny their flesh. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3). They should yield themselves to God and let Him have His way with them. It is the will of God also that men should thank Him for everything that happens, and praise Him at all times. Believers should walk in His way and trust Him. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17).

## BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

(Ephesians 5:18 - 6:9)

The Christian can walk worthy of his calling only if the Holy Spirit not only indwells but fills the heart. The believer has a personal responsibility to do what is necessary that the Spirit might fill him completely. Paul describes just how this can be done.

### BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

*Can you see why speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns would be the first step toward being filled with the Spirit?*

Living in this world is so difficult, that any person needs help to sustain his spirit just as he needs food to be strong enough to live. Paul recognized this and wrote to the Ephesian believers: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). It is an amazing thing to find these two ideas in the same sentence, and to note how Paul puts them in contrast. It would be well to keep in mind that the word "wine" may not refer only to an alcoholic beverage, but to anything that stimulates and stirs the human being in a natural way. Paul urges the believers to not let that be the source of their inspiration, because it can carry them into "excess." The Spirit will stimulate and encourage the individual. It was customary among the people in Ephesus to seek stimulation in wine to help them live day by day. Even today, when life seems too hard in its demands, men are inclined to turn to alcohol. It is a notorious fact that when a person has drunk wine, and has become intoxicated, he may feel strong at the moment, but the experience leaves him worse off than before. There need be no doubt that wine will make a difference in the feelings of him who drinks it, and this the natural man craves.

When a person drinks alcohol, his physical reactions become stronger for the moment, but the effect wears off and is followed by weakness. On the other hand, if a person knows the Gospel, he will know that the Holy Spirit will guide him to secure the help of God from within by faith. This will take place if that believer has faith, but faith is not always strong, nor constant. I could have strong faith in the Lord today, but then a week from now, a month from now, my faith might be weak. Would this mean that I had changed my mind? Not at all. It could be simply that my faith is weak. I would then be faced with trials, temptations, and doubts, as my faith wavered. I need strong faith to be victorious as a believer.

Is there anything a person can do to increase his faith? Yes, there is! "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is made stronger when that person reads and listens to and becomes familiar with Scripture. The more Scripture one knows, the stronger his faith will be. The believer who feeds on the Word will be strengthened, just as feeding on food strengthens his body. Faith is nurtured, made strong and stronger, by reading and listening to and hearing the Word of God. This simple truth is very profound even as it is clear. The more Bible truth I know, the more I read and digest what is in the Bible, the more I think of Christ and of the power of God; and the more I think of Christ, the more ready I am to trust in Him, and the more I realize that He will help me, the more I can expect from Him.

Thus Paul puts these two ideas in contrast in the one verse. Do not drink wine: do not give yourself over to the things that will stimulate your human nature because this will not help you spiritually, since it is all of the flesh; but bring Scripture to mind. If we strengthen our faith, then it will actually help us and it will enable God to work in us.

Paul indicates the first step in strengthening faith:

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (5:19).

I am not sure there is any significant difference between a psalm and a hymn. We commonly understand that the "psalms" are passages of poetry found in the Bible. Thus we find the psalms in the text of Scripture. "Hymns" usually have been written by godly men who have written to help worshipers to see what God will do and to give their own testimony in the hymn. "Spiritual songs" are not so much hymns of praise to God, as they are songs of testimony. For example, people sing: "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses." That song is a personal testimony; it is about the Lord, and it is about what it means to trust in Him. So we call it a "spiritual song." Psalms are taken from Scripture: hymns of praise to God have been written by believing persons. Spiritual songs are utterances of testimony and of prayer. In using these the believer is "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This is the first step toward being filled with the Spirit.

Music is pleasant. We can listen to it again and again, and let our spirits be filled. The message of the song is important in that it strengthens our faith. Such a song is:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

I don't know how many hundred times I have sung those words. They are still meaningful, and if you were to sing them to me right now, I would listen and I would be blessed by them. This is also true as far as the Psalms are concerned:

The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want (23:1).

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (46:1).

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (1:1, 2).

These can be repeated again and again and will always strengthen faith.

Singing such songs is much like reading the Bible. We can read it again and again, and it does not become tiring. When Scripture is set to music and sung we have Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, each one of them telling some aspect of the story of Christ. Thus we are helped to remember the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. Keeping the things of Christ in mind is what will feed faith. This is what we hope for in our living as far as this world is concerned.

We need the help of God. The help of God is promised to us and given to us in Christ Jesus. We receive the help of God in Christ Jesus according to our faith, but faith is not something we can produce out of our own minds and hearts. Faith is something we receive from God through His Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So we will sing the songs, and we will listen to the songs, and we will read the Scripture, and we will listen to the Scripture, and we will think about these things; and the Lord will increase our faith, which will get us ready to receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

## GIVING THANKS

*Did you know that thanksgiving is a necessary step toward being filled with the Spirit?*

Paul was very anxious that believers should be fully blessed. He felt that the Gospel had provided for believers to be blessed in their living and that all spiritual blessings would be available in Christ Jesus. He wanted the believers to have these blessings. Paul felt that it was unnecessary for believers to live in sadness, gloom, darkness, doubt and in unbelief when they could be strong and joyous and living in the Lord. He knew that this blessedness of quietness and peace and joy which comes from Jesus Christ would come into our hearts through Jesus Christ, who would work in us by and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer, but not every believer is yielded to Him. Not every believer accepts Him.

As a matter of fact, not every believer knows about the Holy Spirit, nor has really recognized that God has given His Holy Spirit into the heart of every believer. Because of this the Spirit is not always obeyed; but the Spirit will be obeyed if we believe. The Spirit can work in us according to the faith that we have: faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in the Holy Spirit. Faith, to be effectual so that it can actually produce results, must be fulfilled in conduct.

Paul outlines three steps that are to be taken by a believer which will lead him into this marvelous blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (5:19-21).

The first step has previously been discussed, but let us look at it again. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is a way of enabling us to fill our minds and hearts with Scripture. This procedure gets the Scripture into our consciousness. It will bring the ideas of the Word of God into our thinking. One way to learn the Scripture is to sing it, thus recalling it over and over again in a song. Not that we may one time learn it, but that we may constantly have it in mind because it is the presence of the Word of God in the soul that actually feeds faith. Thus the first step toward actually being filled with the Spirit in a wholesome strong way is to be acquainted with what the Bible says and means. Understanding of the Scripture has been expressed in the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which holy men have written, in which they have written their own spiritual experience.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the necessary and important second step toward being filled with the Spirit. What does being thankful mean? It means that I recognize God has done things for me. When I am thankful, I recognize God as the giver of every good and perfect gift. I recognize Him as the One who watches over me. He is the Keeper of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps. I thank God for His protection, care and provision.

Every day, in little things and in big things, we need to keep looking to see the hand of God. Just as surely as we look around us we will see evidence that God is being good to us. From time to time we can notice some special providence. It may be that as I am driving along in my car, I suddenly notice my car is almost out of gas. Why not thank God for that? I might have gone on for another ten or twenty miles without looking, and have run out of gas. Someone might say, "It just happened that way." I should not pass it off like that. I should thank God. When I wake up in the morning and find that I have a good day, I should thank God for that good day. If I should wake up in the morning and find I will have a rainy day, the question would be do I have a raincoat? If I have I could thank God for that raincoat. Or if I should wake up in the morning and as I am going out to work I find the day is cold and windy, the question is do I have a car? Has it got windows? Do the doors close? Then let me thank God I can get downtown without

freezing on the way. I should be thankful. Since these are such little things, one could ask why would a person give thanks? So that I will be drawn nearer to Him. This is what will keep me close to Him.

The believer should be thankful about everything. He should give thanks always and in every situation. This is very easy to do when things are going good, when they are going fine. But the believer in any case should do this. He should give thanks always, for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, as he is going along day by day, he should not wait until some crash occurs to remember that he is trusting God. The believer should trust Him from the first. The believer should give God thanks and praise for the benefits he is receiving all the time.

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." This is the third step: the believer must submit himself to the people with whom he lives. Are there folks at home? He should be conscious of them and take them into consideration. He should be considerate of people at home and at work. This also will apply to other people who may be driving on the highway. The believer should be considerate, give them room. "Submitting yourself to other people" implies that you accommodate yourself to what is involved when you are with others. The believer is led to take a lowly position. He should not crowd; he should avoid reaching, grabbing, grasping as he controls himself to relax, yield, and submit. If the believer wants blessing, this is what he should do. If the believer wants to have fellowship with God in the Holy Spirit, then he should submit himself to others. He should take a lowly position.

Performing these three practical actions: keeping heart and mind filled with Scripture; being thankful for the way things are happening; submitting one to another, will prepare the believer for the Holy Spirit to come in and fill his soul. If the believer will do these things he will be richly blessed and Christ Jesus will be glorified.

#### WIVES SUBMIT YOURSELVES

*Can you see how a wife's attitude toward her husband is involved in her own spiritual life?*

One of the big problems in Christian living is to put into action the truth we believe. To be sure, believing is the first step. The first issue for any human being is: what shall I believe about God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? The second is this: can I accept the Scriptures as the Word of God? These questions need to be properly answered. What has been revealed about God, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes to me through preaching and teaching, and through the reading of the Word of God. Yet many people who have that quite clearly in their minds continue to live unhappy, barren lives. They do not have the blessing that is available because they do not act in line with what they believe. When a believer takes action in line with his faith, James would say he is fulfilling his faith.

James points out that faith if it does not result in works is dead, being alone. In James 2:21 he is writing about this very matter. He points out that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to Him for righteousness. James then takes him as an example:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (James 2:21-24).

Perhaps as you read the Scripture, you are certain that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. I am just as sure of that as you are. But what are you doing to fulfill this belief? The fulfilling of faith is accomplished by putting it into action, which will happen if the believer is led by the Holy Spirit.

How a believer's faith can be fulfilled is seen in a simple statement given to a certain group of people, spoken of as "wives." "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." This is to be

done by the believing wife: the Christian woman living in a home, as the wife of a man. To such a person Paul would say: "You believe in God, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you believe in the overruling hand of God and the sovereign work of God? That being the case, submit yourselves unto your own husband, as unto the Lord." "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph. 5:22-24).

Some people may even smile at that, while others may be irritated by it. But this was written with the idea of helping believers to be blessed. It was written specifically for the purpose of guiding believers into being filled with the Holy Spirit of God. In this instance Paul is writing to women who are living in homes with their husbands. No matter how strange this might sound, let the words stand just as they are written because that is where the truth is. As a wife, perhaps a mother, the woman is going to live together in a relationship with another.

"Submit yourselves." This does not mean submitting the way one would submit to a harsh taskmaster. That is not the point. This means quite simply: "Accept your husband as he is. You committed yourself to him." For a woman in love, this would be the most natural thing in the world. It is her joy to do as she thinks her beloved wants her to do. But apart from her personal wishes, if this woman wants the blessing of the Holy Spirit, if she wants the Holy Spirit to have control in her life, then she will yield herself into that situation in her home. She will make it a point in everything to look up to her husband as the head of that home. He may be limited, in that case she is limited. He may travel at a slow speed, so she will have a slow ride. She is right along there with him and in faith she is doing this "as unto the Lord." This means she will have the Lord in mind and accept His Providence in relation to the man she married. In all this she will trust the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." In any family situation, the man is the leader. I have appreciated an insight picked up when I was in Brazil. Once I was talking about this very passage of Scripture. After the class session was over, some of the Brazilian Christian women came to me and said in a smiling way, "You know, down here in Brazil, we all agree that the husband is the head of the house." And then with eyes twinkling they said to me, "But we say the woman is the neck. She turns the head." How very true, normal and natural this would be!

"And he is the saviour of the body," in what sense? Normally, the husband will provide and he will protect. In any case, he assumes responsibility there. "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." The wife is to let his will prevail, such as it will be. Why will the woman do it that way? Because he is her husband. Is he right? Not necessarily. He may not be right, but that is the way the wife is going to do because he is her husband. In this she will be blessed! The Holy Spirit can work in her heart.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

This is how Peter interpreted this whole situation. This procedure will be difficult if the husband is an unbeliever, but the promise is there; if the wife will do what she ought to do she might even win him. It will also be difficult when the husband is incompetent, but the wife will learn to do everything she possibly can to help him. She will have to have the guidance of God in the matter and she will receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit in her soul. Such yieldedness affects the operation of the Holy Spirit within.

May God help you each one to be pleasing in His sight in the way in which you live in your own home.

## HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES

*Did you know that a man's treatment of his wife has direct bearing upon his own spiritual experience?*

It is such an easy thing to think that a man's relationship with his wife is his own business. From a human point of view this may be right, but nothing that involves a Christian is his own business; it is God's business.

The Apostle Paul in writing to the believers at Ephesus wanted them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He outlined certain things that they could do to promote this. Such blessedness as being filled with the Holy Spirit would be the work of God. God will not bless a man who is disobedient to Him. God will do many things for the believer, and He has. He reached out for us when we were still in the dark, and God commended His love toward us in that while "we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This we understand. And Christ went to the cross of Calvary for every sinner. This we know and this we believe. But when it comes to God dwelling in a person, sending His Holy Spirit into someone and then having His Holy Spirit work there, we need to realize He will not work in anyone who is not responsive and obedient to Him.

God has a plan for every person who accepts Christ. He really wants every person that believes in Him to walk in His will and to be blessed; but He reserves the fullness of His blessing for those who obey Him. God's commandments are not grievous. If His will is not harsh. Remember, He said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But He does have a pattern. There is a yoke. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matt. 11:30, 29).

The human being has the problem of his flesh, his human nature, his ego, himself; and God deals with this problem drastically. Christ Jesus said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Just that! This makes it clear there is just one thing to do about self: deny it! The believer must deny self. As a believer I must not only deny myself in little things, here and there; but I must go into my own personal Gethsemane before God, to lay down myself before Him and say, "Not my will, but thine be done." He will lead me in His will to my cross that I might be crucified with Christ Jesus. As far as the believer is concerned, it is either self or Christ, but not both – either one or the other. This becomes obvious in personal, practical situations. For example, it would become obvious to a man in his home where he lives with his wife.

Paul expounds this in a long passage which shows the way of God. It begins very simply: "Husbands, love your wives" (Eph. 5:25). This may seem for many people a very ordinary admonition. They could say, "He loved her, or he would not have married her." But wait a minute! This word "love" means far more than just affection. This word "love" in the New Testament use means far more than emotional feeling. "Love" is when I seek another's welfare and happiness. When a husband loves his wife, he wants her to be well off and to be happy. And to the husbands he simply says: "Love your wives." That could be misunderstood. One could think that all it means is that he is telling a man to love his wife as long as she is lovely, or perhaps as long as she looks interesting to him. But there is no such qualification. When he says "love your wife," he goes on to say right away, "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Now that is when the shoe begins to fit on the foot.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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 (5: 25-27).

That is what it means when the Scripture says that Christ loved the church. He gave Himself that the church might be made glorious, having no spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, and that the people in the

church should be made holy, so that they should be without blame. Christ Jesus is even now working toward that end. As Christ assumed responsibility for the welfare of the church, so the husband should do toward his wife. As in the case of Christ, who gave Himself to secure results, so in the case of the husband, he should not spare himself in any effort to secure his wife's welfare and her happiness.

Paul discusses this truth even further:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church (5:28, 29).

When we speak of loving our own bodies, there will be some of us men who in all honesty are not so greatly pleased with ourselves. But when a man is to love himself, and love his body, it does not mean he must approve it, but only means he takes care of it. This is what the husband should do for the wife; he should take care of her. A man should do for his own wife as he does for his own body, and this is just as the Lord did for the church, nourishing it and cherishing it.

Paul goes on to say:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (5:30, 31).

This quotation is from Genesis and refers to Adam and Eve. When they first came together as husband and wife, they would be blended, and they twain shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; Paul says: "but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Paul recalls to mind the original plan of God in instituting marriage by way of illustrating the truth about Christ and the church.

No doubt marriage was widely perverted by man then as now. Many things done in the name of marriage do not represent Christ and the church. So Paul takes his readers right back to the beginning of time in the Scripture and gives them a clear picture of what was intended for a man and his wife. This is the way it would be with Christ and the church.

Paul goes on to say, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:33). It would be the natural thing to shrink from accepting this analogy of husband and wife and of Christ and the church, especially since the illustrations of marriage in Ephesus would be so mixed up and so unclear. To overcome this while also setting things straight in his interpretation Paul dwells on God's original plan as it occurred with Adam and Eve before the fall of man. Paul seems to recognize that this aspect of the truth would be hard to understand, yet it is so important that Paul spells it out again in that last sentence. The Christian should live with his wife as Christ lives with the church expending himself that his wife may be favored.

## CHILDREN AND FATHERS

*Do you realize that a believer should act toward other persons not on the basis of what they deserve but in line with what God wants him to do?*

The believer, as he lives daily in the world, has close relations with others. To begin with, believers were born into this world so there is the relationship between children and parents. The believer as a child, or as a parent, has a special relationship. As a parent the relationship is unique because as far as my children are concerned there is no one else like them, they are mine. If a believer, as a child or as a parent wants the blessing of God, there is a definite style of behavior he is to follow. It is important that he seek God's will for him as he lives each day. If the believer is to be filled with the Spirit, he will have to be obedient. Paul has written to husbands and wives how they can be obedient. Now he will write to

children.

Paul writes to believing children as to how they might qualify for the blessing of God.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (6:1-3).

The believer is to act toward his parents as the Lord will lead. Jesus of Nazareth set the example. He was born into this world as the child of Mary. He grew up in the home of Mary and Joseph, and while there He was subject to them. He set the example and Christ's will is activated in the believer by the Holy Spirit leading him to do likewise. How the believer is to live can be seen in the revelation in Scripture, as set forth in the Ten Commandments. If we wanted to know how Jesus Christ lived in this world, we should read the Ten Commandments. He may have done more than is in the Ten Commandments but He did not break any of them.

"Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." The "earth" referred to in this passage as well as in Exodus 20:12, refers to the Promised Land or Canaan.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee (Exod. 20:12).

The word "earth" does not refer to the globe; it refers to that "Promised Land." When we speak of the Promised Land in the history of Israel, we are speaking of the promises of God. As far as the believer is concerned, he is to live in the promises of God.

The first commandment with promise, although it is the fifth in the Ten Commandments, is "Honour thy father and thy mother." The others, the first four, deal with reference to God. The godly person will obey this fifth commandment, because it is the law of God. Also he will obey this commandment, for in doing this, he wins the favor of God. Paul pointed out that the law, the "ten words," prevails among all men, even if they do not have the Scriptures.

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another (Rom. 2:15).

The experience of all men in the working of their conscience shows the work of the law written in their hearts, even though they are unaware of the Scriptures. Human history records many individuals who did not have the written Word of God, and yet were evidently intuitively aware of what was right and what was wrong.

Thus the idea of children obeying their parents is felt in the hearts and souls of people all over the world. That children should be respectful to their parents and that they should honor their parents can be seen as practiced among many pagan people. For instance, the Chinese, who are believed to have one of the oldest living cultures in the world today, magnify respect for parents. Paul reminds believers that if they will respect their parents, they will put themselves in line for blessing.

Believers are to obey their parents "in the Lord." This seems to open the way for a believing child to reserve compliance if the parents for any reason were to request them to do something that they would feel to be contrary to the will of God. Apparently believing young people would not then be expected to obey their parents. We can see this when Peter and John did not obey the leaders of that day, as we see in Acts 5:29. They were told that they should not preach. Peter told the rulers they would have to judge for themselves whether it was right or wrong for them to forbid the apostles to preach, but the apostles could do only what God told them to do. Peter and John respected those leaders, and never had any intention to

undo or upset those leaders. The leaders were making the mistake. The government was abusing its prerogative to control conduct. Peter and John obeyed their consciences and suffered the consequences, but they did not rebel against the leaders. Compliance with the guidance of parents is to be exercised within the inner understanding as led by the Spirit of God. In this context we can relax, for most of the things parents require of a child are generally right and proper.

Paul continues: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath" (Eph. 6:4). Even though the father might be a believer, he could in his human way be wrong in exercising his authority as a parent. A father could be excessively domineering with harsh treatment. This could provoke a child because such control could be unfair. Again, a father could criticize sharply and harshly without showing any mercy. That is not right. Any father is not righteous, if he doesn't show mercy. The father could be inconsistent, allowing a child to do something on Monday, allowing him to do it on Tuesday, stopping him on Wednesday, letting him do it on Thursday, stopping him on Friday. If he were to keep that up for awhile such control would upset a child.

For a parent to discipline his own impulsive conduct requires self-denial on his part. Paul is pointing out to parents that they are to submit themselves to the responsibility of being parents. One cannot be a real parent and do as he pleases. To be a parent as one ought requires self-denial if one is to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is the positive assignment for all parents. Humility here for the parent is involved in being obedient to the will of God. Spiritual blessing will belong to children who respect their parents, and to parents who are faithful to their responsibilities.

#### SERVANTS BE OBEDIENT

*Did you know the Bible has something definite to say about labor-management relationships?*

Paul is very anxious that believers should have the full blessing of God, which they can have if they are filled with the Holy Spirit. He points out that certain conditions when met will contribute to their being filled with the Spirit. The last mentioned by Paul is that believers should be submitting themselves one to another.

This brings us all right into the matter of living in this world. Living goes on among people. This is what adds to our problems. It is so natural for anyone to be affected by the actions of others. For instance, if I am greeted in the morning in a cheerful way, I am lifted up, and helped for the day. The opposite of that is also true. If I should meet someone who is unhappy, downhearted, discouraged, pessimistic and feels quarrelsome, this would set me in a bad mood. I would be liable to feel tense and unkindly to anyone I might meet. And this would complicate our relationship with others. We serve each other. In one situation I may be the master, in another the servant. This is a simple but true designation of human relationships.

Paul speaks of this:

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free (6:5-8).

It is notable that Paul should write so fully about this. When Paul is admonishing servants to be obedient to their master, he is simply saying: "Do what the boss tells you. He is in charge." The servant should do as he asks "with fear and trembling." This does not mean the believer is afraid of the boss. It does mean the believer might fail or blunder. So he is saying: "Do what the boss asks, and keep in mind

you might make a mess of the whole thing." This will keep the believer humble, which is always essential.

"In singleness of heart" means "genuinely sincere." Here is a simple guidance for all believers who we working for anyone else. This would be true for any tradesman who is working in a shop. It would also be true for any stenographer working in any office. It is also true for any maid working in a house. It is also true for a yardman cleaning up the yard. It is also true for a farmer who is working for other people. It is always true for anyone who works for another. In a sense we are all servants. Paul would say, be careful that we do as we should. We should be humble.

Believers are to do all of this "as unto the Lord." Believers are to work as if they were working for the Lord Himself. Paul goes right to the heart of this matter. The boss may not be a good man, he may be dishonest. But the believer must not be dishonest. As far as the believer is concerned, he should work for his boss as if he were working for the Lord. He should do the very best he can. He may work in an office. He should be as accurate, neat and prompt as he can be. Perhaps the believer is a housewife; she should cook, clean, take care of everything as if the Lord Himself were at her table. She should do all as unto the Lord. Perhaps in her work she has been treated unfairly. She must turn everything over to the Lord; this will give all others pause to think of her witness.

Not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men (6:6, 7).

Regardless of how the believer is treated, regardless of what that other man is worth and regardless of what kind of a being he is, the believer will do his assigned work with good will intending to do the very best for his boss, as if he were doing this for the Lord and not for men.

Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free (6:8).

In Paul's day and time there were slaves and there were masters. Paul would say to a believing slave that he should do his work as if he were working for the Lord. This is real liberty. The entire matter of being free or being a slave for a believer can be understood in this way. In the sight of God the believer is a slave, a bondslave of Jesus Christ. You may be a boss in this world, but you are not a boss with Him. This truth can be turned around the other way. It may be that though a believer in Christ, you are a servant. It may be that you are the "lowest man on the totem pole" in your office. It may be that you have to do what everyone else tells you to do. But in the sight of God, you are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You are literally one of God's own people regardless of where you are in this world. This makes things different and it will help you. This is the way Paul gave the believers a clue as to how they ought to act when they go to work for other people. They should work as though they were working for the Lord.

## THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

(Ephesians 6:10-15)

The life of a Christian is actually a warfare in which the believer is beset by a cunning, artful, persistent foe in the Devil. Fortunately God has provided an adequate armor which will enable the Christian to emerge victorious in the conflict.

### BE STRONG IN THE LORD

*Do you think there would be any difference in a woman's spiritual experience because of the way she treated her maid?*

Is it not true that when we read the word "masters" in the Bible we generally think of men? Perhaps we think of a foreman working with day laborers. However, when Paul writes to "masters," he is talking not only to the superintendent of the mill, but also to the housewife who has a maid. He is writing to anyone who has an employee.

And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him (6:9).

When Paul writes this way, he is not warning me of losing my salvation, but of me missing my spiritual blessing. When Paul writes "Ye masters, do the same things unto them," what does he mean by "the same things"? We have noted above that Paul emphasized that if the believer were an employee, he should treat his boss as if he were dealing with Christ. At once some may say, "That is not practical, it will not work." In answer to all such I would ask, would you be blessed of God? Would you seek to be blessed spiritually? Remember Paul is speaking to believers.

The believer in all things should be considerate. He should not do anything outwardly just for show, but always from the heart, and for the sake of Christ Jesus. Why is this important? Because God sees, and He will not let the believer get away with treating someone else harshly. The Bible makes it clear from beginning to end. If a man actually is unkind to the poor, God will be unkind to him. If a man is actually harsh with those working for him, God will be harsh in working with that man. He will not bless any person who mistreats others. This is an important principle to remember.

Believers are to conduct management in such a way as to win the Lord's approval. Some years ago I read of an investigation being conducted into the way corporations were doing business. A corporation executive was asked why the corporation did certain things in a certain way. This man replied very simply, "You know corporations are not run for the glory of God." Someone may say, "That is terrible." But isn't it true? Many people would feel almost as if you were joking if you asked them to run their business for the glory of God.

Yet this is the very reason that it is so important for us to realize that if God is to bless us, we must conduct our business in such a way that the Lord will approve our actions. I can remember an occasion when I tried to do something for people working for me and others would say to me, "You don't have to act that way toward your hired man. You pay them their wages, etc." But I was always mindful of that passage in the Bible which says that the godly man has regard for the life of his beasts. A believing man would not kick a dog, or beat a horse. Certainly he would not put his employees through unnecessary

hardships.

Paul continues to say, "Do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." In other words, don't threaten them with the loss of their jobs if they don't do what you say. Instead, be kind and considerate. Paul will tell you why. You should remember you have a "Boss" in heaven and He sees you. You may have men working under you here, but you work under the Lord up there.

Paul has discussed in this portion of Scripture three pairs of people – six classes of people; wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters. He has pointed out for each one of them what they should do to be filled with the Spirit. If I am to have the blessing of God, I need a Christian walk. As someone has said, I must put feet on my prayers. I must be saturated with Scripture, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." I need to practice thanksgiving, "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father," and I must submit myself to others. These are the practical ways in which one can actually prepare for the blessing of God.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). Paul is saying, "I have no question about your personal faith in Christ; but, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. You will need strength to yield yourself, you will need Strength to deny yourself, you will need strength to accept Christ as Lord over your life and your activities, you will need strength to obey Him." And I must let Him live His life in me. I must depend upon His almighty power that He showed when He raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord." Not in myself, not in my will power, but in the Lord. "And in the power of his might." May God help each one of us to do these things that we might be blessed by the Holy Spirit in our heart.

#### THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

*If a person received Jesus Christ as Savior, would he need to fear the devil?*

Paul has been setting forth in the Book of Ephesians what is true about being a believer. He began by pointing out what has been arranged for the believer in Christ. He spoke of the spiritual blessings that the believer has in Christ. Then he showed how the believer could respond to walk worthy of his name as a Christian.

Under the leadership of specially gifted ministers – people with divine enablement, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – the believer can grow into maturity, into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Paul pointed out that to do this he needs to practice putting off the old human nature, and putting on the new, which is the spiritual nature in Christ. This could best be done if he were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Paul set out steps to take to achieve this blessed condition: the heart and mind should be filled with Scripture; the believer should practice thanksgiving; believers should submit one to another. To help believers understand, Paul pointed out specifically what six different groups of people ought to do: wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters. The apostle described how each one would be submitting himself in his situation as part of the way in which he could be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

All this would seem to be a complete presentation and one could wonder why Paul did not stop at this point. He was giving them guidance for living. Now he undertook to help them to put into practice that of which he had written. With reference to a believer living in this world, Paul would say, "There is an enemy."

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (6:11).

Armor is what a soldier puts on when he fights. In ancient times when fighting was hand to hand, the

armor would enable him to turn aside the blows of the enemy. "Put on the whole armor of God" means see to it that you are completely covered and protected, so that you "may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Paul had no question in his mind about the devil being real. The believer would be very well advised to remember that the devil is active and hostile. He is cunning, and is a lot smarter than any human being. God can and will protect believers for which they can thank Him. He will do it in His way.

With reference to the devil, we should never forget that Michael, the archangel, durst not rail at him. Whatever you do, do not joke about the devil.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

"Be sober" – get serious minded about this thing. Do not be light about it – "be vigilant" – keep your eyes open because of your adversary. We have an enemy, someone that means to do us harm, "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." It would be a whole lot safer for us if he were merely a lion; that would be enough to scare us by our just looking at him. If he were only something you could actually identify then you could be careful. The trouble is he is a liar. He is smooth. He can be found sitting in church, pretending to be pious. In the Book of Revelation where the seven churches are referred to, two of them were called the place "where Satan is." He can be in the church, he can be in the pew. I have spent many years in the pulpit so I am going to take the liberty to tell you that he can also be in the pulpit. Remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ was with His own disciples, He turned around to talk to Peter, one of the best men He had, and said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mark 8:33).

Paul has in mind that the devil is real and he is not bound at this time. He is prowling and he is after us to do us harm. He is cunning. He comes at us always on our weak side. Everyone has some weakness. An old farmer one time was heard to pray: "Lord, prop me up on my leaning side." That is how it is with many of us. Well, Satan knows where that is. He knows exactly the weakest spot and that is exactly where he will attack. We should keep in mind, not only does he make a direct attack, but he also seeks to affect us through other people. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. The next time we feel like criticizing someone, let us keep in mind that is exactly what the devil would do.

I remember when I was a pastor that instances occurred when people in the congregation said unkind things about one another. A word of criticism has a way of always getting back to the person involved. It gets around and causes always more trouble. Satan is powerful, no man, woman or child is strong enough to face the devil alone.

When Jesus of Nazareth warned Peter that Satan planned to sift him like wheat, the Lord Jesus said to Peter "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). Jesus of Nazareth would not allow Peter to withstand that testing alone. Our Lord is in heaven now praying for us, which is a great comfort to all believers. God has made provision for believers for this very battle against the enemy, and He has made these provisions as we read in Ephesians by preparing a certain armor that the Christian can put on to help him in self-defense against the devil. Such armor will include truth, "having your loins girt about with truth"; righteousness, "the breastplate of righteousness"; the Gospel of peace, "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"; and faith, "taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

God has given us the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit. This is the armor that the believer is to put on in this great contest where he is fighting for his life against a vicious enemy that wants to harm him. Paul urges believers to put on the whole armor of God, not just part of it, but all of it. Believers need total protection. It is a life and death struggle that we may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. Satan is so formidable. He is such a powerful enemy that the only chance of survival that I have is by my putting on the whole armor of God. I can rejoice to remember that when I fail to get it all done, the Lord is more gracious than I can think. He can do more for me than I can ask or think. Even if I do not get the whole

armor on, I can run to Him for safety. "For Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." When we get on our knees and look up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are safe in Him.

## WE WRESTLE AGAINST RULES

*Can you understand that active opposition makes living much harder to endure?*

Doing anything at all involves effort. When difficulties and opposition arise, it is harder. One result of man's original sin as told in the story of Genesis is the curse that is pronounced upon the ground. The statement was that man should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Man was put in the garden to dress it and keep it. He was going to have to work.

It is such a mistake for anyone to think if we just do our work everything will be all right. Actually the very work we want to do is going to run into obstacles and hindrances. That makes the task harder. Sometimes our enemies seem to be personal. We seem to feel that some people just have it in for us. But the greatest enemy that a believer has is an unseen foe, the devil.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Paul points out that we face a cunning, powerful enemy, and we must contend with a host of his evil spirits who are against us.

In another Scripture Paul wrote like this:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

This places the struggle that the believer has largely in the spiritual world. Paul instructed the believers at Ephesus about this:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (6:12).

The greatest enemy is in the spiritual world where we have to face the devil and his hosts. We need help. We cannot cope with the devil in our own strength. We are just no match for him. We are not wise enough, strong enough, nor good enough. The conflict is unavoidable, and continuous. The devil is on all sides, doing everything he can to keep us from walking with the Lord. This conflict is not brought on by our thinking about it. Every now and again someone will say, "Well, I just don't care to think about these things, and I just wish you would not talk about them." This reminds me of some people who do not want to keep a thermometer around, because they do not want the weather to get cold.

The devil is very real. The fact is, we are in this fight whether we want it or not. And we have much to lose. The devil raises questions about the ways of God. Can God be trusted? If the suggestion comes into your heart that God is not favoring you, that He is against you; such thoughts can shake you right down to your heels, believe me. Then again the devil will flatter us by appealing to our own self-importance. The idea will come to us that we do not deserve anything bad or harsh. This is Satan's way of encouraging a grievance against God for letting this or that happen to us. Satan may suggest the threat of some rival at work, suggesting that Jones over there is getting ahead of you. Someone is getting an advantage at work, at school. We must be so careful about this, lest we be deceived and act in ways that would actually be

harmful.

## STAND THEREFORE

*Do you realize that in our spiritual warfare we must take a positive stand?*

Some years ago there was a president of the United States who was widely known for his terse statements. On an occasion when he went to church without his wife, and then returned home, she asked about the sermon. "What did the preacher preach about?" He answered her, "Sin." "What did the preacher say about it?" "He's agin it." Here is a fine clue as to what believers might do. Take a position in spiritual things and stand there. People know of me as a Bible teacher. I pray there is no doubt in anyone's mind where I stand. If one were to ask: "How does he feel about the Bible?" I hope he would soon find out: "He believes it!" "How does he feel about the reality of the things of the Gospel?" "He trusts them." These things should be clear and to the point.

There is a common idea that if a person were a believer he would offer his testimony softly, gently, tentatively, with a sort of "with your permission." If challenged, he would be expected to be in some confusion, to be apologetic, perhaps embarrassed and certainly not to be too bold. Now there will be situations in which the believer can show humility and gentleness, but this in no way would mean weakness. A man can be humble without being weak. In all that is related to public witness or testimony, it is always a good thing for a person to be clear in his stance. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).

It is well to keep in mind that the believer's public testimony is carried on in enemy territory. Believers face a public that is more dominated by Satan than it realizes.

In whom 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 (2 Cor. 4:4).

The believer must stand firm, with a clear note on God, Christ, and Calvary. He must keep it clear in his message that Christ Jesus died for sinners, and that He arose from the dead. He must speak firmly on the truth that Christ is now in the presence of God, that He is praying for us; and praise His Name, He will return! These things have been revealed, and they all come together. The believer should affirm them as they are. To be sure, Satan wants to interfere with the communication of the Gospel. He will oppose any faithful presentation of the Gospel.

In the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Jesus of Nazareth taught that if a seed falls by the wayside the fowls of the air come to pick it up. And when He gave the interpretation of that He said that if anyone hears the Word and does not understand it, the evil one comes and takes that message out of his heart. Satan steals the spoken Word away just like the birds eat the exposed grain that is lying on the road. Any teacher or preacher should beware lest he allow himself to be sidetracked from his purpose. If he is up there to preach and to teach the Word of God, everything else is beside the point. I am saddened when I think of how much time earnest sincere people lose by arguing and discussing matters that do not matter. Believers should beware lest controversy over interpretation of Scripture confuse the minds of the people who are listening. Feelings can be aroused, emotions can be aroused that actually hinder communication.

Paul has reminded the Christians at Ephesus that there is an active enemy opposing their testimony, whom they must withstand. The believer must stand firmly on the position that he has taken in the conflict.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (6.13-15).

The believer must take a positive stand: "You don't mean to say you believe the Bible?" "Yes, I do." "You don't believe the story of creation?" "Yes, I do." "Well now do you believe that Christ Jesus literally arose from the dead?" "Yes, I do." "Do you think He is in heaven now?" "Yes, I do." "Do you think He is coming again?" "Yes, I do." When the argument is over and the feelings have quieted down, there is a tendency on the part of a believer, in goodwill and in humility to retreat. But this is no time to be fainthearted nor to yield in mistaken modesty. In matters of personal preference comparing person with person, the believer will esteem others better than himself. But in matters pertaining to the Gospel, to the truth as it is about Jesus Christ, there must be no retraction, no yielding to the enemy.

Peter and John were humble men, and they were meek toward their persecutors. They never fought back when they were whipped, but they persisted in preaching. They were warned not to preach. They said, "You'll have to judge for yourselves what you are going to do about it, we can only do what God told us to do." The preaching they did brought them a beating and they took it. They did not fight about it, but they stayed with it. Paul knew that the ordinary believer does not have the strength for it, so he outlined how he can prepare himself. Paul says he should "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." The believer should stick to the truth. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness"; making sure that he is doing the right thing, and then remaining steadfast. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Believers would like to live at peace with people. If they cannot, they regret it, but on matters of the Gospel believers must stand and stay there. May the Lord help us each one to be courageous and trust in Him no matter how weak we are personally, and stand where His truth is.

## PRAYING ALWAYS

(Ephesians 6.16-24)

All the parts of the armor of God are described as protection to be used in defense with one exception: the sword of the Spirit. This is the only offensive weapon provided and it is adequate, being the Word of God. The one activity that is to be performed constantly is praying, especially for one another, and for those who minister the Gospel.

### SHIELD OF FAITH

*Can you understand that a believer who is trusting Christ for salvation will need to exercise his faith in daily living?*

It is true that we are saved by faith: wonderfully, gloriously true. A soul can accept Jesus Christ as his Savior, and never have any reason to doubt his destiny. God will see him through. "He which hath begun a good work in you will [complete] it" (Phil. 1:6).

This was the pattern of my own experience. After years of seeking in which I read the Bible and prayed, and went to church and listened, I came to faith in the course of speaking about the Gospel to other Christians. There came a time on one glorious night when I was able to believe. I was able to accept that Jesus Christ died for me. It was a wonderful thing and I have rejoiced in it ever since. I never needed to add to that gracious, glorious experience as far as my faith in God and in Christ Jesus was concerned. But I learned later, and now we are going to see it as Paul points it out here, that it is also true that a Christian can and should live by faith.

The famous Scripture, "the just shall live by faith" includes both these ideas. When we say "the just" we do not mean a naturally good man. We know that there is none good, no, not one. When we use the word "just" we mean "justified." The believer is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. This justified soul shall live. Day in and day out, noon and night, seven days a week, he shall live by faith. As a believer goes through his daily experience he is faced again and again with practical issues, where he has to do things that challenge him to look to God for help, to believe in the living God. Paul speaks of believers receiving "the gift of faith." In 1 Corinthians, in the 12th and 14th chapters, we read that one of the gifts of the Spirit is faith. But did the believers not have faith when they became believers? They certainly did! But it seems possible that a good many people miss a greater blessing here because they think all was taken care of when they accepted Christ.

Let us note the example when the apostles asked Jesus of Nazareth why they had not been able to deliver the afflicted boy from the demon that possessed him. Jesus of Nazareth told them that it was because of their unbelief. These were apostles. Their unbelief was not that they did not believe in Him as their Savior. It is possible that in that particular instance when they were exercising themselves to deliver that boy they were not believing in the living God as they could have been.

On the last journey to Jerusalem when the disciples were walking along with the Lord Jesus and He came to the fig tree and found no fruit on it, He cursed it. The next morning as they were again walking by there they noticed that the fig tree had begun to wither. They drew His attention to it. He said at that time, "Have faith in God." They already believed in God, and that He, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God. They were following Him. What then did He mean when He said, "Have faith in God"? When we pray,

when we enter into an exercise of our will in obedience to God, we need to have faith in God. We must exercise a certain functional faith in Him.

On one occasion the apostles, when they saw things that had happened, made the request, "Lord, increase our faith." They felt the need of an ever deepening relationship with God in all that they did. They wanted greater confidence in God, more commitment to Him that would guide them in their actions. Such a functioning faith would guide and strengthen them. It appears that this is an aspect of faith that could be called "operational," in that it enables a believer to avail himself of the help that comes from God. This is evidently the kind of faith that Paul has in mind in chapter 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

"Taking the shield of faith" calls to mind the use of military equipment. The shield was like a large lid the soldier could move around in front of him to keep him from being hit by darts and arrows. The shield could be moved to cover his body or his face as needed. This was for protection. It was not used to attack anyone.

I can remember as a boy in Canada, when I was in grade school, we were rather limited in means for amusement or entertainment of any kind. We had no equipment. We had no football or baseball. We could not afford it. So what would one do? In the wintertime we threw snowballs. In the summertime, when the snow was gone, we would take clods of dirt and fight with each other, throwing these clods at each other. Those clods were hard, and they could hurt. I can remember one time when some of the boys were doing this and suddenly thought of something new. We got planks of wood, fitted them up and tied them on our arms to use as shields. Then when we went into battle and those clods would come at us, we would use those boards by putting them in front of the clod. In that way we would be spared from getting hit in the face or getting hit in the body. We were using these bits of board as shields.

In a real sense this is the sort of shield spoken of here by the apostle. "Taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The "dart" was somewhat like an arrow. It could be dipped in pitch and set on fire. Thus when this dart or arrow would be shot it would actually have a burning tip, that could cause real damage. The shield was used to ward off these missiles.

In daily living, Satan will attack us. He will suggest things. For instance, he will tell us, "You can't depend on anything." Then we should use our shields. What will such a shield be? To remember that God is faithful, that would be your faith. Satan might say, "Don't trust Providence. Things are all against you." Then we would swing around our shield of faith and catch that "dart" on this: "God is merciful." That will put the fire out. The devil may say to us, "There is no hope for you." Then we will swing around the shield: "God is gracious." That will put the fire out for that one. "Your sin condemns you." But we have our shield of faith, which we swing around and catch that dart, "Christ died for our sins." That will put the fire out. "You can never be any better than you are now. You are no good and you can never be any better." Then we will swing around the shield of faith, remembering "Christ rose from the dead and because He arose, I am going to rise too."

Perhaps I have someone acting evil, doing wrong to me. I wonder what in the world I can do about it. That wrong-doer is flaunting his evil actions against me. What can I do? The thought comes: "I have been so wicked, there is no hope for me." Then I can bring this shield of faith: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). Or someone will say, "You are being blessed now, but wait until you are old, weak and alone." Then I can raise my shield, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5b). These darts, these flaming arrows, these thoughts, can be hurled at me as missiles, to undo, disturb, and distress me. I can catch those on the shield of faith, which is my faith in God based on His Word. The Word of God will put the fire out and I can be at peace.

## SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

*Have you ever realized that for a believer the only weapon he has with which to attack the enemy, is the Word of God?*

In the Book of Ephesians, Paul has recognized that God has arranged for the believer to be guided, to become more mature in Christ Jesus. To this end God had arranged that the believer should have the Holy Spirit, and be filled with Him for his daily living. Paul understood that even with this background, there would be spiritual conflict. The believers have an enemy: a vicious, active, cunning, capable enemy, an adversary who is against them. Paul points out that because of this the believer should put on the whole armor of God. This armor was provided for protection. But in addition to the armor there is given to the believer one weapon for attack, and that is the Word of God. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). As the believer engages in conflict Paul tells him how to put on the whole armor of God. The concluding features are the helmet protecting the head, the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Let us look for a moment at the helmet protecting the head. The head contains the brain where, among other things, the process of thinking takes place. It is important to understand that if my ideas are false, biased or one-sided, my conclusions will also be wrong. So salvation is what I need to have to protect my thinking. Salvation is the helmet to protect the head. Salvation is the work of God through Jesus Christ. When I call to mind what God has done through Jesus Christ, when I understand the relationship I have with Christ Jesus by faith, then the mind is protected from errors that could be introduced. Everything that comes to mind then is checked by the revelation in Christ. After I have once known Him, when any thought comes to tell me anything, I consider it in the presence of Christ. If it is acceptable to Him, I accept it; if not, out it goes.

The Gospel is a message to be believed. In the Gospel all men are the creatures of God, made by Him. All men are responsible to Him for their own conduct. The Gospel is to those who will need help. All of them have done wrong. All of them are now doing wrong. Some of them do not know how to do right. These men need help and so the Gospel comes to them. The Gospel is grounded in certain events in the life of Jesus Christ. There isn't any such thing as the Gospel apart from telling the story of Jesus Christ. The Gospel brings to mind that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and came into the world to give His life a ransom for many. Christ died on Calvary's cross for sinners. God accepted that death as a substitute sacrifice for sinners and, on the basis of it, He will forgive anyone who accepts Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. Christ Jesus was buried. He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures, He was seen, and He ascended into heaven in full view of them all. He is now in the presence of God praying for us, and He is coming again. This is the Gospel.

The central idea of the Gospel is the resurrection. This is absolutely essential. If a man confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead, he shall be saved. The Gospel that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 is grounded in certain events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This Gospel, these events, are interpreted by certain historic documents called the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and later the New Testament. The Gospel story of Jesus Christ is verified by the testimony of countless millions of people who have believed and have been saved, and is now demonstrated in the lives of believers. This is the whole truth of salvation which I must get into my mind. It will be like a helmet. It will protect me from wrong thinking.

Into our hands is put the Scriptures, the written Word of God. God has revealed in the Scriptures the nature of creation, of heaven, of His law, and the nature of His grace. These are given to the believer. This is the one weapon with which the believer can attack the enemy. The believer confronts the lies of Satan with the truth of God. Here the believer can stand. Satan will use someone to say, "There is no hope. Look

around, it is just a hopeless situation. This world is just ruined." The believer can see all this, but he realizes that he has the Word of God. The Scriptures are in his heart. The Scriptures confront the bad situation by saying God can raise the dead. When the heart is filled with fear, the believer has the Gospel telling him "Fear not, for I will be with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." If I feel uncertainty around me, as a believer with the Scripture in my hand I can give a firm word. There is a flat statement from God that I can put over against all the uncertainty of men. Around me may be a storm at sea, but as a believer I have in the Scriptures a compass to follow, to guide me directly in the will of God.

This is fighting with the sword of the Spirit. I am not going to kill anyone with this, but I am going to answer the lies of Satan. I am going to put the enemies to flight, because actually as over against everything I have the plain Word of God which is my weapon for attacking the lies of the enemy.

### PRAYING ALWAYS

*Can you see how praying on the part of a believer is an important service that he can render?*

Praying always sounds proper when a believer's way of living is discussed. Being a believer and living under God you would think praying would come just normal and natural. There is no doubt that believers pray, and that praying can become routine. One prays at certain times about certain things, and all too often the times become more brief. There can be praying in an emergency. If a believer had real trouble, he would naturally turn to God to pray. Unfortunately this is the sum of praying for many. How often it is I wait until I am in trouble before I pray. I need to pray in order that I might avoid trouble. I need to pray for each day, and in each day to pray for each other.

After Paul had set forth a sketch of all the blessings for the believer in his letter to the Ephesians, and explained the wisdom of God in bringing His will to pass, he then showed how believers could walk worthily of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and how they could grow in grace and in knowledge. Then Paul sketched the provision which God has made for the believer's victory in living. He tells how the Christian should put on the whole armor of God to protect himself.

After this Paul spells out what the Christian should do and that is to pray.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (6:18-20).

With everything that is in the Bible in hand, what are we to do? We are to pray! Pray always! The believer is told that he should always be practicing this exercise of praying. For the believer there will be repeated opportunity to deny himself, that God's will might be done. No one is able to see the will of God in his own strength, or wisdom. Nor would he be able to obey it in his own strength and his own wisdom. The believer needs to have the blessing of God. Paul tells us to pray. There is a constant need for the grace of God that He gives freely when He is asked.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth (Luke 11:9, 10).

What is going to happen to the person who doesn't ask? If I don't ask, I will not have. James makes this clear: "You have not, because you ask not" (James 4:2). The Lord gave a wonderful promise if I will but do something about it. If I will just ask and seek and knock. I must ask, I must pray. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." In every situation does not mean sixty minutes in every hour, twenty-four hours in every day, and seven days in every week, constantly, but "always" does mean in any

and every situation.

"With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" means as led by the Holy Spirit of God. I will be prompted by His Holy Spirit.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

When I pray in the Spirit, I pray as I am inwardly prompted to pray.

"And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Note the order of this. praying and watching thereunto. Watching my own heart and my own weakness and praying for the grace that I need. The emphasis is praying always in every situation as led by the Holy Spirit, and watching thereunto. This means to pray to Almighty God and then to look to see how the tide of the battle is going. When I am praying for something that I feel the Spirit wants done, I have confidence that God wants it done. So I ask for it, and then I look – "watching thereunto." I look to see how the tide of battle is going, since I am praying for all saints. The Holy Spirit will lead me to care for other believers. As I see their need, feel their challenge, and I sense the danger that they have and the weakness that they have in themselves, I care for them and pray for them.

"And for me," Paul says to these Ephesian Christians, pray for me that utterance may be given unto me." Notice, Paul did not ask that they pray that he might be comforted. He was not urging them to pray that he could be helped, just because he was weak. He wanted them to pray that he might be able to do what he was to do. He was involved in things. The Lord had things He needed done. With this in mind, they were to pray. Paul wanted help that he might be ready and able to do the will of God, so he wanted them to pray for him. It was for this kind of preaching that he had been put into prison.

Now he wants grace while he is there in prison to know just what he is to do. Should he not pray for himself? Certainly, and undoubtedly he did. Jesus of Nazareth prayed for Himself, and so should I. But the thrust in this passage "praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints" is to pray for others. The armor is for me. The sword is in my hands. But the burden of my praying is for other people – "for all saints." Yet Paul specifically requested that they should pray for him. Not that he should be delivered from the challenge, and not that he should be spared any hurt or any harm, but that he should be strengthened and guided to do his task well. Twice he requested that "I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Paul was seeking the help of God to obey His will.

#### SALUTATION

*Are you aware that we believers should know more about each other and of each other's need?*

Throughout this letter Paul wanted these believers to know what had been done for them through Jesus Christ, that they might understand the purpose that God had in mind when He sent His beloved Son to die for them. Then Paul taught them how God had arranged for them to grow in faith and in knowledge that they might become mature in their faith and finally Paul urged them to take what God had provided for their help that they might be able to do what God wanted them to do. Now we have come to the close of this wonderful letter. It is a marvelous exposition of truth of the Christian's life and experience. Paul, in his closing words, states a most important truth:

But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen (6:21-24).

Paul was not really suffering loss or persecution, but was actively carrying on, openly declaring the Gospel that Christ died for all that all might come to God. Because of their regeneration by the power of God, their adoption into the family of God by His grace, and their receiving the Holy Spirit by God's will, believers should share with each other the grace of God.

Paul was in prison but was undaunted. There was no reference to his situation in the letter. Paul was not worrying about that. He was triumphantly discussing and demonstrating the love of God. These people could be assured that Paul was not about to quit. just because he had been thrown into prison and had suffered indignities and physical hardship was not hindering Paul any. His attitude and his testimony were strong in his witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Ephesians could be comforted to know that Paul was not faltering in his own attitude about things. He wanted them to know of his affairs. He sent his beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, whose name was Tychicus, that he should make known to the believers all things as were effecting Paul, because Paul wanted them to know. Now having done this, Paul then closes with his final words:

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (6:23, 24).

When Paul says "Peace be to the brethren," he is praying and giving his benediction to believers, the brethren. He is unable to speak peace to the unbelievers. He cannot promise peace to people who do not walk in the ways of God. He cannot promise peace to people who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is no peace, saith the Lord unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22). Paul is not going to pretend. He is not going to make everyone feel like, "Oh, everything will be all right because it is going to turn out all right." That is not true. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Some might say, "Have Christians done such good things that they deserve peace?" No, but they believe, and because they believe they will get more than they deserve. Anyone could have this, "Whosoever will may come." Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and you will have this said to you. Do not be misled into thinking that Christ Jesus did something that is going to fix things so everyone will be at peace. Peace is to the brethren. As far as the brethren are concerned, they may not all be perfect and they may not always be doing what God wants them to do, but they will receive this blessing. They will have peace, love, and faith.

"Love with faith" is in the blessing that can come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not saying God the Creator. This will not come because one is a created being. Paul does not say God the Keeper. This peace and love and faith does not come because God keeps everyone. Paul is not speaking about God the Sovereign. God is not doing this just because He is in control. And this is not coming from God the judge. This is coming from *God the Father*. He is the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This comes to those who are *in Christ* from God the Father. This is a Father-Son relationship. In the Father-Son relationship we can confidently expect peace, love, and joy from God the Father, because we are in His Son, in Christ Jesus.

"And the Lord Jesus Christ." Note this is not "and Jesus of Nazareth." And it is not "and Jesus." This does not come out of His earthly career. This is the full title, *the Lord Jesus Christ* in His glory. This is where He is now, the Lord Jesus Christ in His power. The risen Lord told His disciples "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). He is the One to whom all power has been given. He is the One to whom Paul turns, when he asks that peace and love and faith should come to the believers from the Lord Jesus Christ. "Christ" refers to the fact that He is the One chosen of God to save those who put their trust in Him. "Lord" is the title by which we designate that God has put all things into His hands. When we are talking about being blessed, we should be careful to give Him His title and give Him His glory. The One who is going to bless you is the One in heaven. The One who is going to favor you and surround you with His grace and mercy, is the living Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Paul personally adds his own

benediction. In other Scripture Paul reminds us that "the love of Christ constraineth us." Paul was motivated to his ministry by "the love of God that was shed abroad" in his heart by the Holy Ghost. He spent himself risking death that he might tell all men how to be saved.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more (1 Cor. 9:19).

There could be no doubt about his purpose.

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

Christ has died for sinners, not that they should be blessed because they are human beings, but that they might be saved through Him. The truth is that Paul had no comfort to offer to any man as he is in his human nature. In 1 Corinthians 16:22 there is a strong word from Paul when he says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Here again he uses the full title: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ" living at the right hand of God, in control of everything. That is the One to whom we should bow down. Paul would not have been willing to join in the popular usage of the name "Jesus" alone. Much contemporary reference to Christ is naive after all. Paul would not accept public profession at its face value. People can talk too easily. The human heart is so devious and so deceitful. Paul reserved this warm paternal greeting to the real believers, the ones who really do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because Paul loved and served the living Savior.