

Ephesians

Book Study

**Study series as posted at the website
and originally e-mailed to the subscribers.**

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Ephesians

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Introduction - (Ephesians 1:1-2)

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the "prison epistles"; according to Scofield, written around 64AD.

While Paul begins this book much as he does others, with his own unique introduction of his apostolic authority as the writer, Ephesians is different from his other epistles. While he does address "the saints who are in Ephesus" (1:1), he does not mention any 'personal' things and past shared events like he does in other books like the ones to Corinth and Thessalonians. He does not open with how he remembers them and is upholding them in prayer like Phil1:3-6, Col1:3-4. It is more of a 'plain' doctrinal epistle. Some commentaries question whether it was written - only- to Ephesus, or if perhaps it was originally to Laodicea (Col4:16) since he mentions the "epistle from Laodicea", but we do not have such an epistle in our Scriptures...or if it was also meant for other assemblies along with Colossians and Philemon, carried by Tychicus. (Eph6:21, Col4:7) Thus, while being addressed to Ephesus, perhaps its main scope is even generically greater? To the "faithful in Christ Jesus" (vs1) ??

This book has a very clear topic or theme. Where Romans is a book about Salvation; and Hebrews is about Jesus Christ our High Priest and Sacrifice; Galatians addresses legalism; Timothy/Titus, pastors and church leadership; Thessalonians, persecutions, the Rapture, wrath and antichrist; Jude coming just before the end, defining the Apostasy in detail; Acts being a 'history'; and Corinth, to the carnal assembly... Ephesians is - about- the "Church". While many other books speak of various things about the Christian life, Ephesians, specifically, defines "what is?" the Church. What is its makeup? Who runs it? How does it function? We often speak of the difference between "Christian" and "christian"; and "Church" vs "church". Ephesians describes the characteristics of the True "Church". If we get to know this book well, then we will easily recognize the false "church" of christendom.

What do we know about Paul's relationship to Ephesus, from other Scripture? If we use the old Scofield references to trace the chronology (Encyclopedia Britannica seems to agree with Scofield's dates), Paul first comes to Ephesus for a brief fly-by visit, on-his-way back to Jerusalem for a Feast, because he had shaved his head for a vow. (54AD Acts18:18-21) with a promise to return, "God willing".(vs21) A couple years later (56AD Acts19) we see a series of events as he returns. He baptizes some straggler disciples of John the baptist. When the Jews reject the message, he leaves the synagogue and spends two years teaching in the "school of Tyrannus" (vs9-10). So effective is his ministry that the message reaches to "all who dwelt in Asia". This is where Paul's apostolic healing ministry extends through the "handkerchiefs" from Paul to sick people, healing them. This is where, by contrast to Paul's work in the Holy Spirit, the false exorcisms are exposed (vs14-17), and as a result, the occult in the region

is given a crippling blow as the witches and other occult practitioners believe in the Lord and reject their past, in a public display of burning their occult books in a huge bonfire. (vs19) As the "Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (vs20) it affects the region and greatly reduces the worship of Artemis/Diana to such an extent that it affects the economy of the region in the manufacture and sales of idols. So Demetrius stirs up what becomes a riot in the theater, as the mob yells out for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"; after which, Paul leaves for Macedonia. He spends probably a half year travelling here and there, and eventually finds himself headed back for Jerusalem again, trying to get there by Pentecost. (Acts20:16) On this return trip is where at Miletus (the shipping-route transfer station just south of Ephesus), he calls for the leaders of Ephesus to come and meet him; and he gives his farewell exhortations, reviewing the Salvation message of "repentance and faith" (vs21) and warnings against "savage wolves" and false teachers (vs29-30), exhorting them to be faithful to their calling as shepherds and to "take heed to [themselves] and to all the flock.." (vs28)

Sometime around this same time is when he writes to Corinth the first time. and mentions an event in the "past" where he had "fought with beasts at Ephesus". (1Cor15:32) So, apparently during the years he spent in Ephesus, while the Word of the Lord was reaching throughout the region, he also encountered opposition and was subjected to the Roman-style coliseum and fighting lions. He apparently didn't just "lie down" passively and let the animal kill him, because he is 'now' alive to tell about it. In fact, what would one guess that such confrontations were more benign than the ones with the Jews who continually followed him around, stirring up the mobs to beat and stone him..?

But once he leaves Miletus and reaches Jerusalem, that is the sequence of events where he is taken in chains (60AD Acts21) and begins his trek to be tried in Rome where he "appeals to Caesar". (Acts25:11)

Is it during the time he is in "his own rented house" (Act28:30) under Roman armed guard that he writes this epistle in 64AD? During this same time he writes to Timothy (65AD) as Timothy is going to Ephesus, urging him to "charge" those in Ephesus "that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." (1Tm1:3-4) And in (66AD 2Tm1:16-18) Paul speaks of Onesiphorus who ministered to him in Ephesus in the past, and also sought out Paul once in chains. We come away with a picture of Paul's ministry in Ephesus as being a time of great regional spiritual growth, but also of strife and persecution. While Paul is in Ephesus we do not see him being comforted from God about "safety" like he was while at Corinth. (Acts18:9-10)

The next reference to Ephesus is 30 years later when John writes to the Seven Churches. (96AD Rev ch2) How have they fared after Paul's martyrdom? They are praised for not tolerating false doctrine and apostles;

that which Paul had diligently been "warning" them about. But they have "left" their "first love". (Rev2:2-4) And are on the verge of having their lampstand removed "from its place" unless they "repent". (vs5)

It is interesting to notice how the scholars question the original target of this epistle; whether it was Ephesus or Laodicea. When we see the Seven Churches of Revelation ch2-3, we see Ephesus representing today (as we have observed on other occasions) the ultra-conservative KJV-only, Independent/Bible Baptist type groups. And Laodicea, the other end of the "Evangelical" spectrum, Charismania.

The last time Paul sees the leaders of Ephesus he reminds them how he "warned" them "night and day with tears" (Acts20:31) as he warns them that false teachers would rise up within them. (vs29-30) And once he is in chains, he exhorts Timothy to warn them to stay-the-course in Doctrine. (1Tm1:3) And apparently, by 30 years later, all the warnings have had some benefit, because they are praised for feretting out the false. (Rev2:2)

But on the other hand, if it was originally addressed to Laodicea; today... charismania... we can observe today that many leaders of charismania come from backgrounds in the occult. And, indeed, isn't that where the Church at Ephesus came out of. It was Ephesus where they had the big bon fire occult book-burning. (Acts19:19) But today's Ephesus-based Laodicea, rather than repenting and forsaking their past and burning their books, have brought the occult into the "church". That's what the charismatic manifestations are (from being "slain" to the "worship music")... the occult!

On one hand, as Ephesus had "left" their "first love"; today's Ephesus has replaced its first love of Sound Doctrine with a fetish-like attachment to a symbol; a 'translation' of God's Word. Many of them hold so strongly to 'THE' -translation-, that they don't actually know what is contained within God's Word. They are like the scribes of Jesus' day who were proud of 'having' the Law (Rom3:2), but disobeying it in favor of their "traditions". (Mk7:9-13) They have so faithfully militantly fought against the false, but neglecting the Truth, that they don't any longer know 'what' the Truth is. Remember: bankers handle the "real" money (not variations of counterfeits), in order to be qualified to spot counterfeits. They have been focusing so hard on the "wolves" (Ac20:29) that Paul warned against, that their eyes are not "looking unto Jesus". (Heb12:2) If I remember Pilgrim's Progress properly (it's been many years since I read it), there was a place where lions were lunging at Pilgrim against their restraints, and Pilgrim was afraid of the lions; but when he obeyed, looking straight ahead, he reached the other side and the lions could not touch him. When Peter (walking on water to Jesus) looked around at the boistrous waves, instead of Jesus, he sank. (Mt14:30) It is not enough to have the "appearance" of righteousness as one carries a -book- labeled "ABC" or "XYZ", if one does not know what is contained within those pages. But it is only that "first love" of Jesus which draws a person to that precious Word.

"Oh, how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day." (Ps119:97)

On the other hand, Laodicea has it in their minds that they now have the authority to establish a -new- "church". From their spirit-fillings they are receiving -new- commands regarding what they think the "church" should be. They have -new- prophets and apostles. They are seeing new visions. Where Paul was warning carnal Corinth -against- charimania (1Cor14), they have "twisted to their own destruction" (2Pt3:15) his instructions. They have lost sight of what the True Church of Jesus Christ is. They distort 1Cor ch14 to fulfill their lusts, but do not know Ephesians which was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude3) "and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph1:1)

So, yes... Ephesians is a good book for all who claim to name the Name of Christ to become familiar with. What is the respective plan, purpose and authority of God the Father, the work of Jesus Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit with regard to the Church? (ch1) Who makes up the Church? (ch2) How did they become the Church? (ch2-3) What is the scope and extent of the Church's significance? How does the Church function together? (ch4) What is the Church's responsibility to and relationship with the Holy Spirit? (ch5) How are Christ and the Church related? (ch5) What is the nature of spiritual warfare? (ch6) What is prayer? (ch6)

If today's "church" would get to know this epistle, I dare say that pretty much 95% of all modern false doctrine would disappear. There would not be all the denominations, but all would "speak the same thing" and would be of the "same mind and..judgment" and there would be "no divisions". (1Cor1:10)

If the Church knows this epistle, then, it can be "commended to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts20:32)

God and Father - (Ephesians 1:3-23)A

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.." (vs3)

This one verse, if we understand it properly, will start us down the proper path of corrected doctrine. When we think of salvation coming through "no other name" than Christ (Acts4:12), we have developed a "Christ only" theology. Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Christos. Scriptures only, Faith alone, only Christ. Indeed, the gospel as proclaimed by many tells people to "invite Jesus into your heart", and they never really ever hear about the Father. It is merely 'them' and their state of 'betterment'. It becomes "Jesus and me". So, with such a salvation, we do as I did as a child; we pray "Dear Jesus". In fact, as I grew into a youth and would hear some praying, "Dear God" or "Dear Heavenly Father", I would wonder what was "wrong with" them. They were being rather 'brash' and 'improper'. And so the modern theology has spawned worship songs that say things like, "Jesus, Jesus, Jeeezzus... there's just something about that name..."

When Paul prayed, he prayed "to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". (3:14) When Jesus taught how to pray, it is, "Our Father in heaven.." (Mt6:9) When Jesus promised to "send" the Holy Spirit (Jn16:7), it was in the context of Him saying, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper.." (14:16) Jesus' ministry, even though being God, Himself, He says, "I always do those things that please Him." (Jn8:29) Jesus was not His own authority. Even -Jesus- prayed to the Father. When we "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb4:16) we are coming to the Father - THRU- the High Priestly ministry of Christ. When we pray, the "Spirit..makes intercession for us" along with Christ "who searches the hearts" (Rom8:26-27, Heb4:12). If these Two are helping us pray, our prayer is obviously -to- someone 'other than' to those who are aiding us. Right? How many people pray -to- Jesus. And how many more in these days of apostasy are praying -to- the Holy Spirit. We are never commanded to do so. When people pray to "the spirit", they are praying to somebody 'else!' The Believer's prayer is -to- the Father.

When we see Jesus, we are seeing the Father. (Jn14:9) Jesus is the "express image" of the Father's "essence". (Heb1:3 -LITV) Jesus is not the 'end-result' of our devotion. Jesus, even, is 'under' the Father in hierarchy, "..the head of Christ is God" (1Cor11:3) And when all is said and done regarding Christ's ministry, all glory goes back to the Father so that "God may be all things in all". (1Cor15:28 -LITV)

The most "famous" salvation verse, Jn3:16, tells us that -GOD- loved, and -GOD- "-gave- His only begotten Son..." This is what the -Father- did. "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world." (1Jn4:14) During "the days of His flesh" Christ had to "learn

obedience" and exercised "Godly fear". (Heb5:7-8) He had taken on the "form of a servant". (Phil2:7) He was "under" the Father. The Father was "in charge". It was the Father Who voiced approval, "You are My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." (Mk1:11) Obviously, the one 'approving' is greater than the one being scrutinized. While Jesus is the "true vine" into whom the branches "abide", it is the Father who is the "vinedresser". (Jn15) Obviously, the "Vinedresser" has authority over both the vine AND the branches.

Thus, -Who- is it who gives us "spiritual blessings"? The Holy Spirit? This is what charismania says. They use occult techniques and put themselves into a trance-state of mental/spiritual "emptiness" with their 'worship songs' and invite with opened, lifted hands to be "spirit-filled". And when that happens, they -feel- "blessed". Note this well!! The Believer's "blessing" comes from the "God and -FATHER-..." (vs3)

When we are saved, who saves us? Well, we know that we are washed in Christ's blood. (Rev1:5) But it is the Father Who "chose us". (vs4) It is the Father Who "draws us". (Jn6:44) The Father "adopted" us as "sons" (vs5) Notice: we are "sons of God" (Lk20:36, Rom8:14, Gal3:26) And it is the Father who makes us "accepted in the Beloved" (vs6) More literally, He "bestowed grace upon us through Christ". A similar kind of expression as "being accounted" righteous. (Rom4:3) When we stand before the judgment Throne, it is the "Ancient of Days" (Dan7:9,13) before Whom we stand, as opposed to the "Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven". When judgment is passed, if a person's name is found in the Book of Life (Rev20:12-15), it is Christ Who "confesses" the person before the Father and the angels. (Rev3:5, Mt10:32)

Thus, it is the Father Who ultimately accepts or rejects a person. Redemption and forgiveness of sins is based on Christ's blood, but comes from the Father. (vs7) It is the Father's Grace which "abounds" toward us. (vs8) When He purposed to extend His "good pleasure" He purposed it "in Himself". When all things are gathered "in one", the Father does so "in Christ" (vs10) for His own will and purpose. (vs11) When a sinner trusts in Christ, it results in "the praise of [the Father's] glory". (vs12)

When a Believer has "power" through the "Holy Spirit" (Acts1:8), notice carefully that this power is not "in" the Believer. Jesus said that this power would "come upon". Paul defines it more clearly here. God's power is "-toward- us who believe". (vs19)

[Ed: Not to be "picking on" charismania... some people write in to VW complaining that VW is so "negative". They think that VW is "against" everything out there. Well, charismania is one of the prime forces of falsehood and evil today. And when we see what Scripture -actually- teaches about various things, we see how it is in contrast with what charismania teaches and practises.]

What is the difference between "in" and "toward"? If two children are fighting, or if several children are ganging up on one lone child, the child being bested does not have the strength innately to overcome his attackers. But the schoolyard monitor sees what is happening and pulls the bullies away from the one being attacked. The strength and authority of the official acted "towards" the child being picked on, even though the child did not possess the strength 'within' himself. If we remember that we are "branches" attached to the "Vine" Jesus Christ, the branches do not "do" anything. They "bear" fruit. The Vinedresser prunes in such a way that the nutrients from the Vine reach the "chosen" branches. The flow is from the Root, through the trunk and vine, out "towards" the branches.

Do you see how this is different from charisma? When they become "spirit-filled", they behave as though (what they call) "God's power" (and authority) RESIDES WITHIN themselves. Just like Star Wars "FORCE be with you". As though God's "power" was a -commodity- to be charged up, collected and possessed and distributed. So they strut around like little 'gods'... commanding this and that from this "power" they think they -have-. To them it has become -their- power. They 'own' it.

When a light bulb shines, the bulb does not have the 'innate' ability to shine. Believers are "lights". (Mt5:16) But they are not the "battery". The Father is the "Battery". The connecting "wires" is Christ through the Holy Spirit. The power must come from the battery "towards" the bulb. The battery is not "in" the bulb. The bulb is not 'the' battery. In the same way, God's power is "toward us who believe". The bulb cannot 'acquire' a charge and then go off by itself. If it is going to shine, it must "abide" (stay connected) in/to the battery via the wires. Is this clearer? It is "-His-power", not ours.

Furthermore, God demonstrated His (Father's) "mighty power" (vs19) through Christ. How? Through the resurrection. Now, we know how Jesus said, "I have power to lay it [My life] down, and I have power to take it again." (Jn10:18) But notice that He did not have this of His own authority. He says, "This command I have received from My Father". Paul explains it here, that ultimately it was the Father Who "raised Him from the dead..." (vs20)

Remember how the disciples were always talking amongst themselves, wondering -just- 'who' (amongst themselves) would be considered "greatest" (Mt18:1, Mk9:34), and two even requested to sit at Jesus' "right and left" in the kingdom. (Mt20:21, Mk10:37) (Remember, they were sons of Jacob; just like we are sons of Adam) Well, even Jesus, the Son of God did not place Himself into authority. He came to "serve and give His life" (Mt20:28) The exultation Jesus receives comes from the Father. The Father raised Him and "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (vs20) "The LORD (Father) said to my Lord (Jesus), 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Ps110:1) Notice that it is the Father, also, Who is subduing Christ's enemies.

How high is Christ elevated? "...far above all principality and power.." (vs21) Without going into depth on this, let us understand that "principality and power" is the expression for the spiritual realm. It includes the realm of satan. which is the source of our spiritual attacks. (Eph6:12) Charismania today presumes to take upon themselves an "authority" to reprimand and condemn satan. Remember how we learned awhile back that Jesus, even, does not do this. Jesus, even, responds to satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan!" (Zech3:2) This is because Jesus is not in His place of elevation on His own authority. Jesus, even, is under the Father. Jesus is where He is because the -Father- "raised Him up" and has put "all things under His feet" (vs21-22)

And finally... we said in the previous lesson that this epistle is about "the Church". Christ is "head" over the Church. But even this is not Christ's - own- doing. He did not take this upon Himself. It was "given" to Him by the Father. (vs22)

Nebuchadnezzar learned that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will.." (Dan4:17) As we will see in later studies that Christ is the Head of the Church; the Church, ultimately, is under God the Father, the Most High. While Christ is the Head, He is also the "Husband". But He also calls His disciples His "friends". (Jn15:15), and those He has sanctified, His "brothers". (Heb2:11) Thus, we see a coming relationship with the Father as Christ brings His Believers 'along-side' Himself before the Father.

We who name the Name of Christ, I suspect haven't a clue as to the splendor of what is to come in the eternity future. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God (the Father) has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor2:9, Is64:4, 65:17)

Jesus Christ - (Ephesians 1:3-23)B

"All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." (Jn16:15)

Since "God is Spirit" (Jn4:24), and "He said, You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live" (Ex33:20), God "sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal4:4) as the "express image of His essence" (Heb1:3) IN ORDER THAT we might see the Father. "He who has seen [Christ] has seen the Father.." (Jn14:9)

In most 'normal' families (which mine wasn't!), the father is the family's legal authority. Down through history, important matters are dispatched by the father. When the father becomes disabled, people naturally look to the son to represent the father's authority. In ancient times if the father had to go off to war, or some other thing, it was the eldest son's duty to "take care" of the family in his absence.

Well, in the beginning God communed with Adam. (Gen2-3) But sin entered the picture, which put a "separation" between man and God. (Is59:2) Man cannot now see God "and live" because, the "soul that sins...shall die" (Eze18:4, Rom6:23) Thus, for sinful man, God appears to be WAY OUT THERE...far away. Although it is actually sinful man who is "far off" (Eph2:13) But this is not the state of affairs that God purposed or desires. (2Pt3:9) Thus, He sent His Son. While at the present time, there is this huge gulf of distance between God and man, Jesus brings God's authority to us. Thus, while we are dealing with Jesus, because of Jesus' 'authority', we are, in reality, dealing with the Father.

God does not have a 'power of attorney'. (Well, perhaps He does. We'll see next lesson) In the case of Israel, He sent prophets. They would be filled with God's Holy Spirit to proclaim God's Law to Israel...but as Jesus told, they killed them and spitefully mistreated them. So, God sent His Son with the idea that "They will respect My Son". (Mt21:37) Why should they "respect" the Son? Because, according to their heritage, the son carried with him the full legal authority of the father, in the father's absence.

So, as we understand from last week that the Father is the one with ultimate authority; in this lesson as we consider the Son, we should understand that, on one hand the Father 'gave' Him His authority; on the other hand, when we look at the Son, Jesus Christ, we should understand that we are seeing, not only the Son, but the Father. When we see Jesus' work, we are seeing the Father's work. When we see Jesus' authority, we are seeing the Father's authority. When Jesus gives a command, we must heed, because Jesus' command is the Father's command. When Jesus speaks, we cannot snort and retort, "YaRight! What do You know! You're not the Father!" ...as today's rebellious youth retort, "You're not the boss of

me!" The Father is Father of the "family in Heaven". (3:15) When Jesus speaks, He speaks for that Heavenly Family.

Now... when sinful man becomes "adopted" as a "son" into this Heavenly family, how does this come about? [Ed: Since this book is written to the "saints and faithful", I will continue that assumption and use personal pronouns. If you are not "in Christ" (2Cor5:17), please do not assume that what we discuss in these lessons applies to all of unregenerate christendom, and thus, erroneously include yourself. It only applies to Believers. These studies are being written 'as though' -TO- fellow-Believers in Jesus Christ...much as a group of Believers would study while gathered in someone's home for Bible study. Thus, the terms like "us" and "we" will be used. These terms are -only- for Believers; not necessarily everybody on the e-list and internet who will also be reading these studies.] So with that explanation, to answer the question, 'We' were "bought at a price". (1Cor6:20) What price was this? Jesus "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood". (Rev1:5) Jesus' blood was our "redemption". (vs7) And what did we, then, receive? "Forgiveness of sins". The same 'love' that the Father had, by which He "sent" His Son (Jn3:16) is the same love Jesus, Himself, displayed when He gave His own life. "No greater love" does a person have than to give "his life for his friends". (Jn15:13) There are always legal fees and procedures when a child is adopted, which the new adoptive parents pay in order to receive the new child. -JESUS- is the One Who paid those 'fees' with His own blood. Thus, when we became sons of God, we are now "blood" relatives... something earthly adoptions can never accomplish. The earthly adopted child always retains the genetics of the birth parents. But when we are adopted into Christ, we actually receive a "new nature" (2Cor5:17) through the "new birth". (Jn3:3-8) We are related to our new Father in Heaven, by blood... Jesus, His Son's blood.

The unity which christendom so earnestly seeks, but which obviously eludes them... (if they had it, they wouldn't be seeking it) ...we as Believers have. Again, this is a work of Christ. And this is not something He is doing with stadium-filled rallies and conferences. This is not a unity based on tolerance and acceptance of diverse racial ethnicity and economic status, but between the heavenlies and that which is on earth. (vs10) Right now there is a gulf between the heavenly realm and the earthly. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1Cor15:50) But when the "change" happens from corruptible to incorruption (1Cor15:51-54), it will be possible because of what Christ has done.

The fact that we are part of this 'gathering together' is because we "trusted in Christ". (vs12) This word "trust" is the salvific definition of "faith" and "believe". We do not have -enough- faith. We don't "just believe in your heart". Salvation is possible because of the -object- of our faith. Jesus Christ. This faith is not merely believing that Jesus "exists"...although that is the beginning (Heb11:6) Satan and his demons have such a faith. (Jas2:19) But it does them no good because they do not "trust in" Christ.

Satan's scheme was to "be like the Most High". (Is14:14) A person could "have faith" that he would not land on the floor, believing "real hard". But such hokus pokus will not keep him from landing on his backside. His "faith" in not hitting the floor must be in some -object-, like a chair, which, if he "sits in" the chair, thus "trusting/resting" in that chair, the -CHAIR- holds him up and keeps him off the floor. Our salvation is not so much our "faith", but the "object" of that faith, Jesus Christ.

When healing people, on some occasions Jesus would ask the distressed person, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Mt9:28) When we trusted in Christ, we "believed that" His shed blood was able to redeem us. But again, it is -Jesus- and -His- work of redemption.

And finally, the final work Jesus did for our redemption: As Paul reviewed for Corinth, that He "died for our sins"... and then, that "He rose again the third day..." (1Cor15:1-4) Without Jesus' resurrection, our faith is futile, because then He would not be the "firstfruit" for us to follow. (1Cor15:20) It's one thing to redeem us and give us adoption as sons, but if we still die and stay dead...of what use is that? Jesus rose from the dead, paving the way for us to follow. And 'where' are we to follow Him?

Jesus was raised and taken up to the Father's "right hand in the heavenly places" (vs20) Jesus promised, "I go to prepare a place for you" with the added promise "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (Jn14:2-3) Jesus rose from the dead and went to the heavenlies. He will come to take us to the heavenlies. We not only have life because of His resurrection; we also have a 'place' to go to. Now, again, it is not so much that we "go to Heaven", but we go to "where Jesus is". Just as salvation is based on the -object- of faith/trust, so too, our eternal destiny is based on the -ONE- Who resides in the heavenlies. Whether it is "Heaven" or the "new heaven and earth"...or...whatever may be in store throughout the aeons of eternity, the focus of our anticipation is "Jesus Christ".

So... what is the nature of this "Heaven"? Well, God has placed Christ "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named..." (vs21) That means that He is above all the angels of Heaven, the seraphim, the demons, Ezekiel's "wheels", and the kingdoms of humanity. Now, if Christ has promised to take us to be -with- Him, "where" He is... well, perhaps this explains the passage, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man (he cannot fathom or imagine it!) the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor2:9) Where Jesus is... we will be there "with" Him.

Again, however, we will not be in this glorious place because of -our- goodness and righteousness and power. Remember? We are the "Church". Jesus is our "head". (vs22) We are His "body" (vs23) And here is a mystery I do not yet fully fathom. It speaks of the "fullness of Him" (vs23) In other words, without the Church, Christ is not complete. Later in

ch5 we will see the correlation of Christ and the Church being like a marriage of husband and wife. A person who has been married, and then lost a spouse, understands that big empty "hole" without that person in one's life. It is a big humongous vacuum. Things about one's life are not - quite- right without them. God designed it for man and woman to be together to "become one". Even before a person is married, there is 'something' they long for. They are not quite 'complete'. The Church 'completes' Christ. A "Head" needs a "body" to be with.

However, we should not be high-minded. Many "christians" go around strutting their stuff, thinking that God's power is -theirs- (vs19), and boost up their self-esteem and distort God's "grace" into something which looked down and saw all this "worth" in us sinful flesh. They preach a gospel of "importance". They say, "See how -important- you are to God! He can't get along without you. Now seize upon that power...!" and they become little self-invested gods. Notice that, while the Church is part of Christ's fullness, this fullness is -from- the Father.

Are we beginning to understand that there is nothing of benefit in our existence past/present/future that God and/or Christ is not responsible for? In creation, there is nothing that was not created by Christ. (Jn1:3) Our "life" is in Christ. (Jn1:4, Acts17:28) In Him "all things consist" (Col1:17)

Now, returning to the example of the son's authority while the father is away; what happens when the father returns from his travels, or stint in the military? Does the son continue representing the family? Well, he may still have some authoritative functions. But the -father- is now home again. So he resumes his position which he had assigned to the son. In the same way, once our "redemption" is complete (Rom8:23, 1Cor15:54) and we are with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph2:6); in other words, there is no longer that distance separating between us and the Father; then, the authority we have been used to seeing in Christ, reverts back to the Father. "...the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all things in all." (1Cor15:28)

Holy Spirit of Promise - (Ephesians 1:3-23)C

"..in [Christ] also believing you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (vs13b-14)

If you look through this whole chapter, we see that this is the only reference, in this whole discussion, to the Holy Spirit. But I have left the label of this section as being vs "3-23" to help us make this observation. To make a point. And in making this point, we see how Scripture is in contrast to current trends, teachings, doctrine and practice.

While we have already seen, two lessons ago, that the Father is uppermost; and in the next lesson, that the Son manifests the Father's authority while there is this "distance" separating between the Father and sinful, corruptible man; Jesus, under the Father's authority, has explained the role of the Holy Spirit; which a rapidly increasing segment of christendom is rejecting.

While we know of everlasting unforgiveness and "condemnation" for blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mk3:29), the actual ministry of the Holy Spirit is that of a "Helper". (Jn16:7) KJV says "comforter", and for whatever reason, the LITV has retained the archaic KJV word. And thus, those of charisma today might think that their activities of "feelings" are of the Holy Spirit, because as they "feel good", they take that as "comfort"... or, "comfortable". However, "comforter" is an outdated word for the Greek "parakletos". Back when KJV came out, people knew what "comfort" meant in 'ye olde English', from the standpoint of knights. If a knight had fallen, his associate would come along, and from his horse would reach down to the fallen comrade with the tip of his lance and 'prod' the fallen one. "C'mon, get up! Are you OK? C'mon, wake up, get up, let's get going! Get back on your horse." This act of 'prodding' with the lance was called "comforting". Thus, we also understand better when the psalmist says, "Your rod and staff, they comfort me." (Ps23:4b) If a sheep was 'down', the shepherd might 'prod' at the sheep gently with the end of his staff to see if the sheep was sleeping, sick or dead. Or if the flock needed to be traveling, and a straggler was lying down, a little prod would get it up on its feet to get moving again and join the rest.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. As a 'parakletos' He is One who is summoned "to the side of" or "along-side" the person being assisted. It is also a legal type of term for one who intercedes and pleads one's case. One of the ways the Holy Spirit intercedes for us is in prayer. "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom8:26) So, if they "cannot be uttered", why does charisma insist that their maniacal babblings, which they often call "prayer language", are of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is not a Person we have been commanded to address in prayer. We pray -to- the Father, and the Spirit helps us in that. He is not One who receives attention and glory. We are not to focus on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "guides us into all truth" (Jn16:13) through His special "anointing". (1Jn2:27) But the Spirit's ministry is to point us -to- Jesus Christ. (Jn16:14) Where Jesus speaks on His own God-given authority, as being the Father's Son... the Holy Spirit does not have that same authority. Rather, he is more like that "power of attorney" we spoke of in the last lesson. If the Son is in one room (of the "many mansions" - Jn14:2) and wants to communicate with the people in the next room or down the hall, while remaining where He is, He sends His legal representative to speak on His behalf. (Jn16:14) One of the aspects of the definition of "parakletos" is "legal assistant". And as the Believer speaks back to the Father and/or Son, this same legal assistant then takes the counter-message back, in 'prayer'.

Thus, "...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance.." (vs13-14)

What is a seal? When legal documents are drawn up, they receive various signatures and stamps. In ancient times, and still today in eastern societies, official documents would be imprinted with one's seal. In Japan it is called a "han" (hahn). In many cultures it was one's signet ring. When Joseph was given Pharaoh's signet ring (Gen41:42), Pharaoh was giving Joseph his legal authority and power to transact business in Pharaoh's name throughout the land of Egypt. In this country, it is often required that documents be "notorized". In other words, the person signing their name has a 'witness', attesting to the fact that they -watched- you sign your name. They, then, sign their name to the attestation, saying that they watched you sign, and imprint the document with their notary seal. This imprint takes the paper, impressing the seal's shape into the paper as it 'bites' the paper. Such a seal cannot be erased. It becomes an intrinsic part of the paper's form.

The other important word in this place is "promise"... along with "earnest" (LITV/KJV). "Earnest", a legal term. A nonrefundable deposit. When a person buys a house, they include the "earnest money" along with their legal papers, saying that they wish to buy the house. If the seller agrees to the terms, the buyer has promised to purchase the house. At the time of the earnest, the house is not yet in the possession of the buyer. But it is the "good faith" of intent to buy.

Notice that Jesus' "knocking" at the door (Rev3:20) comes at the 'end' of the Seven Churches. The Church age is complete and 'now' Christ wants to make good on His promise, before the call to "come up here". (4:1) He wants to take possession of that which He purchased and sealed with the earnest.

Remember that we who are Born Again are yet "flesh and blood" and CANNOT go to Heaven in this state of corruption. (1Cor15:50) Even as Believers, while our spirits are saved, our bodies are not. We are still waiting the "adoption, the redemption of our body". (Rom8:23) So, how do we know that our salvation is sure? After all, Paul confidently proclaims, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers...nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom8:35-39) This is "Eternal Security". How do we know that our salvation is eternally secure? The Holy Spirit is the "Earnest". He is the "deposit". Where has the deposit been made? He dwells within us. We are the "temple of the Holy Spirit". (1Cor3:16, 6:19)

If the Holy Spirit is 'in' us, if somebody or something would wish to harm us, they must also harm God. If one of satan's demons seeks to confront us, they also confront the Lord, and end up proclaiming, "we know who You are, the Holy One of God". (Mk1:24) 'Ever wonder why that total stranger looks at you with hatred, even though you don't know them? That's satan within them seeing the Spirit within you. They don't hate you; they hate God.

How do we know we are saved? Because of the Holy Spirit in us. We can know, with certainty, that we are NOT saved, if the Holy Spirit is NOT in us. (Rom8:9) While we are in these bodies of flesh, the defining characteristic of our salvation -IS- the indwelling Holy Spirit. What if a person "doesn't know" whether or not he has the Holy Spirit? If you don't know, you are NOT saved. One of His ministries is to "bear witness with our spirit THAT WE ARE children of God". (Rom8:16) If you have to ask the question, "What is it like when the Holy Spirit is in you?", then, you are not saved. He makes His presence known, and you 'know' it.

So... "when" does the Holy Spirit indwell? Does one become saved, and then at some future time one waits for the "baptism"? Well, from what we have already observed, the answer should be obvious. What did Rom8:9 say? "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." So, if a person is "waiting for" the Holy Spirit, BY DEFINITION, they are not saved. When does that signed document become official and 'in effect'? When the notary "seals" it. The document is meaningless until it goes between the plates of the seal, and the notary 'squeezes' the handles.

What is the Spirit guaranteeing? The "inheritance". What is the inheritance? It is "incorruptible, undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you." (1Pt1:4) You see, the Holy Spirit has made "reservations" for us in Heaven. And when is this inheritance given to us? At the "redemption of the purchased possession.." (vs14) What is the "purchased possession"? "...the Church of God which [Christ] purchased with His own blood." (Acts20:28) That's -US-. And when is the "redemption"? (Rom8:23) When these corruptible bodies are "changed"

(1Cor15:51) into incorruption. At the resurrection and rapture. (1Cor15:51-56, 1Th4:16-17)

Jesus, God's Son, with God's full authority, saved, redeemed and purchased us, with His own blood. We have become blood relatives. But we don't yet have the full Family inheritance. That comes a bit later. So, the Holy Spirit is the Father's "Power of Attorney", making the transaction legal and 'binding' until its fulfillment.

So, what of charismania's being "spirit-filled" and being charged up and 'feeling' euphoric, and possessing 'power'? We don't see -any- of that here, do we. And what of pentecostalism's special anointings they pray and 'wait' for? If they are 'waiting', they are not saved... BY DEFINITION. The Holy Spirit does not come 'later'. The Holy Spirit's indwelling -IS- the 'legal' aspect of what it is to be saved.

When it says, "...in Whom also believing, you were sealed..." These events are simultaneous. We are saved 'when' (at the same time) we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. While the Holy Spirit may seem to have a less "glamorous" role... (He is only 'squeezing the lever'), without Him we cannot be saved.

However, the Holy Spirit is not the primary focus of our Faith. Yes, the Holy Spirit is in these "temples". (1Cor6:19) Yes, the Spirit is the conduit of our prayers. (Rom8:26) Yes, God's power that is "toward" us (vs19) is via the conduit of the Spirit. (Acts1:8) But the Holy Spirit's purpose is to reveal Christ -to- and -in- us. (Jn16:14-15) N.T. doctrine does not so much speak of our relationship with the Spirit as it does, "Christ in you.." (Col1:27) and of us being "in Christ". (2Cor5:17) The chain-of-command (God - Christ - man - woman 1Cor11:3) does not include the Holy Spirit. When Paul describes the Believer's relationship with God in ch5, the section does not define and discuss in -detail- being "spirit-filled", he only mentions that in passing (vs18) but he says, "but I speak concerning -CHRIST- and the Church". (5:32) The early Believers were not known for being "spirit-filled", but that they were "-WITH- JESUS". (Acts4:13)

See Also Addendum:

Q/A -Possessing Eternal Life now?

Q/A -1:13 -Holy Spirit's Seal

Sons...holy & without blame - (Ephesians 1:3-23)D

"..just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.." (vs4)

As we now make a fourth pass over this chapter we come to the 'purpose' of its writing. Proper speech and teaching theory says that the speaker should be sure to 1) Introduce the subject, 2) Present the subject, and 3) Review what was said. Like the ol' codger would say, "I'm gonna tell ya what I'm gonna tell ya, and then I'm gonna tell it to ya, and when I'm finished I'm gonna tell ya what I just done told ya." Paul is fulfilling 1 & 2. We don't really see a review at the end of the epistle. But then, Paul doesn't seem to have been known for his speaking abilities. (2Cor10:10)

Ch1 introduces the basic synopsis of what the rest of the book would naturally follow. ch1 says what the desired outcome is. The rest of the book tells how it is achieved. The Church's foundation is Jesus Christ (1Cor3:11) But Jesus is not without the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus, ch1 lays the foundation of the respective authorities and actions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And then, reviews what Their work should result in, in the Believer (the Church). The rest of the book, then, analyzes all the details as to how it comes together as a complete whole.

Thus, we get right down to business. The "spiritual blessing" we receive from the Father in the "heavenly places" (vs3) should result in what? We should be "spirit-filled" and prove that filling by "speaking in tongues". Right? When we've been saved, we wait for the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" so that we can exercise our "spiritual gifts". Is this correct? Did God "choose us" (vs4) in order for us to "Praise the Lord"? To "worship" Him? That God wants our worship... This is what an overwhelming majority of today's "church" is proclaiming. But, what does it say?

"..that we should be HOLY and WITHOUT BLAME BEFORE HIM in love"

What does it mean to be "holy"? If we just praise the Lord with sincere hearts and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit's filling, pretty soon a halo will appear and start hovering overhead... And we will know we have achieved this 'state', because we will "feel" it. Mmmm?

Holiness is not a "feeling". It is a position. Holy and sanctification are the same thing. It is a state of purity, having been cleansed. As a result, it is a position -AWAY-FROM- the filth of the world's sin. God can only accept a "holy" Church, because He is holy. The command is, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1Pt1:16)

How do we -become- holy? Do we do a sufficient amount of good deeds, and refrain from the bad? The Father has "blessed us" (vs3) He "chose us" (vs4) He "predestined" and "adopted" us (vs5) His "grace" has made us

"accepted in Christ" (vs6) Jesus' blood "redeems" us and gives us "forgiveness of sins" (vs7) Remember, the "soul that sins..shall die" (Eze18:4, Rom6:23a) and so His "abundant" grace (vs8) "accounts" (Rom4:5) us righteous. "Forgiveness" is a legal/accounting term. We had this debt of sin hanging over us that would send us to death. But forgiveness erases the debt. The debt is no longer owed. Jesus paid it with His blood. We are redeemed 'away from' sin and its consequences. Positionally, we are now 'separated' from sin. Since we are now "blood relatives" in the heavenly family, we have a new nature, we are no longer associated with sin. That's what "holy" is. That's what "saints" (vs1) is. "saints" in vs1 is the same Greek word (hagios) that is translated "holy" in vs4. We are "saints". We are "holy". Same thing. The RC Pope does not -make- saints out of some ancient dead people. Christ did it with His own blood. It is the position Christ's redemptive blood has placed us ('live Believers) in.

What part do we -do- to achieve any of this? This 'unity' which is accomplished as God is "[gathering] together in one all things in Christ"(vs10); what measures, programs and campaigns are we engaged in to bring it to fruition? If you can see one in this passage, will you please show it to me. Thus far, it is -ALL- GOD'S work. As we see the details in the next chapter we see that it is God's "gift", given by His "grace", and NOT of "works" lest we "should boast". (2:8-10) Remember, we were all going "astray" like "sheep" (Is53:6) All this we have received comes according to God's "purpose" and the "counsel of His will". (vs11)

At what point did this "holiness" apply to us? At the point the Holy Spirit "sealed" the agreement. (vs13) And when was that? When we "trusted/believed". (vs12-13) If we go back to the previous example of the "chair"... we did not buy or build the chair. We did not even pick it out. But when it was known that we were going to fall, we were invited to "sit" in the chair. The Father "draws" (Jn6:44) the attention to the chair, and the Son "invites" to "come" and "find rest for your souls". (Mt11:28-29)

There is a theology going around today, which I heard awhile back on TV ads for one of the Lutheran denominations, that went something like: God has saved the world. When God sent Jesus to die (Jn3:16), Jesus' blood saved the whole world. That is the "good news". And 'now', the invitation was for people to come into their churches so that they could learn how they were 'already' saved. That... mankind is already saved. The mission of "the church" is to get out the news to everyone so they know and realize that fact. So they don't need to live in despondency and condemnation, thinking they're sinners; but to realize that they've 'already' been saved. Yea!! Hooray!!

Well, if we were to ignore vs12-13, we might come away from this chapter with the same idea, mightn't we. But remember that God's salvation for "the world" is to "whoever believes in Him". (Jn3:16)

So, now that we have put our "trust" in Christ, and are characterized by this "holiness" God has provided through Christ and the Holy Spirit, is that the end of the game? Do we now continue on "just as you are". Well, just as I was, was in sin. I am now "holy". Sanctified and "separated" unto God. Why would I want to go back to that filth? I've been "saved OUT OF" it.

Now that we are in a new family, with new blood ties, we need to learn how to live in this new family. Where we used to hate, we now love. (vs4, Jn13:34-35) Where we used to be part of the "foolishness" of the world (1Cor3:19), now we seek the "spirit of wisdom" (vs17) and the "knowledge of Him". Notice that the ultimate state of maturity is when we have come to "the knowledge of the Son of God" (4:13) Paul's ultimate goal was "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." (Phil3:10) When we come to fully "know" Christ, we have His "mind" (1Cor2:16), and thus will also learn the road of humility and servanthood (Phil2:5-8), and thus understand what it is to "die with Christ" (Rom6:4-8). When we fully understand that, then we can fully appreciate the "riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.." (vs18) Today's apostate theology teaches its followers to pursue wealth, fame, fortune and power. But they have never died to self and sin. They have not died with Christ.

If we are -positionally- "holy" due to God's work, then, if we truly love Him as we claim, we would seek to -live- "holy". If, as the song says, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe..", would it not be a slap in His face for us to continue living "like the devil" while claiming to be "Christian"? God did not make us "holy", only to have us "continue living in sin...let it not be!" (Rom6:1-2)

We "should be holy and without blame before Him..." How do we know what "holy" is? By learning the "spirit of wisdom" as we have the "eyes of [our] understanding enlightened" and growing in our "knowledge of Him". (vs4,17-18)

As ch2-3 go into more detail of God's redemptive work and our position in the heavenly places, the Believer's response begins in 4:1, that we should "walk -worthy- of the calling with which [we] were called.." The "spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (vs3) and the "inheritance" (vs18) are so awesome, beyond comprehension, "far above all principality, etc.etc" (vs19-21), the only way we can hope to be a healthy part of the body "by which every part does its share" (4:16), is if we come to Know Christ, the Head.

Does God desire our worship. Of course. But even this we find to be different in Scripture than what is the norm today. "..Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS! Tremble before Him, all the earth.." (1Chr16:28-30, Ps29:2, 96:9) What are the offerings/sacrifices of God? "The sacrifices of God are

a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise." (Ps51:17) As God is Holy "..you also be holy in all your -conduct-.." (1Pt1:15) Today's "church" comes, sometimes partially naked, using the music of demons, sensuously moving their bodies provocatively in dance...and they call it "worship". Yes, they are pleasing 'their' master. When Aaron made the golden calf, Israel "rose up to -play-", too. (Ex32:6) God does not acknowledge such disobedience in worshipping "other gods". "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices (derived out of disobedience and unholy objects) ...as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." Anything else is as witchcraft and idolatry. (1Sam15:22-23)

God says, "For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices" ...remember it was the blood of the Passover lamb that saved them from the death angel, and when they were "baptized" through the Red Sea (1Cor10:2) they were not offering animal sacrifices and singing praises... "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'OBEY MY VOICE, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people'." (Jer7:22-23, Ex15:26, 19:5-6, Deu5:29, 6:1-9)

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Blameless?

We Were Dead - (Ephesians 2:1-3)

"..you being dead in trespasses and sins.." (vs1)

While we noted that ch1 'introduces' the rest of the book, the fact of the matter is that ch2 continues the thought about the "church, which is His body.." (1:22-23) 1:23 should probably end with a semicolon, as 2:1-3 are actually dangling/trailing modifiers of this "church". Many English translations insert words similar to "He made alive" in vs1, forcing it to begin a new sentence there. But the Greek texts don't have those words there. In typical Pauline fashion, this is actually, likely, a rather long sentence beginning at around 1:22 and concluding at 2:3. In other words... 1) Christ is above all principality and power (1:21), 2) He is head of the Church (1:22-23), and 3) This is where the Church came from; these were its origins. The people making up the Church used to be "dead". (2:1-3)

On the other hand, if 2:1 actually begins a new sentence, it shows where we came from, as introduction to the salvation process. Opposite of modern theology which teaches that we were "worth so much to God, that's why He reached down to save us"... it shows our beginnings as "nothing". What value is there to something which is "dead"? There is none. A dead animal, perhaps when it is 'fresh', is worth something for the meat derived from it. But when it has been dead awhile, becomes maggot-infested and begins to rot, it is worth nothing except to be buried into the ground. This is where we began. We were dead. We had been in this state a long time, too, and were rotten. Even what we looked upon as being "pretty good" were like "filthy rags". (Is64:6) "Filthy" doesn't quite convey the meaning. Literally, it is like the stains of 'menstruation'. Where there had been an egg that could have been fertilized and come to life, it is now passed on...dead. If there had been a desire to become fertile and bring life through a baby, when menstruation happens, it is known that fertilization did not happen. There is no life. It is dead.

Just like the potter takes a worthless lump of clay and starts to form it (Rom9:21, Jer18:6, Lam4:2), the clay starts out being stomped on, to make it into the right consistency (Is41:25b). While it is in that form, it is worthless. A vehicle could just as easily come driving along and splatter it all over everything, just as well as it could be made into fine pottery. Aside from the skilled potter, anybody else coming along would simply assume it was "mud".

That's where we were. We were dead in sins. The things we did, we did naturally... just like pigs and elephants like to roll around in the mud, it is their nature to do so; so, too, we, naturally did all the things of the "lusts of the flesh". (vs3) Why are there teen pregnancies? It is the lustful nature which causes "two to tango". Why do the announcers on NFL football talk crudely about how much (or little) J-Lo would be wearing for the half-time show? That is their nature. Why do the comedians spend most of their

time joking about sexual innuendo? Why do the audiences laugh hysterically at the lude jokes? That is their nature. Why do mothers kill their babies, sacrificing them at the altars of convenience? That is their nature. Why do people lie, steal, cheat and murder? That is their nature.

Before we were saved, that is where -we- were. The Church did not pop out of Heaven, borne along on angels wings, with sparkling halos over each of our heads, nestled down into the peaceful meadows of perfection. No! We were in that cesspool. Dogs bark, ducks quack, and sinners sin.

Not only were we following our natural instincts, gotten at birth (Ps51:5), we were following our leader. Who was our leader? The "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.." (vs2) Remember how we have spoken of the definition of the Believer as being one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9) Well, if one is not a believer, his house is not being dwelt in, it is empty...guess who comes along and takes refuge. Demons. (Mt12:43-45) No, we were not (as some would have you believe), all seeking for something to fill that "God-shaped void" within. "There is none who seeks after God" (Rom3:11), we were all "gone astray" (Is53:6a), following our "prince".

Let us remember where satan came from. He used to be in God's presence as the "anointed cherub that covers". (Eze28:14) All his demons used to be good angels, until they fell. Guess what angels are... "ministering spirits". (Heb1:14) Thus, demons are also spirits. Satan comes from the realm of light (he was the "shining one" -Is14:6), and his demons act like "ministers of righteousness". (2Cor11:15) But because they fell, they are of the realm of the "power of the air" and of the "sons of disobedience". Thus, also, it is only 'natural' for the world to be full of false religions... beliefs that operate, even, under 'spiritual' principles. The world speaks of "spirituality". They also have their signs and wonders. They have their "miracles" by which they are persuaded that their belief is correct. These things are not limited to charismania. In fact, what charismania does, it got from the others who practice these magical arts (Acts19:19) of the "works of darkness". (5:11)

Just as an example... after my unequal yoke left (10 years ago), the girlfriend of the fellow she left with would call me a lot and we would talk on the phone. She was into New Age, numerology and all sorts of related things. During one such conversation she told of going out to some rural area she had never been to before, on her way to some "spiritual" meeting with others of "like faith" to hers... how that, when she came to some intersections, and places she didn't know which way to turn, her 'spiritual guidance' led her to make the correct turns each time, and she drove "right to" the correct location. Of course, I was supposed to be 'impressed' by this, as giving credence to her faith system. You see...a small "sign" of "proof" that what she believed in was "truth". But she made no claim to being a "Christian". In fact, I'm sure she was hoping to "convert" me.

You see...not all sinners are "bad". Not all sinners are murderers and cheats. Many of them are fine religious people. They go to their places of worship, and sing songs of praise to their gods. They offer sacrifices. They bow to statues of their gods and saints. (Their "saints" are not "separated", but are of the variety with the halos.) Many of them do a lot of "good works". They run charitable organizations. Some of them even sometimes become president.

But...we were all "children of wrath" just like them. Some of us came from "despicable" backgrounds of drugs, sex and related activities. Others of us came from the uppity-crust religions. But we were all under the same condemnation. We were "dead", and deserving of God's wrath.

What does it take to be deserving of God's wrath? It is easy to understand that "horrible" people might be deserving. But "ungodliness and unrighteousness" also includes "suppressing the truth". (Rom1:18) All these religions of these "good people" suppress God's Word in order to believe their lies. Unrighteousness does not only include the "terrible" people who "do" terrible things, but it also includes those who "approve of those who practice them" (Rom1:32) We might condemn the former president for all his perversities; but those who laugh at all the jokes about his exploits are JUST-AS-GUILTY, because they enjoy his sin in their hearts. And when it comes down to it, before we ever commit that first 'act' of sin, we are already sinners. Because why? They are "CONDEMNED ALREADY (before they ever get started) BECAUSE he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Jn3:18) Without Christ, we are already doomed before we ever get started. Salvation comes -only- through Jesus Christ. (Jn14:6, Acts4:12) We were "without God". (vs12)

Remember, we sin because it was our "nature" to do so. We did not have Jesus Christ. This is where we were!

So... how did we become the Church?

God Made Us Alive - (Ephesians 2:4-10)

"But God...made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (~vs4-6)

Last lesson ended with the question, "How did we become the Church?" You know... there is a false theology where those who call themselves "Christians" go about trying to change society. As noble as such a thing might be, it is fraught with futility. Christians try to get abortionists to stop having abortions, for drug addicts to stop doing drugs. They will proclaim to co-workers that their foul language and dirty jokes "offends" them, because they are a "Christian", so... would they please stop it. But remember... they do those things "by nature". (vs3) If you yell at that strange dog to "STOP BARKING!!", he's just going to look back at you and keep barking even louder and more ferociously (and start showing his fangs); the same way the world riles back at you in anger. Dogs bark! Sinners sin.

When an ambassador goes to a foreign country, his duty is not to change the customs of the country to which he is assigned. No. He represents his country of origin. He will retain his own country's habits and customs, and dress as distinct from the country he is a representative to. If that country is one of an oppressive regime, sometimes its natives will come to the embassy, seeking asylum, seeking refuge to be taken to the ambassador's country... AWAY FROM the cruel regime. The ambassador's life style while in that country shows how his own country is "different from" the regime, and "better than" it. Thus, some will seek the "freedom" which his "different" country offers. You see...we are "ambassadors for Christ". (2Cor5:20) We cannot change this world. But we can reflect God's light (Mt5:14) as we are in it. We can show by how our "heavenly culture" is - different- that Heaven is a better place than the cruel regime of satan's domain. No, we don't "change" the world, but we are "salt" in it. (Mt5:13) As the world gets a hint of taste of that salt, they then come to the embassy seeking asylum. They, then, seek new citizenship. (Phil3:20)

The new citizenship spiritually requires a major "change" of nature. Our state before was "death". Man has not yet learned how to give life to anything. He has now gotten to the stage of cloning. But that is merely working with already-alive cells. He is not able to take dead chemicals, and zap life into them. Only God can do that. It is the same with salvation.

Please notice how everything in vss4-10 is "God" at work. First of all, we start with God's character. God is "rich in mercy" (vs4). That's what "grace" is. (vs8) Grace is not a "feeling" where we suddenly 'realize' how much we are 'worth' to God. Grace is a legal-type of term. The book was due back at the library, but you were given a period of "grace" and were allowed to return it late without penalty. The traffic fine was due, but the judge

'waived' the penalty. There was no question of guilt, and the fine was owed; but the judge extended mercy. Why?

"..because of His great love with which He loved us.." (vs4) What kind of love was this? God "-SO- loved the world"...it was such a great love that, what? "..He gave His only begotten Son..." (Jn3:16) In what manner did He give His Son? He gave Him over to death. What is the greatest manifestation of love? Giving one's life. If a person gives one's own life, what more is there to give? Can a person give any more? "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (Jn15:13)

And so, now, how does God go about changing our nature? He "made us alive.." (vs5) We were dead, He gave us life. Christ died and joined us in death. (Rom6:3-4, Phil2:7-8) And when Christ then rose from the dead, we came to life with Him.(vs5) When Jn3:3 says "born again", while the comparison is made of being born, first, physically; and "again" -spiritually- (Jn3:8), it actually means, "unless one is born from above..." (Jn3:3 -LITV) Our physical births are "of dust" (1Cor15:48) and when we die, we go back, dust-to-dust. But when we are born from above, we have "everlasting" Life. (Jn3:16)

The result of this new Life is that God then takes us and, just as He "highly exalted" Jesus (Phil2:9), He has a place for us "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (vs6) Christ is "far above all principality and power" (1:21) and we are His "body" (1:23). God has a special place for us, up there with Christ. Why?

We have observed in the past that this high place is beyond our human imagination... "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor2:9) If we have come from such an utterly worthless place in the muck and mire of sin, in spiritual death... WHY would God place us in such a high place along with Jesus? Because our worth to God has now become manifest? Because we finally attained to sufficient state of holiness? Because we have finally realized our worth to God? Because we have learned how to harness God's power and do great things, and climb to heights of grandeur? No!

It is all for -GOD'S- GLORY! Read carefully... "..that in the ages to come He might show the EXCEEDING RICHES OF -HIS- GRACE in -HIS- KINDNESS toward us -IN- CHRIST JESUS." (vs7) It has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with God! ...and Jesus Christ! He is elevating us, in order to manifest His Own Grace and Kindness! Do you see why this kind of thing cannot "enter into the heart of man"? We cannot fathom it yet at this time. It is too awesome, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it." (Ps139:6)

Many teach a doctrine of "sola fide". Salvation by "faith alone". Well, salvation is by God's "grace". (vs8) It is by His grace that we can even

have faith unto salvation. You see, even that faith is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God". If God didn't give it to us, we would not be capable of saving faith. Thus, if we want to get real picayunish, we could say that salvation isn't even by our faith. Remember, we were "dead". We were without "strength/ability" (Rom5:6) We didn't even know that we needed to believe, except that the Father came along and "drew" us. (Jn6:44) Salvation isn't so much our "saving faith", as it is God's grace which gave us the faith. Do we begin to see HOW VERY LITTLE we had to do with our salvation?

Does it begin to make sense why we speak so much of "Repentance"? This is why Paul says to the Athenians, "God..now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts17:30) That, while God did not will for any to perish "but that all should come to repentance". (2Pt3:9) When we come to God in REPENTANCE, we are pleading for His mercy, because we are "dead in trespasses and sins", and it is our "just due" (Rev16:6); we are -deserving- of it. His mercy and grace, then, gives us faith to believe and receive Jesus Christ. For all of modern christendom's talk of "graaaaeeesss"; when they reject "Repentance", they, in effect, are rejecting God's Saving Grace. They are by-passing repentance, going straight to "Faith". But Faith doesn't come until God's Mercy has been extended. Faith is a 'result' of God's Mercy, and comes from it; not its cause. And such Mercy is not given where there is no Repentance and acknowledgement of ones state in sin and death. Like the woman said to Jesus, "..even the little dogs.." get the scraps from their masters' table. (Mt15:27) In other words, acknowledging the fact that she was a "dog". If a person wants the judge to 'forgive' that traffic fine, he must appear before the judge. In appearing, he is acknowledging the citation. Unless he is like the corrupt ex-president (!!), judges don't automatically grant pardons to absent fugitives. When people rely on "faith", without appearing before the judge in contrition and repentance, they are fugitives. The warrant is still in effect, for their arrest, conviction and punishment. But when they appear before the Judge and seek clemency, then, when the Judge pronounces them "Justified" in Jesus' blood (Rom5:9), they are truly free. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (Jn8:36)

So now, vs9 almost seems ridiculous to have to say. "..not of works.." If we were dead, and the faith was given to us, we really have no part in the saving process. And yet, it is included, because it is necessary. Most religions of the world are based on works. Penance, good deeds which outweigh the bad, saying of masses, pilgrimages to kiss certain icons/statues, etc. But when somebody has gained world-renoun for good works, even if the person himself doesn't brag, the rest of the world "boasts" on his/her behalf. (vs9b) If God is the One receiving the glory, due to His grace, love and mercy; salvation CANNOT be by our works. Any praise coming to us would not be to God; it would detract from -His- glory.

We are the vessels of His "workmanship/masterpiece". (vs10) He took the clay and formed us into "vessels for honor". (Rom9:21) So, look what the

result is. We are created, not to continue sinning... "Certainly not!" (Rom6:1-2) but "unto good works". You see, we have made full circle. We are to be learning how to "possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor," (1Th4:4) Or... the purpose of our existence as we learned in the previous chapter, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.." (1:4)

Our nature is no longer as "sons of disobedience". Our master is no longer the "prince of the power of the air" (2:2) of the evil spirits. But we are "in Christ...a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2Cor5:17)

See Also Addendum:

Q/A Salvation: Whose faith? - Whose Holiness?

Q/A -Christian who sins, still saved?

Q/A -Created 'out of nothing'?

Gentiles, too - (Ephesians 2:11-22)

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh...now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ." (vs11,13)

Let us who are not Jewish always remember that when Jesus "came to His own" (Jn1:11), He came to Israel. When a Gentile came to Jesus for help, He first made a 'typically Jewish' point by saying, "It is not good to take the children's [Israel] bread and throw it to the little dogs [Gentiles]." (Mt15:26) But He then proceeded to help the woman, because His purpose was also, "I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a LIGHT TO THE GENTILES." (Is42:6) You see, this "covenant" He fulfilled when He died on the cross, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (Jn19:24) of all that was in the "Law and the Prophets" (Lk24:44) He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Mt5:17) That was the Covenant God made with Israel in the wilderness, and earlier with Eve. But Jesus also said, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." (Mt11:13) And as Jesus was about to fulfill the final matters prophesied, He instituted a "New Covenant". "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Mt26:28) Any covenant had to include blood. When John proclaimed, "Behold! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn1:29), in effect he was proclaiming the end of the Old Covenant, and introducing the New. And Jesus fulfilled it by shedding His own blood. He had to, if He was to be the Savior, because "without shedding of blood there is no remission". (Heb9:22) And so, Jesus fulfills the "Covenant of the people [Israel]"... but He is also a "light to the Gentiles".

In writing to the Gentiles, "those who have obtained like precious faith with [Israel].." (2Pt1:1) Peter explains how it was not God's purpose that "any should perish but that all should come to repentance". (2Pt3:9) Just like many today try to categorize certain classes of people as being "unsavable", the Jews considered Gentiles "outside" of God's grace. When God gave the Law to Israel, as they celebrated Salvation each year with Passover, Passover was a strictly Jewish observance. However, Gentiles could come to God and observe it, too. But they had to "become a Jew" through circumcision. (Ex12:48) Even back then, Salvation was the same for all... ".you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land" (Nu9:14) Salvation was for "whoever believes.." (Is28:16) There was "no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Rom10:11-13, Joel2:32)

But Israel had become exclusive. Instead of being a "light to the nations", they shut out the Gospel and called Gentiles, "dogs". Rather than inviting Gentiles to the Lord, and telling them 'how' to do so, they were shut out as

"unclean". You see, this is how Paul introduces this... "you were call Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands.." (vs11) You see, even after Jesus had returned to Heaven, many Jews wanted to Judaize the new Gentile converts, and force them to keep all the Jewish 'physical' rituals. That's what the whole chapter of Acts15 is about; and it was decided that the old Jewish rituals were NOT necessary to Gentiles. In other words, Paul is basically confirming what James/Peter was saying, 'The Jews kept you Gentiles out by their stubbornness.' But God's purpose was to "[visit] the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.." (Acts15:14) And while Israel continues to be rebellious, God is continuing to receive Gentiles "until the fullness of the Gentiles" comes in. (Rom11:25b)

Just as Jesus "came unto His own", Gentiles are also "made near by the blood of Christ". (vs13) The Church has no "middle wall of division" (vs14) The Church has no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The Church does not have "ordinances". (vs15) Most people in christendom today maintain ordinances, but they are not Scriptural. We are given only Baptism-immersion (Mt28:19) and the Lord's Supper. (1Cor11:23-26) Anything else is extra-Biblical.

Along with the removing of this "middle wall", is the removal of "enmity", thus, "making peace". (vs15b) Remember that one of the characteristics of the Church is that it "[loves] one another...by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn13:34-35) And John goes so far as to say, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1Jn4:8) In other words, if you see organizations that are teaching "how to" love one another, and having rallies and campaigns, promoting the fact that they "need to" love one another...they are NOT CHRISTIAN. Such groups are not of THE Church of Jesus Christ. Remember, "God -IS- love". Thus, True Believers into Jesus Christ will also be characterized by love. If they are not, they are not in Christ. They are not Christians. Always remember, our "new nature" did not come about from our own efforts. God saved us for His own glory. (vs7) We were born "from above". (Jn3:3) Part of that 'package deal' is "love". Love is the opposite of anger and enmity. Thus, Jews who truly are "Israel of Israel" (Rom9:6) because they are Jews "of the heart" (Rom2:28-29), and Gentile Believers, will be "one" with each other. (Jn17:21) They will not need to work at "becoming" one. If they are in Christ, they already -ARE- 'one' with each other.

There is, then, Reconciliation. (vs16) Not, blacks and whites reconciling to each other. Not, 'straights' reconciling and accepting homosexuals into fellowship. Not, whites apologizing to native Americans and embracing their gods. No!! No!! "...that He might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile] -TO-GOD- in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." (vs16) Notice carefully, that this is not a reconciling of Jews and Gentiles to each other. It is not a case of Gentiles being grafted in to Jews. Christ's death was for both Jew -and- Gentile, alike, for the purpose of reconciling "the world" (Jn3:16) to God. While the removal of the "middle

wall" brings about peace between Jew and Gentile, the 'real' enmity that existed was between man and God. So this "peace" that is made is two-fold. While we mentioned the Jew/Gentile peace first, because this passage's topic is how Gentiles have now been included, the reality is that the peace 'with God' comes first. When we have been reconciled to God, we are "justified by faith" and as a result we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". (Rom5:1)

What does it mean to reconcile something? This is an accounting term. The end of the month comes and you sit down to the kitchen table and add up the checks and credit card stubs and compare that total against your pay stubs. You calculate how much was in the account at the beginning of the month, and now, what is there at the end of the month in your check register. And then, you compare those figures against the statement that came from the bank... what the bank says is in your account. You reconcile whether your account is overdrawn, or you are in good shape, etc.

Remember... we were dead. We were deserving of God's wrath. Our account was overdrawn. We not only had a -0- balance, we were in the negative numbers, and had the resultant penalties. Jesus' death on the cross applied to our account before the Father, and now as God looks at the books, He sees Jesus' blood applied to our account... both Jew and Gentile, equally. That is what it means to be "reconciled to God". (Rom5:10, 2Cor5:20)

Jesus "preached peace" (Is52:7) both to Jew and Gentile. (vs17) Those "afar off" (Gentiles), and "those who were near" (Jews). And we now "both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father". (vs18) Thus, as the Jews would keep Gentiles out, that is no longer the case. Where Gentiles used to have their "outer court", we now have the same access along with God's Elect, the Jews. We are 'both' part of the same "household of God". (vs19)

What is this household's "foundation"? Upon what does the Church stand? Spirit-fillings and prophecies? No. The "apostles and prophets". (vs20) When John is shown a vision of the "holy Jerusalem" (Rev21:10), notice that the twelve gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. (vs12) And the foundation was twelve, with the names of the twelve "apostles of the Lamb". (vs14) To Israel had been given the responsibility to keep "the oracles of God". (Rom3:2) The Scriptures. And yet, Jesus would berate the scribes and pharisees, and the "lawyers", the ones who knew the law, for hindering people from entering God's kingdom. (Lk11:52) They, the "door keepers" (so-to-speak), would figuratively "shut the door" on people coming to God. "...Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him" were also in proximity to the "gates" and "everlasting doors" where the "King of Glory" could come in. (Ps24) Remember, the Law and Prophets were until John. And then came the Apostles.

You see...this is the SCRIPTURES. How do we know what the Church is? From the Scriptures. And notice that Paul does not exclude the O.T. in this statement. There are some cult-like groups that totally reject the O.T. They call themselves "New Testament Churches". But God has never changed. "For I am the LORD, I do not change.." (Mal3:6) And "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone". Christ is the central theme throughout the Scriptures, beginning as the woman's "Seed" (Gen3:15), to the "Angel" who led Israel (Ex23:23, 1Cor10:4), to the prophecy of His virgin-birth (Is7:14), to His death, burial, resurrection (1Cor15:1-3), to His reigning as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev19:16), to His promise, "Surely I am coming quickly!" (Rev22:20) This is why people of the Church are called "-CHRIST-ians". We have not only "called upon the name of the Lord" (Rom10:13) for salvation, but we are called "by His name". "..and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord.." (Am9:12, Acts15:17) Our marching orders come through the Scriptures.

Thus, this same Paul would write to the young pastor (Timothy) what his marching orders were. Occasionally people email me, asking for advice on a school or seminary that I would recommend for them to attend. Unfortunately, all the schools I know of, I cannot recommend. There are two that I wonder about...wondering if they are still worth attending. But there are too many questions. You see, Paul did not recommend any seminaries for young preachers to get their training. "..that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." ...but now that you have grown up as a fine Christian, be sure to go to a right-proper seminary so they can teach you how to "interpret" them... ?? Is that what it says? "..that the man of God may be -COMPLETE-, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2Tim3:15-17) Ya, but! How can I be sure I am 'interpreting' the Bible correctly unless some 'wise' person with degrees behind his name tells me? Well, certainly, Godly men can be helpful, and we will see how that works in ch4. However, the Scriptures are not for any "private interpretation". (2Pt1:20b) And notice, "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (1Jn2:27) Remember, Jesus is the "chief cornerstone". What did the Cornerstone say would be the case? "..when He, the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth..." (Jn16:13) One reason so many would-be preachers "need" seminary is because they do not have the Spirit of Truth. (Rom8:9) They are not Believers. When a person is a True Believer, he has the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us out of the Scriptures. That is 'really' all we need.

And as this "holy temple" is built up together, it grows together, is joined together, for a "habitation of God in the Spirit". (vs21-22) Ch4 will cover in

more depth how Believers interact with each other and how this all comes about.

Mystery: through Paul to the Gentiles - (Ephesians 3:1-13)A

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.. to me, who am less than the least of all saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles.. do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (vs1,8,13)

For the "oneness" I often feel with Paul's spirit through his writings, he also often frustrates me. If you were to visit me in my house, you would have no trouble finding places to run your fingers through the dust. As a 'typical' bachelor, I don't clean house nearly as often as I should. But, I keep a "neat" house. You will not find my clothes lying all over the place. Everything has its proper place. When I used to work in electronics assembly, if an engineer had come and used my work station, and left it a 'mess', I 'had to' clean up first, before I could start work. I cannot do precision work with everything all willy nilly scattered around me disheveled. And when I come to studies like these, my personal make-up likes "order". In school I used to absolutely -love- to diagram sentences. But when we come to Paul's writings, he typically travels along, often addressing several topics simultaneously, carrying the topic[s] along, interspersing comments about everything, as he strings his sentences along verse after verse. For instance, notice that in this chapter the first period doesn't appear until vs7. Then, 12,13,19,21. I wonder what a sentence diagram for it would look like!

In the first part of this chapter Paul addresses 1) Paul, 2) Gentiles, 3) mysteries, 4) principalities and powers... all four as he rolls along. Let's see if we can divide it down into two studies. (A & B)

Why was Paul a prisoner? "For you [us] Gentiles.." (vs1) Remember how we observed that Ephesians is a "prison epistle". How did he come to be in prison? If we go back to Acts 21-22 we have the account where the Jews were going about to kill him near the temple, and after the Roman soldiers come and rescue him, he gives a speech to the mob from the stairway going up to the Roman military barracks. And as he is giving his testimony, when he comes to the part where Jesus tells him, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles", the mob erupts, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live". (22:21-22) And when left with a choice of going back to Jerusalem to face charges, he appeals to Caesar (25:11-12), even though, as the Roman rulers knew, he had done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment. But the Jews rejected the Holy Spirit, and when the gospel was "sent to the Gentiles" (28:28), the Jews hated and hounded Paul. Why? Because he was proclaiming God's Grace to Gentiles. Their attitude about Gentiles was about the same as many today who call themselves "Christian" feel about Israel, believing a doctrine called "Replacement Theology (the Church 'replaced' Israel)",

who assume a permanent state of condemnation upon Jews, never again to be restored. Again, to those I say, Look at Israel today, now, in the middle east!

But Paul encourages Ephesus not to "lose heart" over his situation. Not to feel sorry for him. He considered his own afflictions as "filling up" what was "lacking" in Christ's afflictions. (Col1:24) Just as Paul and Silas were singing praises in prison after having just been beaten up (Acts16:25), and the exhortation to new Believers was that "we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Ac14:22), and he counted all things as "loss" for Christ. (Phil3:8) If he had not been in prison, would the epistles have been written? Think of how many millions of people have read God's Word at Paul's pen, that might not have had it, had he had what most people would consider a "successful" ministry directly to thousands of people in huge crusades. His ministry, due to his imprisonment, has extended for nearly two millennia.

Paul was given many revelations. (2Cor12:7) And so, in addition to imprisonment, lest these revelations might puff him up with pride, he also had a "thorn"...to help keep him humble. But the Lord made many mysteries known to the Church through Paul (vs3) The accusation against Paul by the Jews was that he was overturning the Jewish Law (they thought -Acts18:13). For all the Law given by Moses, they never saw God's 'grace', even though it was always there. But Paul is the one who emphasized that we are saved "by grace" (2:8). And this is where "dispensation" teaching calls the Church age, the "age of grace". (vs2)

While God's grace always existed (otherwise, David & Bathsheba should have been stoned to death), people didn't recognize it as such. It "was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit..." (vs5) But God chose -Paul- for this task. (vs7) Peter's ministry was primarily to Jews, who had been characterized by Law. Paul's was to Gentiles, with Grace. (Gal2:7-8)

How did Paul come to know these mysteries? "...by revelation.." (vs3) When did this happen? He says, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.." (Gal1:16-2:2) He didn't attend the Jerusalem Theological Seminary, or Nazareth Evangelical Divinity School and sit under Peter, James and John. He went into the wilderness of Arabia. It was only after he had been alone with the Lord (whatever the nature of that time may have been), that he then went to see Peter to -verify- with Peter what he had received. You see, he was a true apostle, having been taught by the Lord, directly. And Peter, also, gives his stamp of authentication upon Paul's ministry. (2Pt3:15-16) Peter says that the wisdom was "given to him".

Mystery: made known to principalities & powers - (Ephesians 3:1-13)B

So, what is the nature of this mystery? In ch2 Paul explains how Gentiles who used to be "far off" (2:17) are now brought near by the blood of Christ. Jews always held Gentiles off at arm's length. They wouldn't touch them with a "ten foot pole". They were "dogs". On the other hand, Jews, in their own minds, were God's special 'elite'. You see, they understood that the term "elect" (Is45:4) referred to them. They, Jews, to whom Jesus was saying it, would have properly understood that "elect" (Mt24:31) meant Israel. And they had this 'position' because God called Abraham out of Ur, and through the patriarchs formed the nation of Israel. You see, as "Jews", they viewed themselves as being 'eternally secure'... God loved them and nobody else. If a person came to God, they came 'through' Israel. Males were circumcised. They became "Jews". Being "Jew" was synonymous with being related to God.

But God's purpose was not limited to -just- Jews. If a person looks at a map of the globe, understanding continental drift when the earth became "divided" (Gen10:25), it is easy to see how Israel is directly in the "center" of the earth's land masses. If the Americas were brought back and tucked in next to Europe and Africa, bring Australia back up, and join Antarctica into it, from which it originally split, into one land-mass, Israel would be the geographic center of it all.

And so, what was God's purpose for Israel? Just to have Israel (only) be His people? It is the "mystery of Christ" (vs4), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (vs8), "created..through Jesus Christ" (vs9). It was an "eternal purpose" which was accomplished "in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vs11)

Abraham's "Seed". (Gen12:3, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14) The "Seed" of the woman. (Gen3:15) This "Seed" was to be a "light to the Gentiles". (Is42:6, 49:6) And in speaking of Israel bringing forth the Messiah, it also says that "the Gentiles shall come to your light.." (Is60:3) When Jesus was born, Simeon blessed Him saying, among other things, "a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles.." (Lk2:32) And when Jews were complaining that Paul and Barnabas spoke of Christ, they turned back on them, "since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" and then quote, "I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ENDS OF THE EARTH" (Acts13:46-47)

You see, God's purpose was NOT that "any should perish". (2Pt3:9) God did not create man with the desire that he would disobey, and thus incur death upon the human race. God wanted to have fellowship. Even as mankind after the flood went after the religion of Nimrod, which has become in these days, the church of Rome; God's desire has been that

man would know Him. Nimrod's religion has continually been "in front of" (and obscuring) God. (Gen10:9) And so, God hand-picked Abraham, from out of the same place where Nimrod began. Nimrod began at Babel. God began Israel some 500 miles to the west. Yes, God specifically chose Israel and called them His "elect". But His desire was for more than -JUST-Israel. In showing His power 'through' Israel, it was for the purpose of showing Himself to the whole world. Israel was to be a "light" of God's grace, in spite of man's rebellion. If only, sinful man would humble himself and turn to God. But Israel was to be the shining example of what God intended... for others to follow.

But all the world saw was Israel. And, apparently, that's all the O.T. prophets saw, too, even though they were used to proclaiming God's prophecies regarding the Gentiles. They had hundreds of years of animal sacrifices. Actually, beginning with Adam and Abel, until Jesus died (4000 years) man sacrificed animals. That's a long time. Time enough for kingdoms and dynasties to rise and fall.

When the prophets wrote of "the grace that would come to you" (1Pt1:10) they were "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating" regarding the coming of Jesus Christ. (vs11) And they patiently, obediently, prophesied... understanding that it was a matter "not to themselves" but for "us". (vs12) And here is an amazing thing...even the "angels desire to look into" it. For all the glories the angels are privy to, being around God's presence, they do not have a connection into God's mind and His purposes.

Apparently the angelic beings were created prior to the earth and man. (Job38:7) Apparently they were 'praising' as He created. And when we consider the conversation between God and satan regarding Job in ch1, it almost has a sense of... when satan challenged God's position and wanted to "be like the Most High" (Is14:14)... that God and satan perhaps have these continual dialogues back and forth. Almost as though satan is challenging God to prove Himself... so God is saying, 'You want proof? Well, watch this..' And while God spoke to satan of the Seed of the woman, He likely didn't explain the "how" of it all to satan. And so, as God chose Abraham and formed Israel, then, satan had his next challenge. So he has been fighting Israel all along the way. Then, when Jesus was born, he tried to kill Him. Then, Jesus died on the cross...Ahhh...victory at last!! Uh-Oh...but, Jesus rose again! But by now, Israel was all corrupt. They were apostate. So then, out springs the Church.

Israel, in the geographical center of the earth, to be a light to the nations, satan managed to corrupt. But now, as the Church is being birthed, it is accomplishing what Israel refused to do. The Church, now, includes all nations. There is no distinction between "Jew and Greek" (Rom10:12, Gal3:28, Col3:11) And it is something not tied to nationalities, rituals and ordinances. (Eph2:15) It possesses something (someOne) that O.T. people didn't have. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer. (Rom8:9,

Jn16:7) One of the fulfillments of God saying "I will dwell with them and they shall be My people" (Lev26:12, 2Cor6:16, Heb8:10)

The Church has "the mind of Christ". (1Cor2:16) And so God can confront satan, the "prince of the power of the air" (2:2), and the "rulers of the darkness of this age" and the "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (6:12), and reply back, 'OK... My Son has now made redemption for the Church. The Church has My Holy Spirit. Know and understand My purpose...'

Dear Believer: whatever we are, as Christ's Church, part of our very existence is for the purpose of satan's observation, and that of the rest of the angelic hosts. We are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses". (Heb12:1) God created man in perfection... the angels watched. When satan lured Adam and Eve away into sin, they watched. When Israel was formed and became a great nation, they watched... and satan's forces continually worked at corrupting her. When Jesus was born, the "heavenly host" announced the matter and "praised God" (Lk2:11-14) and satan tried to kill Him through Herod. And now that the Church has been functioning, they are still watching. And yes, satan still tries to corrupt.

However, where Israel failed to fill the earth with God's Law, the Church is succeeding. "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (Rom10:18) Israel was a 'national' entity, and also by "flesh and blood". But in Christ, for the Church, there is no distinction. (Gal3:28, Col3:11) "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Rom8:14) Gentiles are "fellow heirs" and of the "same body...in Christ". (vs6)

You see, satan had a losing battle before he ever began to challenge God. It appeared that when salvation seemed to be limited to a tiny national entity like Israel, he could try to gang up on her militarily and politically. In fact, he still hasn't got that one figured out yet, as his servants, the Arabs, are still trying to make Israel 'disappear'...as though, if they make Israel disappear, then, somehow God will go away, too, and Allah will have been proven to be "greater". But the "Church" was part of God's plan, His "eternal" purpose. This mystery that nobody prior to the Church understood, was "hidden in God". (vs9) And so now, as God's Holy Spirit indwells the Believer, this mystery that was "in" God, is also now manifested "in" the Church.

Now, satan's hosts have been trying, also, to corrupt the Church. But I would guess he is probably frustrated, because... while he has his counterfeit organization that the world calls "the church", he is still not able to get to the -real- Believers. True faith is of the "heart". (Rom2:29, 10:8, Heb10:22) Even the 'most spiritual seeming' ones from his camp never fully fellowship with True Believers. There is one modern prophet who is viewed by many to be one of the 'few' remaining faithful proclaimers of God's Word. A few years ago I tried to somehow become associated with

him, and work 'with' him, figuring he was God's messenger. (This was before VW began) But there was -just- not the right set of circumstances. He seemed to be at a distance... unapproachable. Now, I am understanding why, as he is becoming exposed as a false prophet. And God also obviously had a different job for me! The churches I have been in, in the past, where I was politicked out, were not modernistic/liberal churches. They were ones who had correct Statements of Faith, and preached from the Bible. But there was always a -certain- 'distinction' between them and me. And eventually, with time, God's Word would reveal 'what' the differences were. In all these 'organizations' called "christian church", I have always been an odd-ball.

And what I say about myself, I hear from many of you. Many are the e-mails that say variations of, "I'm glad you said that...I've been saying it, too...but everybody around me thinks I'm crazy...I was beginning to think I was the only one who felt this way..."

You know...I betcha satan must be going crazy over us who are Real Believers...because, no matter how 'cleverly' he disguises his counterfeits, when we are in God's Word, eventually the Truth wins out, and he is exposed. Sometimes, in the case of his prophets who proclaim 99.999% truth, it takes several years. But -eventually- it becomes known that "none of them were of us". (1Jn2:19) It's like Jesus said, "to deceive, IF POSSIBLE, the elect". (Mt24:24) Satan tries, but he can't -quite- get us... because we are the fulfillment of God's mystery since the beginning. Satan could corrupt the rest, but he cannot touch us, because we are the "righteousness of God in [Christ]". (2Cor5:21)

Filled with all the Fullness of God - (Ephesians 3:14-21)

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. (vs14-15)

First of all, notice what we have addressed on other occasions. Paul prays -to- the "Father". Not Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. And this is as Jesus instructed to pray, "Our Father...in Heaven" (Mt6:9)

And then, notice the -name-. In the last lesson we observed how the heavenly hosts are observing God's creation...and the Church. And how the whole matter of God's grace to the Gentiles was a mystery to them. We as Believers are called by God's name, "And all the Gentiles who are called by My name.." (Amos9:12) as the Believers were first called "Christians" in Antioch (Acts11:26), a Gentile location; not Jerusalem. That's CHRIST-ians. Remember that, while we speak so much of the Church, and Gentiles, this is all the work of Christ. It is the "mystery of Christ". (vs4) And His name is "above every name" and all creation will bow "at the name of Jesus"... "of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth". (Phil2:9-10)

So then, it should be obvious that, since we are the recipients and participants of God's eternal mystery, it is not our purpose to gloat in 'our' position, and the admiration of the hosts of Heaven, strutting our stuff to the grandstands of the "cloud of witnesses" (Heb12:1), like (American) football players do after they make that touchdown, doing their stupid idiotic little dances. No! What does Paul pray for? Strength, understanding and knowledge of Christ, and to be filled with the "fullness of God". No, we don't address the grand stands as charismaniacs pretend to be little gods, issuing 'commands' to the "principalities and powers"! No! But we -do- have "boldness and access (to God's "throne of grace" -Heb4:16) with confidence through faith in Him [Christ]". (vs12)

You see, this is the same thing he says in ch1. Understanding and being enlightened, and knowledge of Christ. (1:17-18) Again, this is not charismania's Hindu/TM/Yoga-style mystical empty-headed worship mantras. It is Understanding with the Mind. (1Cor14:15) Apparently, what he is preparing to give in terms of specifics in ch4-6 must be pretty important. He wants his audience to be clear headed, in Christ, growing, learning, understanding.

Where is the Believer's strength? Is it in being "charged up" on Sunday by going and 'worshipping' with others? No. It is "with might through His Spirit in the -inner- man" (vs16) It is "Christ -in- you" (Col1:27) It is the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9) It is not mysticism of meditating empty-headedly, and through our own inward meditative process, conjuring up a god-presence

within ourselves; and if we can but only learn how to meditate fully, we can 'achieve' this state of power. No, it comes about "according to the riches of -HIS- glory". (vs16) If it is His glory, it is obviously something He does. Remember that it is God's power that is "toward us". (1:19)

We already noted, "Christ in you". Here it says, "..that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith". (vs17) Remember, the "just shall live by faith". (Rom1:17b) Without faith it is "impossible" to please Him. (Heb11:6) From the previous chapter, remember 'where' our faith came from? From Christ. It is a "gift".

If Christ is indwelling us, we are rooted and grounded...IN LOVE. The one command Jesus gave as the defining characteristic of Believers is their "love for one another". (Jn13:34-35) It is how the world can tell that we are Believers. If a person doesn't have love, let us repeat: they are not True Believers. (1Jn4:8) And we can only love Him because "He first loved us". (1Jn4:19) Remember, our "foundation" is Jesus Christ. (1Cor3:11) If we are becoming grounded in Christ, we will 'naturally' love, because "God -is- love". (1Jn4:8,16)

As we grow from being "babes" who nurse on milk (Heb5:13, 1Pt2:2), Paul prays that they would "be able to comprehend with all the saints" (vs18). Recall that he says to Corinth to be of the "same mind and in the same judgment". (1Cor1:10) As Believers grow, we all grow together. This will be the major theme of chs4-5... "how" this happens. How the Church functions together to help all its members to "grow up in all things into [Christ].." (4:15) It is not God's purpose that we remain ignorant, empty-headed mantra-babbling babies who don't want doctrine. How else do we learn the "width, length, depth and height" (vs18) of Christ, unless we are rooted and grounded in Christ, and are learning? To the teachers who are instrumental in this growth Paul exhorts, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1Tm4:16) "..speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.." (Tit2:1) Doctrine is "teaching". If teachers are teaching, then, the ones they are teaching need to be -learning-.

What is the goal? To be filled (vs19), "abound more and more" (1Th4:1) to overflowing. This is Christ's goal when He gives the "water of life", that it should be a "fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn4:14) How do we do this? "..be filled with the [Holy] Spirit". (5:18) No, this is not charismania's mysticism. But it is "exceedingly abundantly...according to the power that works in us". (vs20) Again, God's power that is "toward us". It is not our doing. It is the working of Christ Jesus.

- His Faith
- His Holiness
- His Life
- His Strength
- His Power
- His Growth
- His Doctrine
- His Love
- His Glory

What the hosts of Heaven see as they watch the church (vs10) is the working of Jesus Christ. They see His "glory in the church". (vs21) And what they see fulfills the age-old 'mystery'. This glory is "by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Walk Worthy - (Ephesians 4:1-6)

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." (vs1)

This verse, right here, shows how far off the mark today's "church" has deviated, doesn't it. A typical invitation tells people to come "just as they are", that Jesus' grace "accepts" them with wide open arms "just as they are". Once the person has allegedly now become a Christian, there is no change in the life, because after all, their "worth" is what 'attracted' God to them. And so, the "Christian life" consists of prayer, asking Jesus to "walk with me" and "go with me". The basic thrust of it all is that: I've got 'my' way established, and God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, all, are expected to tow the line and give me strength to go along 'my' path.

Unfortunately, some of this mentality comes from erroneous translations of God's Word. They boldly proclaim "I can do all things..." (Phil4:13) You see, this is a mentality of "I", "me", "mine", "our", "us". "I" am doing. Once God gives it, it is now "my" strength. But notice a more correct rendering... "I have strength for all things in Christ who strengthens me." (LIT) Remember that the power that is "toward us" is "-HIS- power". (1:19) And this power is only available on our behalf as we are "in Christ".

Remember that Jesus is the "Head", and we are the "body". (1:22-23) Let us observe: God created living beings as an example of the spiritual relationship. The commands (electrical impulses) which make the various body muscles respond come from the head, the brain. What happens when a chicken's head is chopped off, before the blood is all gone? The chicken's body goes flopping and running all over the place, bumping into things. Not doing anything of value...but splattering everything in sight with its blood. Making a royal mess!

Sadly, that which calls itself the "Church" today is like that headless chicken. Oh, indeed, it is making a big splash. It is making lots of noise and "going places". It is highly "active", covering lots of ground, fluttering all over the place. Others see activity and a big ruckus. But it is dead. It is without a Head. The next stage for the headless chicken is to end up on somebody's meal table. And the headless "church" is ending up on satan's meal table. He loves to "devour". (1Pt5:8) It is not even worthy of God's meal table, as He says that He is "vomiting" it out of His mouth. (Rev3:16)

We, the True Church of Believers, are the "body of Christ" (1Cor12:27, Eph1:23,4:12) If we are behaving as a body, it is -His- "power that works in us". (3:20) "We" are not "doing". "He" is doing "in us".

Thus, if the spinal cord hasn't been damaged (between the head and body), vs1 is a no-brainer, isn't it. Whatever the head sends down the signal path to the body, the body is going to respond. Since the Head is

Jesus Christ, when He gives commands, our behavior is going to be "worthy" of Him. We will be behaving "worthy" of -His- calling, as we are being "conformed to the image of His Son". (Rom8:29) God was not reconciled to us, to become like us; but we were "reconciled -to- God" (Rom5:10, 2Cor5:20). Thus, our behavior is to conform -to- the lofty heights of God's holiness.

However, notice also that Paul is "beseech"ing. Pleading with his hearers. Exhorting. Now, if he is exhorting "that it be so", apparently it is 'possible' for Believers to -not- always be walking "worthy" of Christ. We are not, now, speaking of the "pretend church" of Laodicea that God is vomiting out. But we are speaking of genuine Believers.

If the commands go from the head to the body, and the body is a "live" body, what sorts of things keep the body from responding properly to the head? Well, in the next chapter he speaks of "do not be drunk..." (5:18) What happens when a person is drunk? The alcohol goes up into the brain and deadens the brain cells. Does it also affect the rest of the nervous system? When a person is kept conscious through a medical procedure, often a spinal block is used...to keep the person's brain alert and the person awake, but deaden any points beyond the block. Or, a 'local' anesthetic is used. Something which blocks the flow of nervous impulses. In other words, something which makes a "break" between the brain and the body part in question. Whether the signal is blocked with drugs, or an accident has caused a break in the nerves, there is no longer a viable connection between the head and the body.

How does the body of Christ stay "connected" to the Head? The "unity of the Spirit". (vs3) Remember how Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak" (Jn16:13) You see, the Holy Spirit is like the nervous system. He takes "of what is [Christ's]" and declares it "to [us]". (16:14) Perhaps this explains Paul's word, "Do not quench the Spirit". (1Th5:19) If we quench the Holy Spirit by being "drunk", we cannot receive the commands from Christ, our Head.

If we go back to that chicken... when the head is cut off the chicken, it flutters around, making quite a spectacle. Indeed, its body muscles are receiving nervous impulses, 'locally', to make the muscles twitch. However, what the muscles are receiving is NOT coming from the head. Are we understanding? When the pretend church prays 'to' the spirits to be "spirit-filled", they are like that headless chicken. Their 'muscles' are receiving "local" nervous (spirit) impulses, but their directives are not coming from the Head, Jesus Christ. Just like the flutterings come from 'spurious' nervous impulses, so too, the pretend church, in seeking what they do, their spirits are "spurious". They are not the Holy Spirit, with Christ's message. They are doing their own thing, APART FROM the "Head". There are -many- spurious impulses. But there is only -ONE- Holy Spirit. You see: what charismania does is -NOT- "worthy of the calling". They

were -NOT- "called" to that calling from/by the "Head". They are "headless".

Jesus Christ is -ONE-. The Holy Spirit is -ONE-. And, the body is -ONE-. (vs4-5) And yes, there is -ONE- "faith"... "doctrine". No, we are not to do like one "ministry" recently was telling me... to go and evangelize, and "get them saved"... and then, "don't confuse" the issue by teaching doctrine. After all, all the various people come from different ecclesiastical backgrounds. They don't want to "cause divisions" by talking doctrine. Well, if there is -ONE- Head, does that Head have many different doctrines? No! If the brain is sending signals to certain muscles, if it sends a mixed signal, the body goes into spasms. There is only -ONE- doctrine/faith. The Body of Christ -IS- "perfectly joined together in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT" (1Cor1:10) So again... if they are of all sorts of "different" doctrines, they are -NOT- of the Head, Christ... because Christ is -ONE-, and He communicates with His body through His -ONE- Spirit.

Thus, if this -ONE- God is "in you all" (vs6b), what will others see as we walk "worthy of the calling"? What are the outward manifestations of a person who is in Christ who is part of Christ's body? Uh, let's see: self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, self-sufficiency... right?? Well, no! 'Somewhat' the opposite of those things... "all lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering" and "bearing with one another in love".(vs2) Do we need to spend time defining these terms? I don't really think so. If a person isn't characterized by them, it is not because the terms are "not understood". It's a 'heart' problem. Their "unity of the Spirit" has been severed or dulled. The solution is to "keep" the unity of the Spirit in the "bond of peace".

See Also Addendum:

Q/A -Don't need to Define: Lowliness, gentleness, etc?

Christ's Gifts to Men - (Ephesians 4:7-16)

"..from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every individual does its part, causes growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (vs16)

Last lesson we observed how the Holy Spirit conveys the Head's commands to the body, so that it works in "unity"... not in spasms. Sometimes various body parts have ailments, and need assistance from other body parts. Ever since I've had arthritis since about the time VW began (it is my "thorn in the flesh"), every once in awhile my writing hand goes into a spasm fit. My penmanship has never been great to begin with, but there are occasions when trying to write, the pen just seems to have a mind of its own...jerking in strange directions. When this happens, sometimes the other hand comes along to 'steady' the hand, to keep it from shaking. The one hand helps the other.

Our bodies have certain needs. Our stomachs need nourishment. But I have yet to see a stomach, just on its own, get up, go to the fridge, and find some food. The 'head' knows the stomach's need, so it issues a command to the feet to 'move'. The feet don't move merely themselves. When the feet move, the whole body moves with them. In doing so, the stomach gets transported to the fridge. However, now the body is positioned in proximity to the fridge...but the stomach is still hungry. The feet are not designed to do much more than transport the body...so, the 'head' issues some more commands...this time, to the hands. The hands open the door, get the food, prepare it. And so, the food is now sitting on the counter, ready to be eaten. But the stomach is still empty. Time for more commands from the 'head'. The food is raised to the mouth by the hands, and now it's time for the jaw and mouth to move and chew the food. Get the picture? If the message didn't reach the feet, hands, mouth... and if they did not respond appropriately, the stomach would go hungry, and the entire body would eventually become weak due to malnutrition.

So, understand why the "gifts" to the Church are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors. (vs11) What is the Church's spiritual food? "Your words were found, and I ate them..." (Jer15:16) Man cannot live just on bread alone, but "by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (De8:3) These four Church gifts are ones which impart God's Word to the Body. God gives honor to leaders... "..especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine". (1Tm5:17)

"Word and doctrine" ...the two things today's pretend "church" rejects. After times of "worship", pastors are known to say, "We won't have Scripture tonight...we've had the spirit.." You see, if they are minus the Head, and they are flopping around with spurious nervous impulses, they are about to keel over anyway as soon as the life-blood is all drained out.

No nourishment will benefit them. Thus, they do not feed themselves. When they reject doctrine, they are 'proving' to all observers that they are minus the Head. The Body which is in communication with the Head via the Holy Spirit "Feeds" itself. The feet, hands and mouth do what is necessary to get nutrients into the stomach, so that they can reach all the body parts, so it can be healthy and grow.

What is the desired outcome? To "GROW UP" in all things in Christ. (vs15) How tall are we to grow? "To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (vs13) How do we know how we compare to Christ? When we "come to the unity of faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God". You see, the Godly teachers pour the food down into the stomach. When Jesus gives His "water of life" it fills to overflowing, a "fountain of water springing up into everlasting life". (Jn4:14b) How do the teachers know how to fill the stomach? Their orders come from the Head. He commands, "You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord" (Eze2:4) The stewards are to "give them food in due season" (Mt24:45)

Now, while doctrine is required, not all doctrine is good. If a baby was left to its own devices, it would end up with all sorts of things in its mouth. It would eat rotten food, as well as waste products, and would also put things in its mouth by which it would choke. Thus, the more mature teachers (they are not to be "new converts" -1Tm3:6) see a baby headed towards the harmful things, they come along and pull them away, wipe their mouths and hands off, and give them good food.

You see, again, today's scourge... 'Let's all get together and "dialogue" and learn from each other.' Let's mix up the good food with the rotten. Let's add a little waste byproducts into the mix. Add in some weeds. After all, we want to "experience" all the options. Stir it all up, and partake. No! This passage -specifically- warns against many different doctrines... "We should NO LONGER BE CHILDREN, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine" (vs14) When the pretend "church" insists on their doctrinal smorgasboard, they are demonstrating their infantile nature. Israel also lusted after the lemons, leeks and garlicks of Egypt....and wanted "meat". They were not content with God's manna. And "with most of them God was not well pleased" (1Cor10:5)

The world promotes its "diversity" as a good thing. Their partial truths by which their lies are covered up are called "trickery of men" and "cunning craftiness" and "deceitful plotting". (vs14) But who is the "father" of lies? (Jn8:44) Satan. The Body grows through "truth". Again, the Head, Jesus Christ, -IS- the "Truth". (Jn14:6) If the doctrine, and/or delivery are full of deceit and cunning, by definition it is not of Christ. One of the recent complaints against considerations that babies of unbelievers who die going to hell was on the order of, "How can you tell somebody their baby went to hell??" Well, if it is the truth...there is no other thing that can be said.

If the eye saw that a sharp object had fallen into the food, and didn't communicate the fact so the hand would first pull the object out, the object would accompany the food into the stomach, and injury would result. If the eye sees the object in the food and communicates to the hand to "stop" ...that is not "hateful". It cares for the stomach. If the food got up to the mouth, but the nose smelled that it was rotten, and persuaded the mouth to purse its lips to not let the food in, that is not 'hate' against the hand. It is looking out for the welfare of the Body. And again, the communications that happen between the body parts do so via the nervous system of the Holy Spirit. The eye saw the sharp object, and as the hand is sensitive to the Holy Spirit it knows that what the eye saw was correct, and adjusts its actions accordingly.

You see, the Body of Christ works as a complete whole. God's Word is our food... our doctrine. We must listen to the Holy Spirit giving us directions from the Head. The teachers must be -TRUE- to God's Word. The rest of the body is dependent upon them for growth and health. God put them there...they did not choose to be teachers. If God did not pick them and appoint them, they are false teachers and their doctrine is false doctrine. God's appointee does not decide one day to go to seminary because "I want to be a preacher"; or go to Bible school, and at graduation time, "what shall I do with my degree? I know...I'll become a pastor!" No! Their work is not for themselves, but "for the edifying of the body of Christ". (vs12) To "equip" the saints for the work of ministry". And as the body is equipped and fed, they, in turn, do their part. The stomach processes the food, the heart pumps the blood and spreads the nutrients to the extremities. The lungs bring oxygen. And the Body all works and moves "together". One growth, one mission, one purpose... under the direction of the Head.

The entire Body all gets the -same- food (doctrine). If the foot gets a splinter, the whole body hurts, and goes about to get the splinter out. When the feet get dirty from walking in the world, the whole body, of its various parts, do their functions to wash the feet. And as the body learns to become coordinated, working together, it becomes strong. And as it exercises, notice the result of its added strength... "to discern both good and evil" (Heb5:14)

Thus, one of the measures of the growth of Believers is in how "separated" they are from the sin of the world. The more a Believer grows, the more they recognize sin for what it is. No... maturity does -NOT- join in "fellowship" with apostates. A mature Believer is one who is separated from the world, and unto Christ. Let's see... "separated" by definition is "holy". We have come back around full-circle to Paul's opening "purpose" for the Church...

"That we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love" (1:4)

Put Off the Old - (Ephesians 4:17-5:21)A

"This I say...that you no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the emptiness of their mind...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which is corrupted according to the deceitful lusts..." (~4:17-22)

If we all remember, the last lesson closed with a reminder of how this series began, that Christian maturity involves an "exercise" of our understandings "to discern both good and evil". (Heb5:14) Our goal before God is to be "holy and without blemish before Him in love". (1:4) There was a complaint from a passer-by that we hadn't addressed what "lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, etc" (4:2) are. Well, now is the time to discuss some specifics.

When we are saved we become "new creations" as we are "in Christ". (2Cor5:17) We are told to "...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Rom13:14) "For as many of you as were immersed into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal3:27) Job speaks of putting on righteousness like a "robe" (Job29:14) And again, "I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness..." (Is61:10)

This was symbolized for centuries in the O.T. in various ways, as well. When the priests prepared to serve in the temple, before they would put on the priestly garments, they would first "wash...with water" and then put the garments on. (Ex29:4-5) If a person had become "unclean" by whatever means one might become defiled, they had to shave, wash with water, and then put clean-washed clothes on. (Lev ch15, etc) Before a person could dwell "in the camp" of the rest who were clean, and/or come near the temple and participate in anything to do with worship, the unclean person had to -FIRST- get rid of the uncleanness. It had to be washed away.

You see... this is what salvation is, "according to His mercy He saved us, through the WASHING of REGENERATION and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Tit3:5) This is why a Believer is "immersed into Christ". (Rom6:3) This is why the symbolism of pouring some water over a baby's head into a basin is a pagan ritual. It is not dabbing some water with the fingers onto the top of the head. This is why "Philip and the eunuch went DOWN INTO THE WATER, and he IMMERSSED him." (Acts8:38) When a new Believer becomes part of Christ's body "...by one Spirit we were all immersed into one body" (1Cor12:13) And finally, to match the theme of "putting on the new man" (4:24), to repeat from earlier, "For as many of you as were immersed into Christ have PUT ON Christ." (Gal3:27)

Do we see one of the symbolisms of baptism here? When Ananias came to lay hands on Saul/Paul, after delivering God's message to him, telling him what his apostolic ministry would be, he says, "Arise and be immersed, and wash away your sins..." (Acts22:16)

And so, as we always do, because it is necessary, we find all this to be in contradistinction to what we see going on in christendom today. Easy-believerism says that "it doesn't matter". Whatever you were, it doesn't matter. God accepts you "just as you are". But Paul reminds us, "For this you know, that no prostitute, unclean person, nor covetous person, who is an idolator, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (5:5) They continually come up with all sorts of words and excuses, but Paul continues, "LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (5:6)

This concept is well-understood by them in their other everyday earthly things. If a couple is getting together to spend a romantic evening, the fellow does not show up at her door to take her out to dinner all sweaty, wearing the clothes he was working in. No, he goes home, takes off the dirty clothes, showers, shaves, dabs on some nice-smelling cologne, and puts on 'clean' clothes. It does not do, even, to merely take off the dirty coat and put a clean one on 'over' the rest of his dirty clothes/body. He - CLEANS- himself. He wants to be "presentable" to her. But for some reason, when it comes to Christ, to whom they claim to be 'married', suddenly everything they guide the rest of their lives by goes out the window. It doesn't 'matter'?!!!

They want to "put on Christ" without first "putting off" their dirty past. God had this to say to Israel in this regard, "You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of Jehovah is contemptible.' And when you offer the blind and sick, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably? Says Jehovah of Hosts. But now entreat God's favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably? Says Jehovah of Hosts." (Mal1:7-9) They are "alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart" (4:18) These things that we look at today in this lesson are characteristics of the unsaved; the way that we now "NO LONGER WALK" (4:17) When Israel did as they did, notice that Paul says that "with most of them God was not well pleased". (1Cor10:5) And those who hold to this theory today, and are characterized by being "past feeling" and "have GIVEN themselves over to lust, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (4:19) are no more saved than those of Israel were who were "scattered in the wilderness"!

So... before going to meet his loved one, a painter is going to "put off" his 'painting' clothes. A mechanic is going to "put off" his 'greasy' clothes. A

construction worker is going to "put off" that which has dirt, dust, cement, tar, etc. clinging.

So, if we are now in Christ, what do we put off?

"..putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor..." (4:25) Who is the "father" of lies? (Jn8:44) Satan. What is one of -THE- characteristics of Jesus Christ? When He manifested God to us, what we saw was "grace and TRUTH" (Jn1:14,17) He defines the essence of His purpose to Pilate, "that I should bear witness to the TRUTH" (Jn18:37) And to the disciples defines Himself, "I am the way, the -TRUTH-, and the life". (Jn14:6) Do you see a person who seems to be incapable of the truth? There is no possible way they can be a Believer. A Believer into Jesus Christ is characterized by Truth. Thus, if we are truthful, by definition, we put away lying.

"Be angry, but do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath." (4:26) Ok...is this a contradiction? Is there ever a time where it's OK to become angry? To hate? About 10 years ago, when my ex had first taken off, when I was at the lowest point in my life, a person took me under his wing. One evening he suggested I read Ps139, psychology's favorite self-esteem/affirmation chapter. But when we got together the next time, he was a bit tongue-tied when I also had noticed, "Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! ...do I not hate them, O Jehovah, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies." (Ps139:19-22) Jesus who was full of "gracious words" (Lk4:22), was also full of "zeal for [His Father's] house" (Jn2:17) as He made a whip and drove the merchants/thieves out of the temple. Is it OK to be angry at abortion? Is it OK to be angry when people pervert justice? As I work on the NKJV-fix project, when I see what the NKJV/KJV scholars did to those translations in some places...apparently 'deliberately'...I become angry. When I see the truth of some passage, phrase or word, compared to what we've been used to, sometimes I yell out in anger, and tears come to my eyes at what these people, WHO certainly had to have KNOWN BETTER, did to God's Word! ...BUT... do not "give place to the devil" by letting "the sun go down on your wrath". As we "have the mind of Christ" (1Cor2:16b), the same things that make God angry will also make us angry. But it is not our place to mete out vengeance, because God says, "vengeance is Mine" (Deu32:35). Anger that is allowed to fester into wrath, eventually turns into vengeance. And we are not to "avenge ourselves" (Rom12:19) Yes, we can become angry. But then we 'cast all our anxiety' (1Pt5:7) on Him; and if vengeance is required, God has promised, "I will repay" says the Lord. (Rom12:19)

As for all the individual items in this passage, we are not going to cover them all. You have your Bibles, you can read them. As if they were not already things which reside within our consciences. (Rom2:15)

However, let us look at one other 'group' of items.

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...but sexual perversion and all uncleanness...let it not even be named among you...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting...for this you know, that no prostitute, unclean person, nor covetous person, who is an idolator, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (~4:29-5:5)

This covers a whole host of things, but pretty much defines the nature of coffee break banter, locker room talk, topics for most late-night comedic monologues, the biggest audience laughs from sitcom situations.

Let us look at a couple of words here. Both the NKJV and LITV use "fornicator" in both 5:3 & 5. In vs5 the KJV delineates "whoremonger". However, most modern perversions have changed all these kinds of references to "immorality". However, even though they all start from a base of the Greek, "porn", when they have different endings, they have different definitions. The word in vs3 defines everything including adultery, sodomy, lesbianism, bestiality, and incest. Vs5 has to do with a male prostitute. This is why it is quoted above as it is.

Remember that the "wrath of God" is revealed against ungodliness, not only for committing sinful acts, but also against those who "approve of those who practice them" (Rom1:18,32) In other words, there are those who engage in these "shameful" (5:12) things. There are those who talk about what they do. There are those who wish they were doing, but only talk about it. And overall, the primary topic of conversation for most unregenerates is in the gutter. You who have been in the world, know what we are talking about. Back in my youthful naive days I used to think that fellows were pretty course. But when I had a couple of janitorial jobs during college, and saw what the females write in their rooms, I concluded that the males were not quite as far into the gutter comparatively!!

Thing is, you know... I've been in the company of some who called themselves "Christians" where, I was embarrassed to be in the same room. I still recall this one trip in a vehicle with the church pastor and other 'leaders' in this church. The things they joked about! The crusade for which I was the 'local' music coordinator (where I was living at the time), the guest evangelist at the pulpit preaching hell-fire and brimstone, but in the back rooms, with his friends' wives...!! Not any acts...but "suggestive talk". And yes, at Bible school... well, let's not even go there! And the very first 'things' I ever learned as a 3rd and 4th grader, I learned from other missionary kids!! And on the mission field, where many of them were born, as was I, one wonders -where- 'they' learned it from!!

Do we need to say any more? If you've been in the world, you know what we are talking about. If you have been sheltered and are not familiar, count yourself blessed!

So... as Believers into Jesus Christ, what does the world see of us? During my college days this one job I worked at, when the lunch room about exploded with laughter at somebody's joke, and I was ignoring it all, one person noticed, "Hey, he's not laughing!" Later that summer, one lunch break I was late getting to the lunch room because I still needed to finish with my bucket of resin so that what I was working on wouldn't kick off before the job was finished. As I had finished and was walking towards the break room, the place had been howling in laughter; but as I opened the door to go in and join them for lunch, the place got suddenly Q-U-I-E-T. Of course, once I was settled in with my lunch, they would go back to their banter. At another job, once the crew got to know me, some of the younger ones would taunt, good-naturedly. One night (it was a swing-shift job) one fellow made me an "offer" to set me up with one of his (girl) friends...taunting, to see what kind of a rise he might get out of me. You know...having been there, I know that when a person is surrounded by the kind of talk the world communicates with each other, every other word a perverse word, it can sometimes be difficult not to start 'thinking' those words in one's own mind. But as they get to know you, are you "one-of them"? Or do you get little nick-names, like mine was at one job because my work partner, from our conversations, knew what I believed, "apostle"?

You can be sure that, if you live for the Lord faithfully, any 'deep' friendships you might previously have had with the unsaved will become 'less'. Your heart's desires are now different. Even with family. Remember Jesus' words about the "sword" instead of "peace" due to following Him, and that even one's own family members will become enemies. (Mt10:34-36) This kind of faithful "putting off" of the "old" will certainly also weed out the acquaintances who are merely -pretend- "christians". The facade of "brotherhood" might even continue for some time. But eventually 'something' will come along that will clarify the distinction. And in many of these scenarios 'they' will often distance themselves from you.

Peter says it, too. "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles; when we walked in wantonness, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." (1Pt4:3) Yes, in our "past" we -did- this, but ENOUGH ALREADY! And when we stop what we did, "In this regard, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same overflow of dissipation, blaspheming." (vs4) Don't even try to remain friends with the world. If you are a 'real' Believer, you no longer have those ties with the world. Remember that Jesus promised, "In the world you have affliction" (Jn16:33) Notice He doesn't say that we will "probably" or "likely" or "it's a strong bet" that it will come. No. As for affliction, you "have" it. It comes with the territory of following Christ. It's a statement of fact, not "maybe - perhaps". If we are following Christ, we do so with His cross on our backs. (Mt16:24) As Paul was encouraging the new Believers in Asia Minor (Lystra) after he had just been stoned and left for dead, returns and tells them, "we must enter the kingdom of God through many afflictions" (Acts14:22) And so, as Jesus

promises affliction, He also says, "be of good courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn16:33b)

Remember the Word, "Let no one deceive you". (5:6a) Today's theology that says, "it doesn't matter" is wrong. DEADLY wrong. "...because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" It says, "Therefore do not be partakers with them". (5:7) Why? Well, what they do is "darkness" but we are now "light in the Lord" and we are to "Walk as children of light". (5:8)

Now, is it the sexual perversion (the acts) that brings judgment? Is it the telling of, and laughing at the jokes that brings judgment? Not directly. But -where- do these things come from? The heart! "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Mt15:19) Pretty much the same 'list' isn't it! If we are Believers into Jesus Christ, we are believers in our hearts. (Rom2:28-29) An act of adultery, by itself, does not condemn a person to hell, otherwise, David would have been condemned eternally. But what is in the heart, spewing forth continually? If we have the Lord Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit. What we are characterized by is the Water of Life, a "fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (Jn4:14) The Holy Spirit is not characterized by "...evil speaking" and "all wickedness". (4:31)

OK, so... all this yucky picture we're looking at is the life of "emptiness" and "darkened" understanding (4:17-18) It is what we are to "put off". It is the "former conduct". The "old man". (4:22) It is "corrupted". And if anybody tells you that it "doesn't matter" once you become a Christian, that "nothing" has to "change"; that all you do is "take Jesus into -your- life" and He now walks "with -you-" in "your" life, they have told you falsehood. Paul says, "But you have NOT SO LEARNED CHRIST" (4:20) When a person becomes "in Christ", there is a -CHANGE-. That is part of the very definition of being "converted". (Ps51:13, Acts3:19) If you convert your car, computer, house, etc., it means you made some "changes". Perhaps you added a blower to your engine. Perhaps, added a room to the house. Upgraded to a newer Windows version. It is no longer what it was.

Now, here are two comments that are separated by a chapter worth of verses, but are related in thought. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." (4:30) -and- "Do not be drunk with wine.." (5:18)

We are not going to discuss at this point whether a Christian 'can' drink wine, or not. Remember, "fermented drink" was part of what they could "eat..before Jehovah" (Deut14:26); Jesus made 'real' wine (Jn2:10); and Paul exhorted Timothy to take a little wine for his needs. (1Tm5:23) But this is in the same context as 4:3, the "unity of the Spirit". The Holy Spirit has been subjected to a very unique situation. Not only does the Spirit not initiate His own commands to us ("for He will not speak [things originating] from Himself"), but is a conduit from the Father and Jesus to us (Jn16:13-15); but in a very awesome sense, He is subject to the Believer, also. In

refuting charismania's nonsense, Paul reminds us that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets". (1Cor14:32) For example, even when God's Word was given through the "holy men of God" (2Pt1:21), the Holy Spirit was subject to each man's personality and writing style. Thus, don't get drunk. Why? What happens when a person is drunk? They lose "self-control". (Gal5:23, 2Pt1:6) While it is true that sober people engage in all this "corruptness" that we are "putting off", what happens when they get to the bars? If there had been any restraint while sober, all inhibitions are let loose. What does a person do and say while they are drunk? Was it God-honoring? "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (Pr20:1) Remember, that we are "temples of the Holy Spirit Who is" in us. (1Cor6:19)

Thus, after all this rhetoric...let us simplify the matter. How do we "put off" the "old"? Easy! "...do not be partakers with them" (5:7) and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness..." (5:11)

Remember, "Flee sexual perversion. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." and we are to "...glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1Cor6:18,20)

Do we claim to be Believers? Do we claim to belong to Christ? Have we "put on Christ"? Then, we must first "put off" the defilements of this world. "...as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, Be holy, because I am holy." (1Pet1:14-16) "Holiness" is not that pagan 'halo' of heathen sun-worship. The very definition of the word "holy" is to be "cut apart and separated" from it all.

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (5:17) Amen!

Put on the New Man - (Ephesians 4:17-5:21)B

"..be renewed in the spirit of your mind...put on the new man which is created according to God...be imitators of God as beloved children...walk in love...walk as children of light...proving what is acceptable to the Lord...walk circumspectly...redeeming the time, because the days are evil...be filled by the Spirit...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."

The last lesson was rather lengthy, considering the seriousness of the evil and filth we "put off" from our "former conduct". (4:22) But it is important for "..everyone who names the name of Christ [to] depart from iniquity." (2Tm2:19) We are told to "not be drunk with wine" -BUT- "be filled by the Spirit". (5:18) We cannot hear the messages from God through the Holy Spirit if we are not in control with our minds. (1Cor14:15) If the Christian life is one in which the Water of Life is "a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (Jn4:14) in our hearts, how can we be 'full' of this water, if we are weighed down with the stones and sand of sin? It's like going to McDonalds and ordering a soda. If you want as much soda as possible, you order it without ice. When the cup is first filled with ice, very little soda ends up in the cup. Like the Sunday school object lesson... if the pitcher has rocks in it and fill the pitcher up with water; now, take the rocks out and see how much more room there is for more water. Only crystal 'clear' water allows God's "light" (5:8,13) to sparkle through us. If our 'pitcher' has contaminants in it, it 'muddies' the water, and the Light cannot shine through.

While, again, we are not going to hit every item, you can read the passage for yourselves and the Holy Spirit will open its application into your own lives, let's take a look at some highlights.

As a starting point, if the Holy Spirit indwells us (Rom8:9) and we allow Him to fill us (5:18b), this is at the very core of the Christian life. It is the Holy Spirit who, after He seals us (1:13), gives us the knowledge and assurance that we are, indeed, children of God. (Rom8:16) Thus, the opposite of being "conformed to the world" (Rom12:2), which is what we discussed last lesson that we are to "put off", is to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind". In this passage Paul expands it by saying "spirit of your mind". (4:23) The Christian life is not based on head-knowledge, just as salvation was not. However, it is not merely 'spritual' -minus- the mind, either. Where the ol' timers were accused of relegating the Spirit to some dark back room in the inner recesses, almost as though He was not applicable to the Believer, modern charismania has unplugged their minds in favor of being "bathed" and "overcome" by their spirits. They check their minds at the door along with their coats, and turn control of themselves over to other spirits. Neither one of these extremes is true Christianity. Just as Paul says that a person without the Spirit is not saved (Rom8:9), he

also says that we are to engage our minds/understanding. (1Cor14:15) Remember last lesson we spoke of the word "converted". The Christian is one who has -CHANGED- from what he used to be. And that change 'begins' with the Spirit-infused -MIND-. In the past we have spoken of the brain being like the computer. Perhaps we could speak of the mind as the software? And the computer operator is the soul/spirit. Thus, Paul says as we are sanctified (separated from the world's filth), "and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless" (1Th5:23) It's a complete package deal. The body does what the brain sends to the muscles. The mind makes the brain function. But it is "he who is spiritual" (1Cor2:15) who is in the driver's seat.

So... how do we know 'how to' go about living the Christian life? "..be imitators of God as beloved children.." (5:1) This is something Paul often said to the churches he wrote to, "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly" and "imitate our [example], for we were not disorderly among you" (2Th3:6-7) And Peter says, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.." (1Pt2:21-22)

Notice how Paul says "..as beloved children.." (5:1) My friend tells how his little daughter often plays... preaching and doing 'ministry'. He's a pastor. When I was the similar age, I would stand up on the bed (platform) and play my toy accordian and conduct services. My dad was a missionary. For awhile the Chevy truck commercial was showing the little boy in the sandbox, pulling a whole string of other vehicles with his (toy) Chevy truck, and then they'd show his dad driving into the yard, pulling an oversized load, with a "Chevy" truck of course.

A little aside here. Of what do our lives consist? If you have children, you can pretty much tell what you are by watching your children at play, because they are what you are. Do they bully other kids? Do they get into fights? How do they interact with others? What things do they do in their play? Ladies, what is your little girl's most favorite thing to do? Get dressed up "like mommy" and put all sorts of makeup on? What does that say about 'your' priorities? Please see 1Pet3:3-4. And before anybody sends me 'hate mail' on this point, please understand I am not condemning cosmetics, or a woman seeking to enhance her attractiveness. But, is 'that' what everybody else sees as being your primary essence? (Remember Tami Fay who used to be known for her gloppy eyelashes? For being an alleged preacher's wife, even the world made fun of her!) So much so, that that is what your little girl seeks to emulate as she plays "being mommy"? What 'is' mommy? Lipstick, false eyelashes and high heels?? Hmmm! "false" == "father of lies"??

OK...so, back on track here. If we are children of God, just as human children imitate their parents, so too, we 'imitate' our Father. If you look at this askance because the KJV says to be "followers", please understand

the Greek word "mimetes" coming from "mimos", which is "mimic". Whatever God is, that is what we are to be. If "God is love" (1Jn4:8,16), we will "walk in love" (5:2). Since "God in Christ forgave" us (4:32), we will also "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.."

So, the question becomes, 'How do we get to know God?' We do so by getting to know Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the "express image of His essence" (Heb1:3) as Jesus said when Philip asked to be shown the Father, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn14:9) So, how do we get to know Jesus? We have a very special book that shows Him to us. It is called, the "Bible".

You know, I discovered a very interesting thing while working on this 'translation' work. When I was getting Acts thru Revelation finished up, I was feeling some sense of accomplishment that I was 'just about' finished with the N.T. But you know what? I was really only about 'half' finished. The four Gospels contain about an equal number of words/verses as the rest of the N.T. combined. And for all the epistles and things in the rest of the N.T., each book somewhat covering its own distinctive subject with its own flavor, the topic of Jesus Christ receives four entire books, with many 'long' chapters. As we observed in the previous lesson that the Holy Spirit's writing of the Scriptures was done through the individual personalities of each writer, for Jesus we have four different angles/perspectives on the same Man. I expect some people somewhat ignore the Gospels because, well, that's 'just' about Jesus. But - DOCTRINE-, now 'that' is what we need, and that's in the epistles. The Gospels are about Jesus, but the epistles are "for the church"! But understand: the N.T. 'begins' with the four Gospels. It 'begins' with Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, the rest of doctrine is meaningless. Doctrine is about our understanding of Salvation and the life of faith, but Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb12:2), upon which that doctrine is founded. Jesus is the very Corner Stone. (2:20)

And so, as we come to know Jesus Christ; just as the two who make up a married couple begin to look and act like each other, so too, we will begin to look and act more and more like Jesus. There is currently a most disgusting 'cult' that profits by selling their jewelry and trinkets, "WWJD". Isn't it sad how everything that is so perverse begins from a certain grain of truth. But, indeed, as we order our lives, we will be considering, "what would Jesus do?" Again: how do we know what Jesus would do? We know by learning of Him from the Gospels. What would Jesus do? Well...what - DID- He do? That's what He -WOULD- do. When the early apostles were faced with trial, it was noticed of them that they "were -with- Jesus". (Acts4:13)

In what other ways do we know how to imitate God? Through the Holy Spirit. Yes, we can read the Gospels till we're blue in the face; but when we are faced with the actual situations that come our way, how do we know what to respond? Well, first of all we are always prepared. "...always

be ready to give a defense.." (1Pet3:15) This preparation comes from being "sanctified" with the Lord in our hearts. Again, separated from the world's filth, and -unto- God. But then, more specifically, how do we face each situation? Jesus said, "...it will be given you in that hour.." (Mt10:19) By what agency? The "Helper". (Jn16:7) Remember how Jesus is the "Head"? (1:22) When we have the "unity of the Spirit" (4:3) the Spirit is the messenger to bring us the Head's commands. The "anointing teaches you concerning all things" (1Jn2:27) Again, if we are of clear mind, not being drunk, the Holy Spirit "brings to [our] remembrance" all the things Jesus commands. (Jn14:26)

Now, as we continue along in life, we do not do so lightly. La dee dah! The Lord said the Holy Spirit would tell me what I need to know, so I think I'm going to go over here, lie under the shade of a palm tree and sip on the ice tea, without a care in the world. After all, the Holy Spirit is our "Helper". Right? When a situation comes along, I will "JUST KNOW" what is right or wrong, because all I have to do is squiggle my nose around while I scratch my head and wonder, "Hmmm, What would Jesus do?" Well...

"..proving what is acceptable to the Lord" (5:10)

This word "proving" is a very special word. To "test, examine, scrutinise." If the object is said to be a "diamond", it is subjected to the tests to verify its authenticity. With various metals and minerals they are subjected to the "scratch" test. How do you know an inductor has the right number of turns of wire, and that the ferrite material inside the donut casing is still in tact? It is "proved" by touching the leads to the test points of the induction meter.

When Christians begin scrutinising various things, we are pounced upon for being "judgmental". Even the very act of analyzing, to them, is judgmental. They become enraged because they know the outcome of such "judging". Judging (analysing/discerning) will show the matter to be rotten, and thus judged (condemned/rejected). "Judge (condemn) not, that you be not judged" (Mt7:1); but on the other hand, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (Jn7:24)

Many things the world simply does not understand. Just picking a topic at random, Rock music... the world has no clue as to what's wrong with it. It is 'their' music. It is a music which promotes the spirit of the age. When a Believer analyses it, like we have done briefly in the past, and come to understand what is wrong with it, we shun it. We can analyse the technical reasons about the harshness and non-harmonics of the sound, etc; but we also have an added element they don't... the Holy Spirit. The "natural man" doesn't understand, but "he who is spiritual judges all things". (1Cor2:14-15) While the indwelling Holy Spirit can convict our conscience that Rock music "isn't right", we might need to investigate (prove) exactly what it is that is wrong. Otherwise, how can we "give a defense" to the one who asks? Since they don't have the Holy Spirit, our merely saying, "I just know, because I know, that I know" doesn't cut it with them.

But most of all, we are answerable to the Lord. Even if we don't know all the answers for the world, and as a result they laugh at us, we need to prove (in some manner) within our own hearts what pleases the Lord, and what does not, so that we can live in "good conscience" before Him. (Acts23:1, 1Tm1:5) And even if they do revile us, our "good conscience" will stand before the Lord. (1Pt3:16,21) That's what matters, so that whatever we do is "of faith". (Rom14:23) This does not come about by sitting idly by. We first need to "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know, yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you; unless indeed you are unacceptable?" (2Cor13:5) And then "proving" our lives before the Lord.

"See then that you walk circumspectly..." (5:15) LITV uses the word "carefully". "Exactly, accurately, diligently" Having been a musician, I also dabbled in stereo equipment. I've modified tube amplifiers to seek to get a more precise sound. I used to build and tweak on speaker systems. Sometimes "A-B" testing is done. Which one sounds more like a "real" violin? Is the stereo spacial effect more faithful to "live music" if the speakers are 7ft apart, or 8ft in this room? How much do they need to be toed in to the listening seat? And precision of balance is guaranteed with rulers and tape measures and VU meters. -PRECISION-

This notion of "careful" living was quashed during the hippy rebellions of the 60s and 70s. Live and let live. If it feels right, don't worry about it... "just do it". Try "new things". Experiment. Sha la la la la live for today. Don't knock it, man, if you haven't tried it. I'm OK, you're OK, we're all OK. If everybody was 'consenting', and nobody got hurt, what does it matter? Loosen up, man! You're too up tight, man!

Sound familiar? And if a Believer wants to be faithful to God, and order himself strictly and circumspectly, the hippies go crazy, "You're freakin' me out, man!" OK...so we don't have actual "hippies" today in the same way running around flashing the "peace" sign. But today's generation is their offspring! A person's "personal life" doesn't matter, as long as they are doing their job. There is no longer any right and wrong in society's mentality. It no longer matters what a person believes, because all paths will get there ultimately. And from the legal system, to interpretation of God's Word...words no longer have specific meaning, but are subject to wrangling, interpretation, and "twisting" (2Pt3:16); and how we "feel" about it all.

But God says, "I am Jehovah, I do not change". (Mal3:6) And Jesus narrowed things down to the "jot and tittle". (Mt5:18) Our living carefully as we progress up the "narrow" (Mt7:13-14) way is in stark contrast to the world's drunken debauchery. Again: see why we are not to be "drunk"? (5:18)

And so... how will others know that we are Believers? So far the major part of this lesson has had to do with our own personal ordering of our individual lives before the Lord. If we are imitating God, what will others see?

We will be "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." (4:32) Jesus said that the telling characteristic would be our "love" for one another. (Jn13:35) And if we don't have love, we are not Believers. (1Jn4:8,16,20-21)

We will certainly "sing and make melody in [our] heart to the Lord" (5:19) and we will be characterized by thankfulness. (5:20)

But our final consideration here is another item that is in stark contrast to the world, and is related to love. "...submitting to one another in the fear of God" (5:21)

What is submission? To arrange one's self "under" another. To be subordinate. To be subject to another. And here again, we follow Christ's example. Remember? We are "imitating" Christ.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or self-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others [as] surpassing himself." (Phil2:3) Let's stop here a minute. This is opposite of "self-esteem" isn't it! (A recent news item: the Koreans with low self-esteem rank highest in math test scores, but American kids, with teaching IN SCHOOL, of all things, in self-esteem and self-affirmation, rank lowest in math scores. Self-esteem doesn't "get the job done", is not the answer.) But also notice the word here. A lot of translations use the word "better". Consider others to be "better" than yourself. That's hard enough, isn't it. But notice that the word is not only to "excel and be better" than, but even way beyond... "to surpass". As if two cars were racing. "Better" would be that one car got across the finish line a bit ahead of the other. But to "surpass" is the faster car 'whizzing' past, leaving the other in the dust. In the case of "better", the slower one is still in the "same league", so there is yet an element of "self-esteem" one might cling to. But when the other "surpasses", the attitude of the Believer is that self is "nothing".

Is this what Christ did? He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant" (Phil2:7) "empty" is like "nothing", right? Oh, but... "I have my rights!" Well, no! A "bondservant" had NO rights. None. Nada.

You see...what the world needs to see is -NOT- us "wonderful Christians"! No, they must see Christ. John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn3:30) "Christ in you..." (Col1:27) How can we claim to be submitted to Christ, if we are not submitted to one another? How can we claim to -love- God whom we do not yet now see, if we do not love the brethren whom we can see? (1Jn4:20) What is the ultimate display of love? To give up one's life for another. (Jn15:13) In many cultures the

murdering of a citizen had consequences; but if one killed his slave... well, that was just his "property", much like an ox or sheep. We are slaves of Christ. (1Cor7:22) "By this we know the love of God, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1Jn3:16) Ah, yes!

If any of you were hoping for a list of DOs and DONTs in these two studies, sorry to disappoint you! The Christian life is one that comes out from the heart. The reason so many order their lives by "lists" is because their hearts are not in line with God. They are not True Believers. They are pretenders. A True Believer into Jesus Christ is one who has His Light. "Awake, you who sleep, stand forth out from among the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (5:14) If you are ashamed to be seen as "different" from the world, and prefer to be living like the "dead" of the world...remember, that's what they are, what we were, "dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1)...then, there is a serious question as to whether or not you truly have come to the Light. If you hold to the notion that you don't need to change, now that you are a "Christian", then, perhaps you are not actually a real Christian? Perhaps you did not truly Repent of your sin nature. True repentance "abhors" (Job42:6) the sin nature and wants nothing to do with it. As a result, such a convert wants to get "away from" the world's filth...not continue wallowing around in it. (2Pt2:22)

When Jesus was on the earth He said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." (Jn9:5) Now that He is away preparing a place for us, His light now shines on/through us. We are the "light of the world" (Mt5:14), and we are not to be "hid". I personally believe that one reason there are so many 'lone' Believers here and there all over the world is because of this Light. If all the lights were rejoicing together in one place, to make each other "feel" wonderful, think of all the dark places that would exist. But as long as there is even a flicker of light someplace, that light dispells the darkness.

If you are a 'lone' light where you are, and you know of no other Believers around you for 'fellowship', Rejoice! "..give thanks.." (5:20) that He has given you a job to do, and set you in whatever place you are in. Don't hide in the dark shadows of the world's filth. Keep clean before God.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." (Mt5:16) "..redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (5:16) Amen!

Wives to their Husbands - (Ephesians 5:22-24)

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." (vs22) "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." (Col3:18)

"..the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior..the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be blasphemed." (Tit2:3-5)

"..and let the wife see that she reverence her husband." (vs33)

Well, sorry ladies... we start with you. The 'passage' starts with you. The husband gets his next lesson! Knowing the climate of the day, there are some of you who are going to rise up and rebel against God's Word as we look at it in this lesson. As we see what God teaches for the proper wifely role, and if you begin to think that it is awfully one-sided and chauvinistic, just wait till you see what the husband has to deal and compete with, and his responsibilities next lesson. Hopefully then, you'll realize that you've got it relatively easy.

Wives are told to "submit" to their husbands. Right here many women have already turned off. In today's climate, forget about notions of male vs female; people in general do not submit. As we learned in the previous lesson, Christians are to submit "to one another in the fear of God". (vs21) In today's world nobody wants to submit to anybody or any thing. We are all our own masters. We have self-esteem. We are "self-actualized". (I still haven't quite figured out what 'that' one means!) But everything is of self, from self, by self, for self.

Submit means to "arrange under, to subordinate, to submit to one's control, to yield to one's advice or admonition, to obey". It is like when the Roman centurion wanted Jesus to heal his servant, and is not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof, because, as he says, "I am under authority". (Mt8:9) The centurion was under his higher-ups. And he had servants under him. It is a thing of "chain-of-command".

Often when children are told by their parents to do something, they retort, "Why?" In the 'olden days' parents would sometimes simply say, "Because I said so (Smack!)." That was reason enough. The parent is over the child; and sometimes the child might not have been old enough to understand "why"; or, more likely than not, their retort was an act of rebellion, and thus, no explanation was appropriate for the moment.

-WHY- is the wife to submit to the husband? Because God 'said so'. That is reason enough. "For the husband is -head- of the wife" (vs23) This is how God appointed it. When the Commander-in-Chief sends an order

down the pike, and eventually the sergeant barks an order to the private, if the private were to ask, "Why?", the sergeant could say, "Because the President ordered it." Now, I don't know how things are in today's more lenient military, but would I be accurate in assuming the private, if he doesn't want to be in hot water, is not going to even dare to ask, "Why"? He knows his rank, and replies, "Yes, sir!"

Is the president more important than the private? Is the private less of a person than the sergeant? They all inherit the same Adamic sin nature that came through Noah, through the generations. And when a husband and wife are both Believers into Jesus Christ (which, this passage is written to believers), the same Salvation is imputed to both equally, "...there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal3:28) Please notice; this verse is misapplied all over the place in these days, to teach that male/female 'roles' are equal. They are not. This verse is speaking of 'Salvation'... of being "in Christ Jesus". When a wife submits to her husband, she is not 'less saved'. She is not 'less-of-a-Christian'. She and her husband are co-equally "one" with Christ, in the same way that if the president and private are Believers, even though rank separates them as to their roles, they are both "one" in Christ. As I have observed in church fellowships in military towns, when a teacher is in the military, and many in the group are also military, the teacher often introduces the lesson/lecture by saying something to the effect that "Rank stays outside the door". In this class, "there is no (military) rank". Lower rank does not salute the upper rank, because in God's presence, they are all "one in Christ" and "submitting to one another in the fear of God". (vs21) Same with husbands and wives. In God's site, they are both co-equal. But just like when those military personnel get back on base and rank is observed, so too, in marriage, the roles are observed.

The wife is to submit to the husband just as the Church submits to Christ. And let's complete this chain-of-command structure. Even Christ is not His own "boss", but is under the Father. (1Cor11:3) He said, "I always do those things that please Him". (Jn8:29) Christ obeys the Father. Jesus says to the Church, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn14:15) Wives, particularly, like the sentimental talk. They like to hear their husbands tell them, "I love you". And wives love to tell their husbands, "I love you". Well, wife; if you -say- you 'love' your husband, "keep his commandments". In other words, obey him. If you -say- you "love" your husband, but do not obey him, nor are submissive to him, you are a "liar" when you say you "love" him; in the same way a Believer is a liar. "He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him." (1Jn2:4-5) Wives: do you want the love between you and your husband to "grow" and become "perfected"? Be submissive to him, and obey him. Hold him in "reverence". (vs33)

Oh yes, I'm sure some of you think I've gone way off the deep end right about now! But this is what it says, "...JUST AS the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (vs24) Yes, wives, "everything". Even to your unsaved husband? Yes, "in everything".

Do you desire to see your husband saved? How are you going to win him? Thump your Bible at him and make sure he knows just how horrible a sinner he is, and that he should be 'like you'? Do you whine and preach 'at' him? Do you sniff your nose in the air, with a hoity-toity 'better-than-thou' promenade as you head off "to church"? What does Peter say? "...be subject to your own husbands, that..they, without a word, may be won by the -BEHAVIOR- of their wives, when they observe your pure behavior with fear." (1Pt3:1-2) Submission and obedience.

Also notice: submit to your "own" husband. (vs22) Christian wife: you are not under the authority of the male leadership of the fellowship. In this, some Bible-thumping churches are no better than cults, where the pastor and board expect the church women to be under 'them'. But notice, even, that when a wife wants to investigate even some spiritual matter, Paul instructs, "...let them question their -OWN- husbands at home.." (1Cor14:35)

There have been times when women write in to VW with questions about this or that. I will give answers from the Scriptures. But then, depending on the topic or situation, I will often also ask them "if they have discussed the matter with their husband?" I will suggest to them that the answers I have given are how I see the Scripture in the matter, but that they must seek the counsel of their husband on the matter, and follow his leadership. When God made Eve, He did not bring her "before the church board". No! He brought her to Adam. She became Adam's "helper suitable to him". (Gen2:20)

So, what is the wife's role? Should she be a stay-at-home-mom? Should she can/freeze all the garden produce, wear only long dresses, wear her (long) hair in a bun, sew all the family clothes, and home-school the children? If she gets a job, is she sinning? Should she not wear any makeup, nor have her hair done up in a salon? Well, guess what... I'm not going to answer 'all' these things. Who is to give her these answers? Her "own" husband. Her marriage is to her "own" husband.

There is a section of this country called, "the Bible belt". In discussing some problems someone was facing recently in one of these groups, I suggested that it should be called, "the Pharisee belt". Most of the things they require each other to conform to are not necessarily 'all' Scriptural precepts. But interspersed into their phariseeism is a certain "code of conduct" for Godly wives. Somebody even recently sent me a URL to a website of a place that specializes in "modest attire" for Godly women. When Paul says that wives should be "discreet, chaste" (Tit2:5) and "pure"

(1Pt3:2), did he mean that every dress is supposed to have a certain design of ruffle around the shoulders and sleeves, and that aprons are to have a particular checkered red/white pattern? (I won't even touch the rest of what I saw at that site, even suggesting "godly" attire for the bedroom!! I guess they never noticed Gen2:25, or the book of S-o-S) You see, they miss the whole point where Peter says, "Do not let your adornment be outward; arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on apparel" (1Pt3:3) They suggest that Peter is exhorting not to fix up one's hair, nor dress up. But it must be taken in context. They stop there, without going on to, "...rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (vs4) What do people notice about you? Your lipstick/gloss, coifed hair, perfectly color-coordinated outfit, high-heels and matching purse? Did Peter say these things are wrong? No. He says, let this not be what people notice about you, but that what they see is the "meek and quiet spirit". Now, to be sure, a meek and quiet spirit is going to affect the nature of one's attire. And, oh how I could recount instances of some of these Pharisee-belt women, who conform to 'their' standards of modesty, but do not possess a "meek and quiet spirit"!

So...how should you "get up" yourself? Well, the holy women of God "...adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands" (vs5) Like I said, I'm not going to give you the answer. It is not mine to give. It is your husband's. And there is not one "Pharisee belt" -standard- for all women. Each wife, being subject to her "own" husband. What does -each- 'individual' husband say? That is what "his" wife will do. And if you see another woman conforming to how her husband wishes of her, and it is different from what your husband wants from you, don't you dare judge that woman! Don't you dare! Don't you dare be a 'gossip and busybody, saying things you ought not'. (~1Ti5:13) That other woman "stands or falls" to her own master (Rom14:4); as do you to yours!

Now, when Paul instructs that the wife be a "homemaker" (Tit2:5), is that her only option? Is she condemned if she has a job? If you think so, then it is recommended that you read Proverbs 31:10-31. If we understand how God's instruction to "teach" God's Law "diligently" to the children is a command given specifically to fathers (Deu6:7) as they are instructed to "nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Eph6:4b), perhaps we can have some tolerance for families we see occasionally where the wife has the job, and the father is a stay-at-home-dad. As a fellow school bus driver called himself years ago, whose wife was a doctor... he was the "house husband". How can a father be an effective teacher to his children, if his time is totally spent away from home at the job/career, and when he comes home, is too tired? Naturally, when the O.T. was written, most people were of an agrarian society. The whole family lived and worked together on the 'family farm'. So, naturally, the fathers and sons were working together all day. When today's society is mostly urban, of necessity we must view things differently. And also, let us be sensitive to the fact that there are some men who seem not to be well-

suited to holding a salaried job, but are gifted around the house. Both the salary, and the domestics are necessary to make a "home" work.

But again, who makes these decisions? It is made between the husband and wife. Each family unit makes its 'own' life choices. If you decide that the wife is more suited to the career, and the husband should stay at home with the children, don't let the pharisees give you a guilt complex for not being "like-THEY-are".

Thus, hopefully it becomes clear that a wife's "submission" to her husband does not automatically translate into "stay-at-home-mom". She is under "her OWN" husband, and as they are "one flesh" (which we will discuss next lesson), having left their individual families to form their "OWN" family, they make their "OWN" family decisions. It's like Jesus said to Peter, who was looking around at others saying, "what about this man?", and Jesus says to him, You never mind him! "You follow Me!" (Jn21:22)

"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything". (vs24)

See Also Addendum: Q/A -What About Unmarried Women?

Husbands to their Wives - (Ephesians 5:25-33)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (vs25)

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter towards them." (Col3:19)

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be cut off." (1Pet3:7)

OK fellas... remember how it was? She was the most beautiful creature you had ever laid eyes on! God brought her to you and your eyes popped out and you said, "Wo! Man!" (Gen2:23) This is awesome!! You could hardly keep your eyes or hands off her. Now, it's more like: Why is she sooo emotional! I thought I could trust her, but see how manipulative she is... and whiny and bossy and self-centered. How did I end up with - HERRRRR??- Or like in My Fair Lady, "Why can't a woman be more like a man!"

Adam even went so far as to accuse God, "The woman whom You gave to be with me...!" (Gen3:12) Yes, Peter says to "understand" them, and Paul says, "Don't be bitter against them". Yes, perhaps their sin nature stirs their emotions up into manipulative behavior. But also 'understand' that this is the state of affairs which is part of the curse to the woman, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Gen3:16b) You see, this emotional nature is also part of the curse; part of the "sorrow" of conception.

And there is really no grounds to be bitter. Initially she was attractive to you, but now you feel like you are "stuck with" her. What a 'raw deal' you got! Mmm? Well, what did she get in you? Likely, no knight in shining armor, either!

What did Christ -get- when He 'got' the Church? And yet, the husband is to love his wife just as Christ loved the Church. What did Christ get? He got a bunch of scoundrels who were "dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1) Even the apostles were continually squabbling with each other. A couple wanting to be at Jesus' "right and left" in His kingdom. How many times doesn't it speak of how they were always jockeying amongst each other, speculating as to who was better. Even the very night Jesus was betrayed, just before they abandoned Him and scattered, just after Jesus has told them that "one of them" would be betraying Him, and they are wondering "who" it might be, "there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered greater." (Lk22:24) -THIS- is what Jesus has to work with!

I don't know of any Scripture that suggests Jesus has ever been bitter against us. Husbands, love and "don't be bitter". (Col3:19) And as God deals with us, He "...knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Ps103:14) Husbands, respect/honor her as the "weaker vessel". (1Pt3:7)

But now... let's get into the meat of this passage. While Paul speaks of marriage, he says "...but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (vs32) And as we delve into this, our understanding will then work its way backwards, out from Christ and His church, to the husband and his wife.

Ladies, please pardon while we finish painting a terrible picture of 'womanhood' here. We are speaking of the "church", and what Christ is working with. While my own unequal yoke turned out to be a manipulating liar, particularly as she was leaving to be with "her gods" (you who have read my testimony at the website know what this refers to), I'm sure there surely 'must be' some honest women out there; at least, one or two? Although, the "virtuous woman" whom "her husband safely trusts her" is called rare: "who can find?" (Pr31:10-11) Solomon with his "thousand" to analyze says, "One man among a thousand I have found, But a woman among all these I have not found." (Ec7:28) And so, as we analyze what Christ has to work with, we see that God was looking for a righteous person: "Jehovah looks down from Heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one." (Ps14:2-3)

With this as background, Paul says, "...as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.." (vs25) How did Christ give Himself? He DIED! There is no greater love. (Jn15:13) Now, while with Christ the resurrection fits the Salvation equation, if we just consider "death" by itself; if one gives his life in death, there is no more to give. And furthermore, once a person is dead, there is nothing more to "receive". A great many relationships are ones of "what can I get out of this?" You see, fellas, this is why you are now feeling 'trapped', because you went into marriage to "get". You saw things you "wanted", so you went after them and got them. But because you were in it to "get", but were not really "giving", now you are getting what you gave. Make sense? You think she manipulates? Well, did you do any manipulating to 'snag' her? You see how that works? "...whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Gal6:7)

But, since, in our human finiteness we cannot understand such a depth of love, Paul brings it down a notch. "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (vs28) Yes, Christ "gave" Himself. But only He is perfect. We are yet in these bodies of sin. So then, we get to the "golden rule" concept. "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do the same to them." (Lk6:31) We cannot begin to comprehend Christ's love, because His holiness is so pure, and our sin is so rotten, and we really have no concept as to how rotten we are, to understand the depths of His love. But we can

understand our own hearts and desires. We can understand how we care for ourselves. Forget "low self-esteem". Paul shoots that theory down in vs29. We have lots of self-esteem. Well, all that, that we feel for ourselves, is what husbands are to lavish upon their wives.

Now, if this seems like a difficult concept to put into practice, what a husband lavishes upon his wife is the same as he lavishes upon himself. If he cares for himself, he cares for his wife; because they are "one". Why does God "hate divorce"? (Mal2:16) Because he made them "one". (Mal2:15) Why one? Because He seeks a "seed of God". It is the oneness that exists between the Father and Christ, which now also exists between Christ and the church. (Jn17) And how does man understand this oneness? Through the earthly relationship of marriage. Remember back to the series "Life is in the Blood", where part of the man's essence becomes part of the woman's essence. So, husbands, when you are with your wife, you are with yourself. And, while we know that as Eve went off and rebelled independently of Adam, we know that wives often go off to do their own thing today; but if everything else could be equal; men, whatever you see in your wife, -is- yourself.

And this is solidified in the marriage 'process'. A man "leaves" his father and mother, and "cleaves" to his wife. Just as many are softening the concept of divorce in these days, and the gods of this age are telling women to launch out on their own, that they "don't need the -MAAANNN-", that they should divorce the bum and "good riddance" to him; they are also softening the original union in their translations. When they change "cleave" to "join", its like changing from Super Glue to artist's rubber cement. Rubber cement may hold things together, but you can pull them apart again. Whereas, when super glue makes a bond, those items aren't coming apart. This is the nature of the union of Christ with His church. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom8:35,38-39) Husbands, cleave to your wife. Don't let her go.

Last lesson we gave a "Don't you dare" exhortation to the women. Here we give one to the families whose children are in the process of "leaving" in order to "cleave" to their spouse. If your child (or family member) is becoming "one" with their new spouse, DON'T YOU DARE go meddling! I dare say one of the biggest problems to young marriages is when the in-laws/families start trying to run things. They no longer belong to you. They now belong to each other. In God's design, there is no such thing as "family values". Uh, that's the kind where the the families do a continual tug-o-war with the new couple, trying to pull them apart, because of their own selfishness, because they are under the false assumption that parent/child is the strongest relationship on earth. Particularly, that of "mother and child". It is not! Husband and wife is! Why? Because God said so. It is how He designed it. It is a picture of "Christ and the church". (vs32)

And this is the scourge Israel was under...they continually went "whoring" after other gods. And today's "church" is busy inviting the world into its fellowship. But with Israel it was supposed to be God and Israel. And today it is Christ and the Church.

So, as the husband is loving his wife as himself, what are his goals? To have hot sex and a pretty trophy on his arm? That's what the world goes after. Certainly these things will be there, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb13:4) And Paul exhorts a couple not to "deprive one another" (1Cor7:5) in that department.

What does Christ purpose for the church? "...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word" (vs26) What is "sanctify"? Same word as for "holy". Cut apart, separate. Remember, "leave"? When the Church cleaves to Christ, what do we leave? All the stuff we looked at in the previous lessons. The stuff we "put off, concerning the former conduct" (4:22) The "works of darkness" that we "have no fellowship with". (5:11) That's why those lessons came before these. We cannot appreciate and understand our "cleaving" to Christ, if we haven't first "left" the "trespasses and sins" that we were "dead in...in which [we] formerly walked.." (2:1-2) That's why, if you believe in marriage 'cerimonies', the 'vows' include the phrase, "forsaking all others". Abandon them. No longer go see those old girlfriends. Don't still "be there" for them, as a shoulder to cry on. You now have your wife. "Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well." (Pr5:15)

The Church, as we anticipate Christ's coming for us and our being like Him, the exhortation is "...everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1Jn3:3) While in adult terms, women (as Eve did) have minds of their own; if she is submitting to the husband, she will conform to what he is. As the church conforms "to the image of His Son" (Rom8:29), the wife conforms to the image of the husband. How is your wife going to be pure? Are you pure? If you are pure, she will tend to follow your lead. (Again: we are speaking of Believers, here. If you are married to an unequal yoke, for obvious reasons, this cannot apply, because you are of different spirits, and you each worship different gods.) But as you seek purity in your own life, by the very nature of your oneness, you will be imparting purity to your wife. As your life is cleansed, and as she follows and obeys you, she will be cleansed. "Commit your works to Jehovah, And your thoughts will be established." (Pr16:3)

"...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (vs27) I guess this must be why women are always stiving for perfection in beauty? But fellas, how often do you complain when your wife went shopping, and she comes modeling that new outfit she just bought...and you think to yourself what you feel you don't dare say, "How ugly!" Well, if you weren't willing to go shopping with her, don't complain now. Christ knows what He wants His church to look like and has left

instructions; the Scriptures. Do you know what you want from your wife? Just because there are a lot of feminists out there who say otherwise, don't assume that your Godly wife doesn't want your guidance. Get involved in her life. Remember, her life is your life. Yes... go shopping with her. You might even be surprised at, how, actually, fun it can be!

But then, as Peter spoke of the outward vs inward beauty, do you only look at your wife's outer beauty? And what happens after you are married? Before, when you were courting, you would primp. Now, you both let it all "hang out". Sadly, that's what today's "church" does. Once you're a Christian, "it doesn't matter". God doesn't care. After all, He accepts you "just as you are". You can hang out with the world, it "doesn't matter". After a couple get into trouble and their marriages become "stale", one thing that they are told in seminars is to "continue to date" your spouse. All those things you did to attract each other? Continue to do them after you are married. You would primp before? Continue it now. You sought out the well-being of the other before? Now, even more so, because you are now "one".

Yes, we are "one" with Christ. He is the "Head" and we are the "body". (1:22-23) Notice we go back and forth, in and out, between the human marriage, and the church's relationship with Christ. They are so similar. Just as the wife is "one" with the husband, and as he cares for her as though he was caring for himself; the Church with Christ has various facets, too. Yes, the Church is like the wife, but because we are "one" with Christ, we are also His "body" in that oneness; so Paul speaks of being "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (vs30)

This primping, sanctifying, cleansing and making into a "glorious church", however, has a final goal. While grooms dress up and can only be 'handsome', when a bride bedecks herself for her groom (Is61:10), she is 'beautiful' in all her glory. (Rev21:2,11) And as the couple turns around the announcement is made, "I am happy to present to you, Mr & Mrs Couple".

Only, with Christ, it's a bit different. Jesus is the groom, and the Church is His bride; and Jesus announces His bride:

"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God." (Lk12:8) "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev3:5)

And then:

"Now when everything is subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who subjected everything under Him, that God may be everything in all things." (1Cor15:28) The Church, as Christ's bride, will be there with Him, under the Father. And in that place, "Eye has not seen,

nor ear heard, nor has it dawned upon the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor2:9)

But as we come down off these douds of anticipation, Paul reminds us that, while we might understand human marriage, and have some glimmer into how this relates to our relationship with Christ, that this is all yet "a great mystery". (vs32) We don't yet fully understand it in all its glory. If the husband wasn't also of flesh and incapable of being a perfect husband, his role regarding his wife should be as Christ is to the church. However, there is no man alive on earth who can match Jesus' perfection. So for now, he summarizes in practical terms that we can do. Do you want to know how to have a successful marriage? Everything else that might be said on the subject all boils down to this:

"Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she reverence her husband" (vs33)

Children to their Parents - (Ephesians 6:1-3)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (vs1) "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord." (Col3:20)

A couple months ago our local news told of a late-night party going on in an area park. Well... more like 'early-morning'... around 3:00 am, or something like that. A group of teen-agers with loud music. It was loud enough that the disturbance awoke people in the neighborhood. And so, when one of those men got up and went out and asked them to "be quiet", they ganged up on him, beat him up, knocked him unconscious, and continued beating and kicking him, to where his head was swollen up so badly his neighbor could hardly even recognize him. Cracked his skull, broke his jaw, etc. [Editor: He is recovering]

A little Word prophesied 2500 years ago about our day: "And I will give young boys to be their rulers, and caprices shall rule over them. And the people shall be crushed, man against man, and a man on his neighbor. The boy will be insolent against the elder, and the despised against the honorable... Woe to the wicked! For the evil, the doing of his hand will be done to him. As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over him. Oh My people, those leading you cause you to go astray, and they swallow the way of your paths." (Is3:4-5,11-12)

40 years ago teachers could grab a kid by the ear and haul them to the principal's office where, in turn, they might get a board whacked on their bottom side. And then, if the parent heard about it, they'd get whacked again when they got home. 20 years ago when I drove school bus, a person in charge could grab a kid by the scruff of their shirt to "get their attention" when they were misbehaving. But by then, however, kids were already learning to sass back, "my parents will sue you!!" Today, we have adult-sanctioned and produced TV spots, with children "instructing" adults on how they should be to their children. And the series that really gets under my craw are the commercials with the little smart-mouthed 'young' boy, dressed in martial-arts style 'white', and in one of the series he begins with, "I told my father..." as the commercial goes on to expound the -child's- 'wisdom', compared to his father's (assumed) 'stupidity'.

Well, we don't need to expound very long on this topic. Scripture is quite clear. Children are to "obey" their parents. In other words, when the parents say, "Thus-and-so"; the child is to conform to "thus-and-so". The reason children today do not follow this is the parents' fault. As this Scripture says about their "evil" and the "doing of their hand" being done (back) to them. Today's society is reaping the results of years of non-parenting and non-discipline. But that is next lesson's topic, to fathers.

Now, I've heard that there are some who like to interpret this vs1, when it applies to 'Believing' children, that "if the parents are -Christian-, then obey

them" but if the parents are not believers, a believing child does not have to obey non-christian parents. That the phrase "in the Lord" defines the the state of the "parents". But it should be clear from the Colossians passage that this is not so; but that children obey their parents, saved or not, just the same way a believing wife is to obey her husband, saved or not (1Pt3:1), "as unto the Lord". (Eph5:22) In other words, children: when you obey your parents, you do so "as to Christ". (vs5) "in all things". Why? For the same reason wives are subject to their husbands... Because God said so.

And then, as the child grows up to adulthood, what is the responsibility to the parents? "Honor your father and mother." (vs2)

So, what does "honor" mean? Many parents; the ones we exhorted last lesson with "don't you dare"; interpret this passage to try to keep their children under their thumb even as they mature to adulthood, that they are to still obey them. But remember, when a person "cleaves" to their new spouse, what does it say about their relationship to their parents? "...-LEAVE-..father and mother.." (5:31) If they have "left", they obviously don't still 'obey' them. Thus, "honor" must mean something else.

First of all, there is a universal Scriptural principle of Respect for elders. "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am Jehovah." (Lev19:32) I still remember the days when a child didn't dare call an adult by their first name. Such 'familiarity' was not "respectful". However, in today's climate youths are calling adults by the first letter of their names: "Mr. P", "Mrs. J", etc. While that is not the adult's first name, it mocks their respect; seeking to be inappropriately familiar. And what is the saying? "Familiarity breeds contempt." And as children call their own parents by their first names, if one looks at the rest of their demeanor, one sees lack of respect. In the O.T. when a young man was insolent, the parents might bring him before the rulers with the accusation, "This son [youthful young man] of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." (Deu21:20) And the verdict was to stone him to death and thus "put away the evil from among you". (vs21) And indeed, in these days we are seeing some youths being tried "as adults" for their crimes.

But most of all, honor speaks of "taking care of" the parents. Or, seeing to it that they are cared for. When Paul speaks of "double honor" to the elders who teach the Word, it is in the context of financial support. (1Tm5:16-18) Honor those who minister God's Word by making sure they are cared for. Now, while Paul speaks of parents "laying up.. for the children" (2Cor12:14), and not expecting to live off the children; there comes a time when the parents cannot care for themselves. And Jesus condemned the Jewish practice of "corban", where a person could give what they would have otherwise used to help their parents, for the temple. (Mk7:10-12) Jesus speaks of this support as being the "honor" (vs10) of the 5th Commandment. (Ex20:12, Eph6:2-3)

Does this mean that adult children are required to take their elderly parents into their own homes, as they did in ancient times? What about when rifts have developed due to some being saved, and others not? Jesus did say that those who follow Him might have to experience a separation from family as the "sword" of animosities and hatred result. (Mt10:34-36) and also, "let the dead bury their own dead". (Mt8:22) And obviously there have been many times when children left one country to move to another, never to see their parents again, in which case, there were others near-by to care for them. When parents grow old, in their senility they often become child-like; and the adult children often need to interact with them as if they were children. But "how" is this done? What about when the parent is a cranky ol' buzzard and impossible to deal with? Depending on the situation, children often put a distance between themselves, knowing the parents are being cared for. Sometimes an adult child might need to be 'firm' with a parent. But again, "how" is this done? With respect. With honor. For all their failings, remember, they -did- bring you into this world. If it had not been for them, you would not be where you are now.

As children, obey the parents. As adults, honor them. With the promise, "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."(vs3)

Fathers to their Children - (Ephesians 6:4)

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (vs4) "Fathers, do not provoke your children, that they may not become discouraged." (Col3:21) "And these Words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deut6:6-9)

The subject we discuss in this lesson, you who have read my testimony might think that what -I- write might be biased because of my growing up experience. But as you see how the lesson progresses, hopefully you will understand that it comes from God's Word, because we will see things that might seem contrary to what 'I' might say if I were merely 'reacting' to my own upbringing. Just as a brief summary: while I received well-deserved punishment as a child, I also was subject to much abuse, both emotional and physical. What I experienced must have been somewhat common to many children, because...

Notice: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath..." Now, the fathers who are doing the abusing, if they make claims to being "Christian", will often interpret this sentence that "wrath" means -God's- wrath. In other words, as some fathers have been known to say, that they are "beating the devil out of" their children. In other words, if the children are beaten enough, they will grow up to be "good little Christians" and will be spared God's wrath. So, what these father's call "discipline", they think is "saving" their children; because, after all, "You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell." (Pr23:14) And they are also usually KJV-onlyists, who follow "chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Pr19:18-kjv) However, the text says nothing about "crying". That is a mistranslation. The verse says to discipline the child for the purpose that he doesn't go to "destruction/death". But they will beat, beat, beat; and the child will cry, cry, cry. Over and over, time and again, it goes on and on.

But notice how Paul expands upon this by saying, "...that they may not become discouraged". (Col3:21b) Is it possible to beat children 'too much'? Well, these exhortations, since they are given as they are, suggest that, indeed, it is. And what happens when a child is discouraged? They can become self-destructive, or out of disgust for what they perceive as their parents' "cruel god", they are often known to bend over backwards later in life, and totally rebel against anything and everything having to do with God and the Bible, and actually seek to live "like the devil" their fathers tried to beat out of them.

Now, having said all this, do we then bend over backwards and say that corporal punishment is 'totally' wrong? Today's society would vehemently protest that it is. They label it as "violence"...that "violence never solved anything". And as they seek to psychologize everything, they ignore the basics they learned in their own Behavioral Science 101. They, who claim that we evolved from apes, forget the studies they do with apes. That rewards encourage certain behavior; but that pain is also sometimes necessary to prevent/deter certain other behavior.

How does any living creature learn "not to" do certain things? When they experience pain or discomfort as a result of doing them. One learns to keep away from a hot stove, when one's finger got singed. My former cat I have mentioned in the past, whom the robins taught to not chase them, also learned about refrigerator doors. As a kitten it continually wanted to poke its head into the fridge when the door was open. We would continually pull him away, saying, "No!" But eventually one day it finally learned the necessary lesson, when we weren't 'right there' as the door was slowly closing under its own weight, and his head got caught. He never did it again! No sirree! Whatever 'discomfort' he felt with his head between the door and the frame was what was 'necessary' for him to learn.

You see, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him." (Pr22:15) How? It is this basic elementary principle that God designed into all living creatures. When pain and/or discomfort becomes associated with wrong behavior, that wrong behavior is unlearned. And furthermore, for a more correct understanding of the earlier verse, if we understand, "Commit your works to Jehovah, and your thoughts will be established" (Pr16:3), if a child is trained away from evil 'works', and guided to -good- works, along with God's Word (which we will come to in a moment), this is what is meant when it says, "you shall beat him...and deliver his soul from hell". As the child learns what is wrong, coupled with God's Word to know the right, such 'guidance' away from wrong is part of the process of instructing him in the ways of the Lord. And when he learns of the Lord, and then meets the Lord, he is delivered from God's wrath.

The exhortation is, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die." (Pr23:13) This figure is used of how the Lord deals with us, "For whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and whips every son whom He receives." (Heb12:6) Thing is, when earthly fathers do this, they are imperfect, as the writer continues, "For they indeed for a few days disciplined us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." (Heb12:10) And thus, Paul continues with exhortation about the "nurture" in the "admonition" of the Lord.

The world, bit by bit, is seeking to outlaw God's commands in this regard. That "civilized societies" don't engage in such cruelty and violence. That it is cruel to "hurt" their children. But notice: "Now no chastening seems to

be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it." (Heb12:11) You see... it is SUPPOSED TO HURT! That's why it works. When they refuse to discipline their children, then they wonder why there is so much violence from these same youth!

"He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." (Pr13:24) Parents, do you love your children? Then, discipline them. Do you want them to turn out like today's violent youth? If not, then, discipline them. If you say that discipline is hateful, and don't do it, they -WILL- turn out like hoodlums. So, which do you desire for them? If you don't want them to be hoodlums later, you need to show your 'love' for them by disciplining them 'now'.

But, the raising of children is not just about discipline. It is about nurturing them. Which comes first? Discipline or nurturing? Well, they both go together. Sometimes, when wrong behavior is in progress, one cannot be teaching how to "be good". Today's psychology tries to do that. The child is throwing the tantrum, and the adult tries to 'nicely guide' the child into something 'positive'. Well, it's like we have been learning, we have to get rid of the "old" first, before the "new" can be put on. The child's 'attention' needs to be secured first, so they can then heed the positive. As long as rebellion is rising up with wrath, they are not in a frame of mind to hear anything else. And so, often the discipline has to be given; and then, the nurturing as to what replaces the wrong. "This is the way, walk in it..." (Is30:21)

And 'what' is the way to walk in? "These words which I command you today..." (Deut6:6) God's Law. God's Word. "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word." (Ps119:9) "Your Word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." (Ps119:105)

And 'how' is this way to be taught? "...you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deut6:7~) And the following verses essentially say that 'everything' about your way of life should be based on God's Law.

Remember, two lessons ago we suggested that if a wife is submitting to her husband, the husband can look at his wife and see himself, because she becomes what he is. A similar thing is true of children. While the soul of the father does not pass to the children except for as they were conceived, nevertheless the children imitate their parents' behavior. So, whatever you see in your children is a pretty good reflection of yourself.

Thus, fathers, getting back to that "do not provoke" concept we opened with... If you see your child being a certain way, what is your first reaction? Is the first reaction to yell at them, and go give them a thrashing? Or, do you temper your reaction by first observing...'where did they learn that'?

Did they learn it from you? Are they doing what you do? So, are you going to punish them for it? Or, does observing your child give you a sense of how your own behavior needs some modifying? Perhaps you need some of that "chastening of the Lord" yourself, first? (Heb12:5)

You know, when I used to teach piano and organ lessons, there were many times that my teaching of my students also taught 'me'... in ways that would be next-to-impossible to put into words. But as I would teach a concept to the student, the same concept would become heightened in my own playing technique. As parents train up their children, if they are doing it right, I expect they are also receiving instruction for themselves.

This is why, this whole thing comes from the Lord. The "..discipline and admonition of the Lord". (vs4) Do you see, ladies, why we said to you several lessons ago, even though today's liberated female complains about "the maaannn!" so much and what they perceive to be his deficiencies, how your man has things a lot tougher than you have them? If he has you and the children looking up to him, he has a higher standard he needs to attain. He not only has to be responsible for you, he is supposed to have all this wisdom regarding the children, too. Notice, vs4 specifies "fathers". And so, too, do you realize just a bit more your own role as his "helper suitable to him"? (Gen2:18)

Fathers can do the best they know how, even though they can never match God's perfection. (Heb12:10) This is why fathers, before they can teach their wives and children, must first have God's Law "in [their own] heart". (Deut6:6) While doing as all believers must, who desire to live Godly... "..looking unto Jesus" (Heb12:2)

Masters and Servants - (Ephesians 6:5-9)

"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ". (vs5)

Notice that this addresses "bondservants". A bondservant was somebody who was 'owned' by the master. The master might have purchased the slave, or the servant might have come under debt to the master and not been able to repay the debt, and so, came under servitude.

Notice one thing Paul does not say... He does not say to organize amongst the fellow-slaves, march in protest marches, and plot against the master... because slavery is 'wrong!' While he does speak of taking advantage of any opportunities to become free if they present themselves, he exhorts the believer to not be concerned about being a slave. (1Cor7:21)

But this passage also applies to those who are not enslaved, but are under the employ of an employer, since he closes out what he exhorts as being to: "whether he is a slave or free". (vs8)

So, if we work for somebody, how do we serve? Recently I went to a McDonalds again. I hadn't been to one in a long time; around here, the service is so bad, I tend to go to other places if I stop for a bite to eat away from home. But this day, as I was working on my Big Mac and fries, one of the girls was sauntering around with a rag in her hand. I don't think I could have moved as slowly as she was moving, even if I were to work 'hard' at being slow. Even when I'm resting, I move faster than she was moving. Well...maybe not...but you get the idea. And of course, the way they keep increasing the minimum wage for these kids, she was making 'big bucks' for her sauntering around. She was supposed to be wiping off tables. Recently a subscriber sent me some jpg files of made-up Windows "error messages", for 'fun'. One of them, looking like a little pop-up error dialogue box, said something like, "The system has detected that the operator is a government employee, so the computer has now gone into sleep mode." And then, how often haven't we seen the 'single' person up in the cherry-picker, working on the power lines, and 6 are down on the ground, standing around doing nothing.

A christian working for somebody, expecting to get paid, gives the employer their money's worth. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.." (Ec9:10) Why? We are not serving the employer. We are serving the Lord. When we work for some person, we are to do so as if we were doing it for the Lord. There are many who spend more time contriving the 'appearance' of working, than actually doing any work. Give the boss the 'impression' that they are doing a lot, even if they are not. But Paul says our service should be "in sincerity of heart". God says that "dishonest scales are an abomination to Jehovah" (Pr11:1, 20:10, 20:23) If you

pretend to be giving your employer a certain service, but are 'padding' your work, it is every bit like scales mis-adjusted. Scale weights with wrong labels on them. The odometer of the car turned back. Software installed in gas pumps to make them read more gallons than actually went into the customer's tank. Etc. If you don't give everything you are capable of, it is like "stealing" from your boss. "You shall not steal" (Ex20:15) It is like "dealing falsely [and] lying" (Lev19:11)

And then, what about the Believer who is actually a slave? How does such a person serve? What about when the master requires things of such a slave that the slave might view as being inappropriate or displeasing to God? Do they obey, or disobey? Bondservants, "..be obedient to.." your masters. Just as wives are to submit to their husbands "in everything" (5:24), even to the unsaved husband (1Pt3:1); servants are to "obey IN ALL THINGS your masters". (Col3:22)

What if the master requires the servant to attend to him while he engages in idolatry? Going to the pagan temple? Bowing to pagan idols? After all, the first and foremost commandment in all of God's Law is "I am Jehovah your God...you shall have no other gods before Me...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them." (Ex20:2-5) We have an example of this very thing. Naaman has come to Israel, and has been healed of leprosy through Elisha, and comes to faith in God, and proclaims that he will no more worship "other gods, but Jehovah". (2Ki5:17) And then, he presents his dilemma to Elisha. When his master, back home in Syria, goes to worship before Rimmon, he as the servant is required to be at his master's side tending to him, and bows to the idols with his master, he asks, "may Jehovah please pardon your servant in this thing" (vs18) and notice the reply from the man of God: "Go in peace." (vs19) You see, when we are subject to the godless "higher authorities" which are "ordained by God" (Rom13:1), God knows the chain-of-command under these authorities. While man can only see the "outward appearance" God "looks at the heart". (1Sam16:7) A true "Jew" [and Believer] is one who is so "of the heart" (Rom2:29), and God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb4:12) Just as we have observed some time ago that a believing wife of an unsaved husband should dress up and join him when he goes out partying when he wants her with him, and the pharisee women should not judge/condemn her; so too, a believing slave should be subject to the unsaved master.

Now, if it should be that the Lord lays it on your heart to disobey the master, because the Lord lays it on your heart that the given situation requires a testimony of purity and obedience to God's Law, then, also be prepared to be thrown into the lion's den like Daniel, the fiery furnace like Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah, or prison like Joseph. (And yes, if you are a 'free' non-enslaved employee, be prepared to be fired or politicked out of your job/career.)

If this becomes your outcome, do not grumble at the punishment you receive. Servants are exhorted to be subject to their masters, "not only to the good and fair, but also to the perverse" (1Pt2:18) And look to Jesus as the example you are following, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but gave Himself over to Him who judges righteously" (vs23)

And finally, to the masters: "do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in Heaven, and there is no partiality with Him" (vs9) Remember just as with the husband and wife, while there is the chain-of-command which places the husband 'over' the wife, in God's eyes as to their individual standing before God, they are equal (Ga3:28); so too, even though economics, society or politics have placed one person as "master" over another, in God's site he is no better than the slave. Even though he may be a master over his slave, he is a slave to his Master in Heaven. Remember the story Jesus told of the one who was forgiven a debt, but exacted a much smaller debt from a fellow-servant with cruelty; God required retribution from the one who treated his fellow-servant ill. (Mt18:23-35)

When Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, since Onesimus had run away, according to the law of the day, Philemon could have beat him to a bloody pulp, or any of a number of things. In those days, masters could kill their servants and be legally guilt-free. The slave was their "property". God's laws to Israel made things more merciful to slaves. But still...a slave, even in Israel, was like 'property'. But since Philemon was a Believer, and Onesimus had just become a Christian, Paul sends along a letter explaining the situation, urging Philemon to receive Onesimus back as "no longer as a slave but more than a slave; a beloved brother.." (Phm16)

So... masters/employers: Don't merely be thinking of the "bottom line" when dealing with employees/slaves. They are "people", just as you are a person. How would you wish to be treated if you were in their shoes? "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do the same to them." (Lk6:31) Ah, yes!

Spiritual Warfare - (Ephesians 6:10-13)

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on all the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (vs10-11)

First of all, "finally". Notice that in six chapters to this epistle, spiritual warfare comes 'last' in the discussion. Notice also that throughout the book we have not had tongues or being 'spirit-filled'. What we have had up to this point is a putting off of the old sin nature and works of the flesh, and a putting on of a Christ-likeness. The emphasis has not been our 'authority over satan', but our "growing up in all things into [Christ]" (4:15) How can we hope for victory over satan unless we have been trained? Military recruits are not handed rifles and grenades first thing off the bus, and sent to fight the enemy. Pilots do not first thing get into an F-16 and perform precision aerobatics with the Thunderbirds. Pilots receive hours and millions of dollars worth of training. Other soldiers receive bootcamp into mental and physical discipline necessary to work together with others and follow orders of the commanders. They learn about their weapons, and military tactics. This training takes time. They are always exercising their skills. As Christians, in training, we are always having, "...their understanding -exercised- to discern both good and evil." (Heb5:14) How can we stand against satan if we do not understand him? If we are "not ignorant of his purposes" (2Cor2:11), it means that we have learned how to see past his facade as an "angel of light" and his demons who appear as "ministers of righteousness" (2Cor11:14-15) But how can we have a 'fighting chance' against him, if we have not been through boot camp and are trained in righteousness? Many of the military boast of themselves as being "mean. lean fighting machines". "Lean" means getting rid of the excess baggage of whatever would hinder one in carrying out his duties. Getting rid of sin, growing in Christ, taking the nourishment of God's Word.

"..be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.." (vs10) Notice this says nothing about sitting around mantracizing praise music and being 'spirit-filled'. We are not to be filled by demons, but with God.

We need to be fully aware that what we are up against is "wiles". (vs11) Deception. We speak of this continually. And we harp on it over and over, because so many are deceived. For as much as we address this, and for all that is posted at the website on it, the most number of whinings against this ministry come from those who obviously either 'cannot' or 'will not' see satan's deception.

NOTE THIS WELL, dear Believer! Our greatest struggle is against that which 'looks like' it is "Christian". Those who do the most complaining that you are being "divisive AGAINST BROTHERS" are the 'very ones' through whom our spiritual warfare comes.

Let's repeat this point: The people who are tearing down walls of doctrine, mushing everybody all together, and complaining that you keep separate from them and expose them through God's Word, accusing you of being "divisive" because of your Godly separation... -THEY- ARE the enemy. -They- are unregenerate. -They- are wolves in sheeps' clothing. -They- are of the "spirit of antichrist" that is already in the world. (1Jn4:3) Don't pay any mind to the "Rev" in front of their name, or be impressed/intimidated by the degress behind it, or the thousands who flock to their meetings. Remember that the "broad way" that contains "many" leads to "destruction". (Mt7:13) And also remember that Jesus promised that persecution would originate from out of the "synagogues" (churches) (Jn16:2-3) But as Jesus says of them, "..they do not know the Father nor Me".

However, having said all this, these 'people' through whom it comes are merely the conduits from the real source. The struggle is "not..against flesh and blood". (vs12) The reason the deception is so effective is because the enemy persuades Believers that they are being "divisive against BROTHERS (people)". But it's just like in earthly warfare. It is not so much the 'people' of the militaries that fight each other, but their sending governments. During the US Civil War of the 1860s how many are the accounts of family members (brothers, cousins, fathers, sons) fighting each other, because they were on opposite sides from each other in the conflict... when, in actuality, they had no personal animosity against each other? But they were forced to shoot at each other because of the governments which drafted them. Even during WW1 and WW2, there are the accounts of when Xmass came, enemies would lay down their weapons and the soldiers from opposite sides would meet with each other and celebrate the season together. The next day, due to orders from their commanders, they would start shooting at each other again.

While, what we see and have to deal with is the 'people' serving their commanders, their 'commanders' are the "rulers, authorities, the world's rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual wickedness IN THE HEAVENLIES" (vs12)

The people who brag up -their- 'authority' "speak evil of things they do not know". Even God's angels, who exist in the same realm, do not elevate their own authority over satan. (Judas 9-10) We get a bit of a glimpse into this kingdom of the "heavenlies" in Daniel ch10. A messenger is sent to explain Daniel's visions to him, but is detained by the "ruler of the kingdom of Persia" (vs13) This messenger had been apparently imprisoned there, until Michael came along to free him. Notice, this is merely a 'glimpse' to us humans. But the validity of this is shown when the devil offers to give all his authority over the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. And he says, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." (Lk4:6) And if you read that passage, you will see that Jesus did not disagree with the devil's assessment of his authority. But He tells satan to "Get behind Me, Satan!"

(vs8) It is this authority that Jesus will be wrenching away from satan when He exercises His authority as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev19:16) And it is this same authority of the heavenlies which constitutes the source our warfare.

Therefore, our orders are to engage in Prayer Warfare. Map out strategies against the territorial demons. Set up warfare prayer rooms, and interlink all these around the world, and establish "blankets of prayer" and "prayer-chains". Pray up walls against your own local territorial demons. Walk through neighborhoods and pray the demons away. Challenge satan and his demons in prayer, speaking to them personally, and make sure they know -just- "how powerful" you are and that they had better shudder at the mere sound of your voice in prayer and what you are about to do to them through your Power-of-Prayer. Mmmm? Notice that this paragraph suddenly has no Scripture references attached! You will not find 'any' of this rubbish in Scripture! But this is what the pretenders claim to be doing.

What are the Believer's marching orders? To go on spiritual offensive warfare? Go on the attack? Map out strategies? Those who do this think they are in charge. But Christians are NOT 'in charge'. We obey our Commander. What does He command? "Stand". (vs11)

This word "stand" is defined by the concepts of "to place, put, set, make firm, fix, establish, to keep his place, to stand immovable" The concept defined in the exhortation, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable..." (1Cor15:58) The guards 'posted' to the doors of the White House, or at the ramp/stairs of Air Force One. The guards assigned, posted, to guard the airplanes on the runway. Before the stealth fighter plane became more common, when on display at Air Force airshows, surrounded by rope, with armed guards posted, with signs warning of the guards' authority to use deadly force if anyone entered the roped-off area. And these guards, not engaging in chitchat with people, but standing/pacing their posts, watchful eyes against any incursion into the security/secretcy of the airplane. In NO CASE do you see these guards running around, here and there, helter-skelter; barking out orders. They are assigned to their 'post'. They are to "guard" that 'spot'.

Now, if somebody attempted to make an incursion past such a guard, when the commanders came along later to investigate, what they had 'better' find, if the intruder got through, is a 'dead' guard. "...resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.." (vs13) As Believers, "...they did not love their lives unto death." (Rev12:11b)

This is different from what is called "spiritual warfare" today, isn't it. So, which warfare are you enlisted into? Are you a Christian, or a -pretend- "minister of righteousness"? (2Cor11:15) Now that you realize that spiritual warfare is not glorious as -you- are 'commanding' satan's legions, have you "counted the cost" to follow Christ? (Lk14:28)

If you are a True Believer, next lesson we will see the 'defensive' weapons available at our disposal. But be sure, victory is assured. Let's finish that verse we quoted a part of above, "And they overcame him through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives unto death." (Rev12:11)

Defensive Weapons - (Ephesians 6:14-20)

"Stand firm therefore..." (vs14)

Well, c'mon, let's get on with this lesson! I thought you said we were going to look at our 'weapons' this time. How come you are rehashing last lesson's depressing thoughts? I want to get these weapons and fire them around, make some loud banging sounds, and shed some blood, and face the enemy and do battle. I want to map out strategies and show satan 'just who' is -boss- around here... 'me'!

Dear Believer... (Pretenders... right about now you might as well run along to something else. These lessons aren't for you!) Do you see the point being made? This word "stand" is used three times here. That means it's important. We 1) STAND against satan's wiles (vs11). We 2) STAND, having done so to death if necessary. (vs13). And we 3) STAND with the weapons provided. (vs14) We are not 'going' on the offensive, but we are to "RESIST" in the evil day. (vs13) For the True Believer, if the person is living for the Lord, we don't need to go looking for conflict. It finds us! And when it does, we stand and resist it.

Now, look at all the weapons we have. Truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, Word of God, prayer. (vs14-18) Does anybody see in this list anything that does 'not' represent Jesus Christ? Jesus said, "I am...the truth". (Jn14:6) "O God of my righteousness". (Ps4:1) "...that we might become the righteousness of God in [Christ]" (2Cor5:21), "...the gospel of peace..glad tidings of good things" (Rom10:15) We won't cover everything here, but when satan came against Jesus, what did He respond? "It is written..." (Mt4:4,etc)

Notice that all of these figures of military weaponry are all defensive, to protect the wearer. Just as God was a shield to Israel against Egypt's armies from the pillar of cloud/fire (Ex13:21,14:24), so is He also to Believers against satan's onslaughts through spiritual 'Egypt'. And the one item the pretenders claim is for offensive campaigns, the sword (vs17), Jesus used to resist satan with "it is written". Jesus did not go out looking for satan in order to jab at him.

The pretenders claim that, being the "sword of the Spirit", that means they need to be "spirit-filled". That they need "Holy Spirit power". That if they are thus filled, 'they' can defeat satan. But notice that the passage defines itself... "sword of the Spirit -WHICH-IS- the Word of God". When God's Word goes out, it does so without returning "void". Without accomplishing what it was sent to do. (Is55:11) And so you see, even when we "wield" this 'sword', it is not 'us' fighting. It is Christ. It is -God's- Word.

You see, if we want to be successful in resisting satan and standing firm for Christ, we do not need worship music to help us be "spirit-filled". What

we need is a firm foundation of God's Word. Yes, -DOCTRINE-, the very thing the pretenders are tearing down in favor of their own agenda. Notice that there is not one word in this passage about "worship". The "cost" to follow Christ does not always "feel good". We will not always -feel- "blessed". We will not always -feel- "charged up". We will often be tortured, mocked, flogged, imprisoned, destitute, afflicted, oppressed. But notice that of this sort, "the world [is] not worthy". (Heb11:37-38)

Notice Paul's desire. He was an "ambassador in chains". And yet notice his prayer request on his own behalf. Oh, please contact all the people in the prayer chain for intercession on my behalf that I can be freed from bondage. Mmm?

"..supplication..for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel...that in [bondage] I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (vs19-20) Hey! Speaking out is what got Paul into chains, in the first place. And he is asking for prayer that he will continue to be bold in speaking for Christ.

Today there is an interesting phenomenon. When groups of people labeled as "Christians" (whether they really are or not, nevertheless they have the label) are experiencing persecution (allegedly) "for their faith", other [c]hristians in other parts of the world "pray" for them that their circumstances might become less cruel, and they go petitioning governments to stop the persecution. I have not heard of a one of these entities sending out e-mails or prayer requests so that these who are being persecuted might "be bold" for Christ. That they might stand firm, and "having done all, to stand". When the early church was persecuted, they prayed for "boldness" to "speak [His] Word". (Acts4:29) Today's "christians" are different from those in Acts. Are they even really "Christians"?

Yes, Believers have "authority" over the enemy. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to tread over serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." (Lk10:18-20) Names written in Heaven? That's righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation. 'Ever wonder why so many [c]hristians seem unable to resist satan? They do not possess salvation. They are not True [C]hristians. They are not saved.

Yes, we stand firm, and even though we may die resisting, we do not fear those who only have power over our bodies, and have nothing more they can do. (Lk12:4) Yes, we do have affliction of spiritual warfare from satan's onslaughts. But our victory is not our own. Jesus says, "be of good courage, I have overcome the world." (Jn16:33)

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1Cor15:57-58)

Addendum Section:

Blameless? © 2005

READER QUESTION:

what does it mean to be "blameless" before God. I have a friend who did a study on blameless and claims there were 12 people that the Bible mentions as blameless. His contention is that Jesus came to not only die for our sins but to show that we could absolutely live a life without sin - be blameless. I believe that God calls us to strive with all that is within us to obey Him and not sin, but that inevitably, we do sin. Even our "good deeds" are never absolutely pure in motive, lacking in some degree of selfishness or pride, however small. He feels this sort of thinking - that we all inevitably sin - allows people to use as an "excuse" for sin. Your response appreciated.

VW ANSWER:

There are some who believe that a Christian does not ever sin; that if he sins, he lost his salvation by that act of sin; but then, he can be saved again. (I've heard some attach the label "Arminianism" to this doctrine) If I remember correctly, I believe some Nazarenes and other "holiness" denominations believe this; and their weekly invitations have people going forward to be repeatedly RE-saved. Trouble is, Scripture is quite clear that, if a person "falls away" that they cannot be "renewed" to repentance. (Heb6:4-6) But also, that expression the KJV uses, "falls away", is not so much a "falling" as it is to "turn aside". The term "fall" suggests an 'accident'...whereas to "turn" is a 'deliberate' act.

The fact that Christians -do- stumble occasionally and become tainted by the world is quite clear. In fact, if we deny this John says "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" thus we are to "confess" our sins, and received the advocacy of Christ on our behalf. (1Jn1:8-2:2) Notice the ones John says "sins", who receive advocacy...."My little children"....Believers.

John records that it is "not in our nature to sin" (1Jn3:9); but we -do- sin because we are yet "flesh and blood" which is "not able to inherit the kingdom of God" because our flesh and blood are yet "corrupt". (1Co15:50-54) In Paul's struggles he observes: "with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom7:25b) While we are yet in these bodies, our salvation is -spiritual-, as it is the Holy Spirit who "seals" us. (Eph1:13) Notice that it is the Holy Spirit "of promise". It is a 'promise' that, when the "change" comes (Job14:14), we will be included...and we will receive new glorified bodies; having shed the "natural body" and received the "spiritual body". (1co15:44) We don't yet possess "eternal life", but what we have through the Holy Spirit's sealing

"promise" is the "hope of eternal life". (Tit1:2, 3:7, 1Th5:8, etc) (More on this in the next question)

Jesus symbolized this when He washed the disciples' feet, and says to Peter, "He who is bathed has no other need than to wash his feet, but is completely clean." (Jn13:10)

The Believer has been "bathed" in the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Tit3:5) where we were "buried with Him through immersion into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom6:4)

This matter of being "blameless" is more of an accounting or legal term. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Rom4:3) And yet we can look at Abraham's life and see how he also acted in doubt when he sired Ishmael, as Sarah continued to be infertile year after year. When they went down to Egypt during the famine he lied about Sarah being his wife out of fear for his life. These things, done 'after' he had "believed" God, where he was "accounted" as righteous.

It's kind of like when a person stands before the court, accused of some particular crime: How do you plead? Not guilty. And after the case is heard, the judge agrees and "dismisses" the case. In other words, the judge agrees: "not guilty". In other words: "blameless". Although, the person may truly be guilty of other tiny little infractions and misdemeanors...but is not being held accountable for them.

That's an -earthly- court of law. But before God, the only thing we can plead is "guilty". And that's what salvation is, that God 'waives' the penalty due to Christ's propitiation, having paid the debt, so the case is dismissed, "paid in full", and now as far as the Heavenly Court is concerned, the debt having been paid, the defendant is now -declared- "justified" (Rom5:9, 1Co6:11) or "righteous". There is no "blame" held against the Believer, thus, they are "blameless".

Kind of like David. We might look at his time while running from Saul, when he 'defected' to the Philistines for a time as a time of lack of faith? On one occasion, to extricate himself out of a situation he had gotten himself into, he even found himself feigning madness. (1Sam21:13) But in looking at history, what was God's verdict upon his life? "...because David had done what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and had not turned aside from anything that He had commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." (1Ki15:5)

God looks at us and "...He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Ps103:14) Thus, we can see all the warriors of faith in Hebrews ch11, and see people whose lives contained failures along the way...but

for the historic record they are called saints of "faith". In God's Book they are accounted as "blameless".

Those who are accounted "blameless" are not those who have never sinned, "for there is no one who does not sin" (1Ki8:46); but on whose account...

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps103:12) and "...He adds, Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb10:17)

Possessing Eternal Life now? (re: "Blameless" above)

READER QUESTION:

I was slightly "bothered" by a comment you made in your last mailing - that we don't yet possess "eternal life" (Tit1:2, 3:7, 1Th5:8, etc).

This got me thinking ...

I can see your point, and that this is supported by certain Scriptures. But at the same time, Jesus said that "Whosoever believeth in him [the Son of Man] should not perish, but have eternal life"; (Jn 3:15) that "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (Jn 6:54); and that "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life" (Jn 10:27-28).

Paul then told Timothy to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Ti 6:12; 19); and John said that "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you ... that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:11-13).

Yet as you say, Titus only talks about the "promise" of eternal life, as does John (1 John 2:25). And Jesus said that those who, for His sake, had forsaken worldly passions in this age would receive eternal life "in the age to come" (Mark 10:30).

The question, then: Do we, or don't we, have eternal life as a present possession? Any thoughts you have would be much appreciated.

VW ANSWER:

Yes, we are "promised" Eternal Life; the Holy Spirit has "sealed" the promise; we have "hope" of it; and indeed we are exhorted to "lay hold" and cling to it.

But what is the 'nature' of what we presently possess? The very fact that you-all are -reading- this e-mail indicates that we-all are yet on this earth. We are, obviously, not yet in Heaven (are there computers and the internet in Heaven?). Jesus promised to "go prepare" a place for us, and to "come again" to "receive" us to Himself. (Jn14:2-3) Computers and e-mail are aspects of this world; we still see 'sin' all around us, and we each sometimes get our feet 'dirty' in it. We are yet "flesh and blood" which is "not able to inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." (1Co15:50) In our present state, in these "natural bodies" (1Co15:44) we are yet subject to death. That is hardly "Eternal" or "life", now, is it.

But here's the deal...

"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has -SEALED- us and given us the -EARNEST- of the Spirit in our hearts." (2Co1:21-22) See also: 2Co5:5 And within the other context where Paul tells how the Holy Spirit "seals" us, the next verse - defines- the Spirit as the "...EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION.." (Eph1:14) (You can read past mentions of this in the "Ephesians" study series at the Library. I think we have likely also spoken of this in relationship to the OSAS doctrine, how a person, once having put down the earnest, might back away from the deal, forfeiting the deposit...in this case, salvation. Heb6:4-6, those who "draw back" Heb10:38-39, Lk8:13)

To review: what is the "earnest"? When a house is being purchased, the buyer puts down some "earnest" money, as a "good faith" gesture 'promise' to the fact of their true intentions to buy the house. Typically, unless the seller rejects the buyer's offer, this earnest is non-refundable, should the buyer back out of the deal. That's part of the reason for the earnest, so that the seller has to deal with only bona fide (good faith) offers.

This "house" example is a little backwards from our salvation...but it serves an example of what we are talking about....

The couple (husband and wife) have looked at this house, and they have "fallen in love" with it. They REEEEEALLLY want it! They sign the preliminary papers of intent to buy, making an offer of a purchase price, write out their check for the non-refundable 'earnest' money....and everything is submitted through the realtor to the seller. So now they 'wait' to hear from the seller. The phone rings, and the realtor tells the wife the seller has accepted the offer, so she hangs up, squealing with delight, "The house is OURS! It's OUR house!" Perhaps some friends come around for supper/visit, and the couple takes them over to see the house..."Look at -OUR- house!"

However...officially, it is not yet legally in their 'possession'. They have not yet paid the remainder of the purchase price, they have not transferred the utilities to their names, they have not yet moved in, they don't even yet have the keys....so as they joyously show THEIR new house to their friends, they cannot even take them inside. But it is -THEIR- house due to the 'understanding' through that "earnest" process. And their "hope" to 'move-in' is not a question of "whether" they will move it...but "when" do they get to? How much 'longer' will it take to finalize the legal aspects of title transfer, etc?

But the "purchased possession" hasn't yet been "redeemed". (Eph1:14)

Or said another way, somebody has a lottery ticket (I don't condone this practice...but it does provide us an example in this case), and they see the numbers pop up on the TV screen as the balls come rolling down the

shoot, and find they have the jackpot ticket. They start jumping up and down, shouting and squealing, "I won! I won! I'm rich! I'm a millionaire! I won!" But...at the 'present' moment while they are thusly excited, their bank account is still overdrawn and they are deeply in debt...even though they have just "won" the lottery. They yet need to go to wherever it is they cash in (redeem) their slip, to receive their winnings, where the money actually goes into their account. They "won", but they don't yet "have" it...but they excitedly "hope" to go the next day to redeem their winnings.

In the same way...yes.... we -HAVE- Eternal Life; the Holy Spirit has sealed the deal. The "earnest" is the Holy Spirit residing in us. (Rom8:9) But we are not yet in Heaven, in God's presence; Jesus hasn't yet come to get us...but we have "hope" of it. And this "hope" is not a question of "if" we will go, but "when", as we are "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." (Rom8:23)

Yes, due to the Holy Spirit's "sealing", we do presently possess Eternal Life; but we haven't yet received the keys, nor have we moved in and got the utilities all transfered into our names yet. Right now all we can do is drive over, 'point' to it, and rejoice to everybody how it is "ours", and how we will 'soon' be moving in.

All we can do is wave the lottery ticket around in the air, showing it off as the "winning number", and boast how we are "going to" go cash it in for the "big money".

Hopefully this makes sense?

Holy Spirit's Seal -Eph1:13

READER COMMENTS:

You have made a studious presentation on the sealing of the Spirit. I'm no Charismatic, but please consider that there is a distinct sealing of the Spirit on top of regeneration. You see, with your view, you have made the seal and the substance all one. The seal is not the deal, but is to certify the deal. The earnest is not the purchase; it is to guarantee the purchase. The witness is not one of the parties, but is to certify the transaction of others.

VW ANSWER:

Your first comment about "distinct/on top of" will be answered in the next sections, here. But as for the rest of this I think the study already said these things. The "deal" was Christ redeeming us with His own blood. (vs7) And the "purchase" is completed at the end of the Church age when Christ comes 'knocking' on the door, wanting to take possession. (Rev3:20) Yes, the Spirit is only the "witness" to the transaction; but until that notary seal is in place, those documents are not binding. Christ made His "offer" at Calvary when He died, with the provision that "whoever believes" (Jn3:16) might become part of the "deal". He did that "once". (Rom6:10, Heb7:27, 9:12, 10:10) But the "whoever" part of the transaction is sealed -individually- by the Holy Spirit. Remember how the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was "divided/distributed" and sat upon "each" of them. (Acts2:3)

READER COMMENTS:

Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Eph 1:13 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, The seal should be viewed not as "in", but "upon".

VW ANSWER:

First of all, in quoting Gal4:6, you have contradicted yourself. Notice the Spirit has been sent "into" our hearts. The Holy Spirit "dwells -IN- you" (Rom8:9) We are temples of the Holy Spirit "who is -IN- you". (1Cor6:19) We'll look at the "on/upon" aspect later in this Q/A.

However... thank you for emphasizing the word "after" in Eph1:13. I really wanted to address that in the study, but it did not really quite 'fit' for the way it was being put together. But, the Lord always seems to allow somebody to ask questions in such situations, giving me the 'excuse' to subsequently address things in that way.

You quoted vs13 from the KJV. NKJV says "in whom also, having believed.." And any other translation I looked up, including YLT, they all used a similar "past tense" approach. But notice how the LITV renders it:

"..in whom also believing you were sealed.."

This little difference makes ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD with respect to several doctrines. Since I am not an expert in Greek, I must rely on the tools made available by those who are. The word rendered "believed/believing" is 'Aorist' tense. That is a tense "without regard for past, present or future time" but most translators have chosen to render it as "past tense".

To begin understanding this tense, as an example, let us assume somebody is telling about somebody else -SAYING- something. He could say, "Jack said, Blah, blah, blah.." That's 'past' tense. Or somebody could be observing, "He is saying, Blah, blah..." That's 'present' tense; happening 'right now'. Or, looking ahead to somebody's speech, someone might say, "He is going to say, Blah, blah..." 'Future' tense. But Aorist tense is more on the order of how somebody typically tells a story, "The big moron -SAYS- to the little moron..." This word "says" has no real "time" attached to it. It tends to be more "present tense" to the context of the story or account being told...not 'when' the story is being told. So, if the "big moron" is talking to little moron, "says" is 'present' tense to the event of big moron's speaking. But at the time it is being told, it could be fictitious and not ever have actually happened, or if "Jack" spoke some words to somebody-or-other, and that event is now being told, "says" would be 'present' tense to -when- Jack spoke the words, but 'past' tense now, as the event is being recounted. But using the word "says" gives a sense of 'immediacy' to the telling of it.

Thus, "believing" (Aorist) is occurring at the same time as the "sealing", even though we might now be talking 'past' tense, looking 'back' to when we were first saved... thinking back on our experience, and Paul is 'now' explaining the details of "what happened" BACK THERE.

The mood being 'participle' it could use either an "ing" or "ed" ending. But if it is without "time", it would seem to be more appropriate to use the "ing" ending, because "ed" -locks- it into 'past' tense. Indeed, many other places in the N.T. where Aorist is used, you will find the LITV renders them with "ing"...as do other Greek scholars.

In something like this, I also look at the reliability and tendencies of the translator. This verse could be viewed by some as a key proof text for the confusions/clarifications of the doctrines of "Eternal Security" and "Once saved-Always saved". Anyone who is acquainted with Jay Green, Sr. knows him and his organization to be heavily into the writings of Calvin and other Reformed/Puritan authors. To them, generically, Eternal Security is essentially synonymous with OSAS. Indeed, Mr.Green in a few places has made his Calvinist bent known in his translations with the use of 'added' italicized words. Thus, if the same thing were to be holding true here, one would have thought he would have rendered it the same way

everybody else did. Doing so would have been consistent with his Calvinist beliefs. But he did not. He handled this Aorist tense the same way he did all the others. He went against his own beliefs to be accurate to the text.

You see, "believed" has a different sense to it than "believing". Those who maintain that one believ(ED), and 'now' they are saved, because they believ(ED) 'back there' at some point in time, rest on that past faith. They pin their eternal security on some 'date' when they -prayed- the "sinner's prayer". And so, with that past 'act' on the records, they maintain that their salvation "cannot be lost". (their terminology)

But such a belief never -quite- explains "..work out (cultivate) your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil2:12) Or, "..whose house we are -IF- we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." (Heb3:6) Or again, Jesus' words, "..but he who endures to the end will be kept safe.." (Mt10:22, 24:13) There's 'tons' of stuff in the N.T. about "enduring". (e.g. 2Tm2:12, Jn6:27, etc) 'Not going to rehash OSAS again right now; there are lots of past writings on the subject at the website:

People who hold to OSAS tend to explain away the words "endur/ing" as meaning something other than what they mean. But Jesus spoke of the ones who would begin, but not having counted the cost, would abandon the building. (Lk14:28) Or of beginning to plow, and then looking back. (Lk9:62) If one denies Him, He promised to deny them before His Father. (Mt10:33) Paul reiterates that. (2Tm2:12) And what of all those seeds which sprouted to life, and then died. (Mt13) The ones who are most militant with OSAS also tend to be the Church of Ephesus; they got their "first" love, but put it on a 'shelf' for safe-keeping, and in the end, it is said of them that they "left" their "first (one-time event) love". (Rev2:4)

Salvation is not a one-time event. It -begins- at a given moment of the new birth (Jn3:3) and as such, a person should know of that 'time' it happened (whether he can necessarily remember the exact calendar date or not... the event should be firmly etched in his mind/heart). But it does not stop there. One does not buy salvation and then put it on a shelf some place for 'safe keeping'. Salvation is Eternal Life. While we are building on the foundation of Christ (1Cor3:11) we are "living stones". (1Pt2:5) Salvation is proven by the subsequent Life. (Jas2:14-26) If there is no telling Life, then such a faith "is dead also". (vs26) Known by its "fruits". (Mt7:20) Thus, from the moment one is saved, yes, at that moment they believ(ED). But the nature of such Faith is that one -CONTINUES- believ(ING). What the Spirit seals on our behalf is a "living hope". (1Pt1:3) Not dormant like the servant who took his master's talent and hid it in the ground. (Mt25:18,25) Keep in mind that, although he started out as a "servant" (was saved), he was "cast..into outer darkness.." (vs30) Paul did not consider himself as having "arrived" but said, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.." (Phil3:13-14) When Barnabas met with the fledgling Believers in Antioch, before he left to find Saul, he

exhorts them to "continue with the Lord". (Acts 11:23b) Obviously, such a statement assumes the opposite is possible, that they -won't- continue. Thus, the Spirit's sealing is related to that on-going, continuing believ(ing).

And then... the other false doctrine that 'could be' proof-texted from rendering it "believ(ED)" is that of Charismania/Pentecostalism. This should be easier to understand. If we go erroneously adding the words "after that ye" to an incorrectly tensed "believ(ED)", well... the result is obvious, isn't it. The Holy Spirit does not come "after" one is saved...because that verse doesn't say "after". I think it is so obvious, that I'm not even going to address it further in this context.

READER COMMENTS:

Consider these scriptures...

Pentecost - the Spirit fell on regenerate believers: Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat [upon] each of them.

Samaritan believers - Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen [upon] none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Acts 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Cornelius and household - hearts purified by faith, witnessed by Spirit coming upon: Acts 15:8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell [on] all them which heard the word.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came [on] them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. There are two extremes...

The Pentecostal which makes the sealing optional to regeneration [the indwelling], dependent upon our paying the price, and

The Baptist which makes the sealing non-existent, synonymous with regeneration. One is too experiential, the other not enough. I would posit that, while salvation is one package, yet there is a witness of the Spirit on top of regeneration, even though it might sometimes happen simultaneously with regeneration.

VW ANSWER:

First of all, let us remember that Ephesians is -to- the CHURCH. Acts is still to/about the Jews -AS- the Church is coming into being and becoming established. Remember that Acts ends symbolically with Paul proclaiming 'to Jews' that the "salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" ...after which, the Jews leave. (Acts 28:28-29)

All the apostles were Jews. And BY DEFINITION, an "apostle" is someone who is involved in beginning something "new". Initiates and introduces "new" teachings. The book of Acts is a 'history' of how this came about. The Acts "of-the-apostles".

Without looking up references, when God gave the Law at Sinai, there were some mighty spectacular things going on. The fire, cloud, rumblings, trumpet sound. God was introducing Himself to Israel, and giving them the Law. But once the ordinances had become instituted, Israel did not continue experiencing rumbles, lighting, trumpet sounds. In the same way, once the Church was established, the "signs and wonders" of Acts did not continue. They "ceased" (1Cor13:8, Num11:25b)

Remember that "signs and wonders" is a DISTINCTLY -JEWISH- thing. Notice: God says, "We are for signs and wonders IN ISRAEL from the LORD of Hosts.." (Is8:18) And throughout Acts the "wonders and signs" were done "through the apostles". (Acts2:43, 5:12) And they were done for the purpose of authenticating the apostleship of the apostles (2Cor12:12), thus, proving to Israel that God was establishing something new.

For the sake of -PROOF- to the Jews who were present at each instance, God was proclaiming that the new Church was for all people...Jew and Gentile alike. (Eph2:14) Thus you have the Holy Spirit -symbolically- coming on/upon several representative 'classes' of people.

- 1) Acts 2 -Jews
- 2) Acts 8 -Samaritans (to the Jewish mind, despised 'half-breeds')
- 3) Acts 10 -Gentiles
- 4) Acts 19 -John's disciples

In other words, what had been up until that time, various classes of people and dispensations, and variations of the message and baptisms (even though it always has been -One- God), were now symbolically all brought together, for the Jewish understanding, under the -SAME- doctrine. As we will see later in Ephesians, "one Lord, one Faith, one baptism" (4:5)

You see, the Jewish rituals would sprinkle blood and pour oil, and "lay hands upon" in order to dedicate. On the head of the sacrificial animal, thus, symbolizing the laying of the guilt of sin on it. (Lev3:2,etc) And on Levites to dedicate them for service. (Num8:10,etc) And so, the early (Jewish) Church also did the same when they commissioned people for service. (Acts13:3) And Paul speaks of NOT "laying hands" when somebody isn't yet ready for service. (1Tm5:22) Thus, it was also a JEWISH ritual which "laid hands on them" to receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts8:17) And that is why it is worded "on/upon" in that way, those four times. Those were 'ritual' occasions, for the benefit of the Jewish mind, of introducing Believers to the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't so much that the Holy Spirit was coming 'upon/on' these various - individuals-, but that the Holy Spirit was being commissioned upon these classes, in the same way the Levites were laid (hands) "upon" for service. After all, since Christ died and tore the veil, we now have direct (priestly/levitical) access to the "throne of grace". (Heb4:16) But, after 1400 years of rituals, the Jewish mind needed to 'see' this change. That is why those passages speak of "on/upon". And why they would have been done for those who were 'already' Believers. The same coming of the Holy Spirit of ch2 needed to be implemented to these other Believers, ritually, for the observation -of-, and witness -to-, the Jews.

ADDITIONAL REPLYING COMMENTS:

I think the best illustration of the essence and meaning of the sealing of the Spirit is in the case of the Son of God Himself...

it was in addition to sonship

it was to confirm sonship ...

It was assurance to Jesus: "You are My beloved Son".

It was assurance to those watching: voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved..."

Example: John 1:33 And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' it was upon [in a sense upon, but admittedly in - not external, cp Gal 4.6, Rom 5.5]... Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him John 6:27 ...for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal."

VW ANSWER:

Let me say AGAIN... Eph1:13 is to/about the "Church". This epistle was written 30 years after Jesus had ascended back to Heaven. We are way past the need for the Jewish "signs and wonders" and -visible-symbolisms.

These examples about Christ are different. Jesus was sent "to His own" (Jn1:11) -JEWS-... He was manifested (sealed) in a manner they were accustomed to. To compare the Holy Spirit's coming upon Jesus, to His sealing of the (Gentile) Church, is like comparing apples and oranges. It is this kind of mis-application that also produces the erroneous (typically) 'baptist' doctrine that proclaims that we "follow the Lord into the waters of baptism". Jesus' baptism is/was different from the Believer's baptism. Remember that when some disciples of John were found, who had been baptised with "John's baptism" they were re-baptized; this time in the "name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts19:3,5) as Jesus commanded, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". (Mt28:19) But, even Jesus' baptism was different from "John's baptism". It was unique unto Himself and His purpose as the Spotless Lamb in preparation for sacrifice. John's baptism of people was unto "repentance" (Lk3:3). But Jesus was "fulfilling righteousness" (Mt3:15), something we won't address right now.

Something else to notice about Jesus and Pentecost. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended upon Him in -visible- form, like a dove. (Mt3:16) At Pentecost, it was -visible- "tongues, as of fire" (Acts2:3) So... OF COURSE these visible fillings are going to come "upon" them. After all the centuries of human symbolisms of "laying hands", how else was God going to visibly demonstrate -TO- 'ISRAEL' that He was "laying His hand upon.." in this way? He used -visible- symbols. Thus, when Pentecost came along, they knew that John's prophecy that Jesus would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and -fire-" (Mt3:11) was fulfilled. Again... John was sent to Israel, and he prophesied to/about Israel.

But the Church, to whom Paul is writing in Ephesians, is different. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn20:29) We believe in Jesus, "whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith-the salvation of your souls." (1Pt1:8-9) Do you see, again, this 'continuing' nature of our "believ(ing)". And we are continuing onwards until when? The "-revelation- of Jesus Christ". (vs7b) i.e. Resurrection - Rapture

This exemplifies how charismania is such a movement of UNBELIEF. They must -see- 'signs'. They cannot accept their faith as being genuine unless they have the same signs that unbelieving Israel was given. Remember that Israel, the nation for "signs and wonders" always "resist(ed) the Holy Spirit" (Acts7:51) And because of their rebellion, God sent the gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts28:28) God was "not well pleased" with "most of them". (1Cor10:5) Thus, due to their lusts, God is allowing charismania to be deluded into believing their lie (2Th2:11) of the spirit of antichrist (1Jn4:3), and when they will have been pleading with the Lord to let them in and He declares to them "I never knew you; depart from Me..!" (Mt7:22-23) they will then join their antichrist in "perdition". (Rev17:8)

Salvation: Whose faith? (Ephesians 2:4-10)

READER COMMENTS: #1

As I was reading this good stuff it came to me that the Scriptures in a few places really are talking about and are pointing to, the faith of the Lord Jesus, and even God, (many times understood as faithfulness) as those which are relevant for our salvation! Some of them follows:

Rom 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Ga 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Ga 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.

Ga 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Eph 3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Jas 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

Re 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

With this one concluding verse where Jesus expressly talks about His [own] faith, (to be kept); Re 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

VW ANSWER:

Exactly!

READER COMMENTS: #2 (excerpts)

While I understand some of your concern over the repentance issue, I am not prepared to comment on that as I have not studied the matter. Off the cuff I believe that it is a necessary step in the salvation 'process'....

However, my main concern with the article is your statement that God gives a man the faith to believe, and that we are not saved by faith.

--Quote--

"...even that faith is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God". If God didn't give it to us, we would not be capable of saving faith. Thus, if we want to get real picayunish, we could say that salvation isn't even by our faith."

--endQuote--

Bro Paul, I disagree with that statement on Biblical grounds. The driving force of Romans is that God's righteousness is in Jesus Christ, and that it must be had by faith. Now Romans is very clear that faith is not a 'work'. It specifically sets out to demonstrate that. 3.22 deals with the righteousness apart from the Law. "by faith...upon all them that believe"....

VW ANSWER:

Some people are sooo into "sola fide" (faith alone), and they quote from places like Rom ch4 that "Abraham believed God.." that he was not "justified by works" (vs2-3) (which is true), that they cannot seem to see that that faith was not Abraham's. It was -GOD- Who called him "out of [his] country, from [his] kindred and from [his] father's house" (Gen12:1) They don't understand that our faith can only come when the Father "draws" us. (Jn6:44) When they are so anti-repentance (or as in this case, not "studied" it), thinking that repentance is a "work", what do they have left? Nothing. All they can cling to is -their- "faith". Like their favorite song whose message they take out of context, "only believe, only believe, all things are possible, only believe". But those words are to those who are -already- believers, as the song begins to the "little flock". Just as, "the just shall live by faith". (Rom1:17) Got it? The "just" (a -saved- person who has been 'justified') lives (once he's been saved) by faith. That is not a "how to be saved" sentence, like the Protestant Reformation declared it to be.

Unfortunately the newer translations contribute to this problem. Even the NKJV which I use primarily is also disgustingly in error! As one example, Rom3:22 the NKJV says, "..the righteousness of God which is through faith -in- Jesus Christ.." The NASB and RSV do a similar thing. But the Word actually says, and KJV is correct here, "..faith -OF- Jesus Christ.." Just as in all those passages from "#1" above.

This is quite a critical difference, as we notice this #2 comment, while making his point, passes over this point with "..." dots. The passage does not say "by faith...upon all them..." It says "by faith -of- Jesus Christ...upon all them..." And in this, notice that he misquotes the study in his argument, too. He claims that the Eph2:4-10 study said that we are "not saved by faith". But notice the place he quotes, by which he is making his point, the study said, "salvation isn't even by -OUR- faith".

Yes, we "believe -on- the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts16:31), that is to say, we put our trust "on" Jesus Christ. When He invites "come to Me" (Mt11:28) we rest on Him as He "lifts [us] up". (Jas4:10)

The -kind- of "faith" these people proclaim is the kind that goes with their "sinner's prayer" in which the person is told to "repeat after me" and "REALLY MEAN IT". So, people are "really meaning" it "real hard"...as they "pray hard". You see...such a -kind-of- "faith" is actually works. They are "working hard" to have this faith...and they hope they have "enough" faith. Or 'persuade' God of their sincerity..?? They tell the person that, in order to be saved, they must "pray". And people "go forward" time after time to "pray". But they keep doing so repeatedly because it's not real faith. It is -their- faith, not Christ's. They have never met Christ face-to-face and responded to His confrontation of them and their sinful heart. When you meet Christ, you know you've met Him! There is no question on the matter! Your heart is "cut" to the quick with your guilt. (Acts2:36-37)

True Saving Faith is the Faith -OF- Jesus Christ. It is Jesus' faith which He gives, not ours. That's why it is a "gift of God" (Eph2:8), it is NOT "of ourselves". And the e-mail even tried to make that verse say something different than it says. But if we follow plain English grammar syntax, it is really quite easy to understand. Yes, we believe. Yes, salvation is through faith. But we do so after that faith has been 'given' to us, after God's "grace" has been extended. And when is God's grace extended? It is God's response to our pleas to Him for mercy, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner". (Lk18:13) And Jesus' verdict about that man was that he went home "justified" (vs14) rather than the pharisee who had "faith" in himself. And that, my friends, is the doctrine which so many rebel against (particularly the ones, typically, who lead others in the "-repeat-after-me-" prayers); and thus, they themselves are not saved...

That doctrine..? REPENTANCE.

If you think that last statement was judgmentally harsh, just think about it objectively. If they don't believe in the very doctrine (repentance) which is the 'key' to unlocking the door to their hearts, how could something have happened (them getting saved) when they haven't done something (repented) they don't believe in? It didn't. God doesn't purpose for "any to perish" but what? "That all should come to repentance." (2Pt3:9) If God's call is to "repent", and they don't believe in "repentance", they are perishing. Plain and tragically simple. And no amount of -their- 'KIND OF' faith is going to save them, no matter HOW HARD they try, and "work" at it. Amen!

Even in the Gospel of John, that speaks of "believe" (Jn3:16), and never once mentions the -word- "repentance", notice that it is God who "draws" (Jn6:44), and the "-new- birth" that everyone talks about is -actually- a birth "from -above-" (Jn3:3 LIT). And how is it from "above"? Through the Holy Spirit. (Jn3:8) Another verse that incorrect translations have muddied up the understanding by talking about "wind". And when we are resurrected and/or raptured, who does it? "I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn6:40,44,54). Jesus Christ.

It's like Jesus' account of "The kingdom of heaven is like..." The servant "was not able to pay" and was condemned, but "therefore fell down before" the 'king' saying "Master have patience with me, and I will pay you all" and out of "compassion" (one of the components of mercy and grace) the king "released him, and forgave him the debt". (Mt18:23-27) You see, the debt was owed, the person wanted to "make promises" to pay it back on his own (works), but he was not able (Rom5:6). But even though he is not able, he has humbled himself (Jas4:10) by prostrating himself. He is hoping to "work" his redemption, but the king simply "forgives" the debt. He doesn't pay -any- of it back, because he is unable. His forgiveness comes -from- the king.

This is how people try to "get saved". They make promises to God which they are simply unable to keep. They promise to "do better" or "be better people". That's some people. Others don't even acknowledge their sin. They just want to "believe" and "take on" Jesus along-side themselves, hoping Jesus will come alongside and take them by the hand and go "with them" in the path -they- have chosen. They say, "I believe in Jesus", but have not pleaded with God due to their debt of sin.

A certain man who was born blind was healed by Jesus. Interestingly enough, Jesus doesn't heal him on-the-spot, but puts clay on his eyes, and then sends him walking...to go wash 'away from' Jesus. After he is healed, and gets kicked out of the temple by the rulers, Jesus finds him and confronts him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" (Jn9:35) And notice the response, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" (vs36) Notice just -WHO- initiates this faith... Who introduces [W]hom to [w]hom? Jesus. On another occasion Jesus is about to remove the demon out of a man's child and Jesus says, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk9:23). And notice the man says, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (vs24) As though to say, 'Yes, this is what I want...but how do I believe? I don't know how! Help me to believe!'

You see, Jesus came to "seek and to save" the lost. (Lk19:10) We were like sheep going "astray". (Is53:6) We were not seeking Him; we were running away. How could it possibly be suggested that we were exercising -our- 'faith' if we were on-the-run? But He seeks us out, the Father draws us, and when we are confronted with Jesus, we can either bow before Him in repentance and receive (Jn1:12) His faith, or proudly refuse. After all, we just "saw Jesus"!! Hallelujah!! Well...the demons have seen Jesus, too, but they are not saved. They have "faith" and "believe" in Jesus; but they "tremble". (Jas2:19) They have never repented of their rebellion.

One other item this person said, which was not pasted above, to support his argument. He claims that the "gift of God" is "salvation", not the "faith". (Eph2:8) As though to say that "Salvation" comes from God, but we receive it by 'our' faith...? How, praytell, can the two be separated? We have "one Lord, one FAITH, one baptism.." (Eph4:5) Notice the

terminology, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom10:17) Again... it comes -from- God.

Part of the essence of Salvation -is- Faith. To "continue IN THE FAITH" (Ac14:22) They were "strengthened IN THE FAITH" (Ac16:5) "Examine yourselves as to whether you are IN THE FAITH". (2Cor13:5) These terms "Faith" being synonymous with "Being Saved". It comes -from- God. All aspects of it. All we can do is bow at Jesus' feet when He comes to us, prostrate, knowing our guilt. All -we- can "do" (and it's not a "work", any more than responding to the court judge's questions at trial is a "work") is admit, acknowledge, confess our sin, and "throw ourselves on the mercy of the court".

Again... sorry for the bluntness, but... If you haven't bothered to "study" the matter of repentance, it is high time you did. Without it, you perish. (2Pt3:9, Lk13:3,5, Rev2:5,22) "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2Cor6:2b)

Christian who sins, still saved? -Eph 2:4-10

READER QUESTION:

I understand that salvation is a gift. I understand that faith is a gift. I know that Jesus Christ died for my sins. I know salvation comes with your belief in Jesus Christ. I know it's not on my own merits, not because I have been so good or some would say, I know that I am saved because I don't do the things I used to do. It seem to me that we are mixing works with faith and or mixing works with salvation. If a person accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour THIS IS SALVATION! HE BECOMES LORD OF OUR LIVES EVERYDAY. We at times do fall into sin and at times not willing or able to let go of sin. I look at David, Abraham, Peter, Paul and many more of God's great people who knew right from wrong and at times on many occasion sin. I believed the love they have for God never change. So I believed those who are saved today. Please explain to me that those who are saved but still sin in their lives, at times willing, is that person still saved.

VW ANSWER:

Salvation comes as God's "gift". God's grace, God's faith. (Eph2:8) It is NOT of works. (Eph2:9) But once we are saved, we will do good works (Eph2:10) as a 'result' of our being saved. We know we are saved...by the fact that we do good works (Jas2:18) because "by their fruits you will know them" (Mt7:20) Where we used to be "by nature children of wrath" (Eph2:3) and did the things the "sons of disobedience" (vs2) do, now that we are "in Christ...old things have passed away; behold all things have become new". (2Cor5:17) We no longer "devote ourselves to sin" because it is no longer "in our nature to sin" (1Jn3:9) However, while it is no longer in our 'new' nature to sin, being in this world sin still clings to us, and we must confess periodically. (1Jn1:8-10) 1Jn1:9 is written to Believers. The desire is that we ("little children" -Believers) "may not sin". However "if any sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1Jn2:1)

It's like when Jesus was washing the disciples' feet, he comes to Peter and they have the little exchange. Peter doesn't think that Jesus should be washing his feet...but when Jesus says, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" So Peter says essentially, "Well, in that case...give me a whole bath". But then Jesus explains..."He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean..." (Jn13:8-10) In other words, if people were preparing themselves for a special feast...which that Passover meal was...they would have bathed at home, put on clean clothes. But by the time they arrived at the upper room, their feet would have picked up the dust of the road along the way. Same thing with the Believer. When a person comes to Christ in repentance, and receives Jesus forgiveness, he is "clean". But from that point, the Believer is travelling along the world on his way to the Father's banquet...and the feet pick up dust of the world's sin.

Thus...1Jn1:9 is actually a case of washing one's feet...if that makes sense. We are holy, and fully "sealed" for Heaven (Eph1:13) when we were saved. But until we shed these bodies of corruption, we mess up periodically...so we need to wash the dirt off. But even though the feet got dirty, the rest of us is clean. We are still saved.

Created from Nothing? -Eph 2:10

READER QUESTION:

Just one question: Is the word "created" in Eph. 2:8-10 translated from ex nihilo? (Sp?) Meaning out of nothing! Thank you Paul, and will be looking for your answer. Keep up the fine work for the Lord. God bless you.

VW ANSWER:

Hmmm. Interesting question. In looking it up right now I see nothing that indicates, as you say, "ex nihilo". And as I think about 'that' definition of "creation" that we have come to assume all these years, that God created the universe "out of nothing" ...well, that simply isn't true, is it. He created it out of Himself. "All things were created through Him and for Him" (Col1:16) That word "through" includes, "by, by means of" etc. And it says that "..in Him all things consist". (vs17)

Thus, the "..His workmanship, -created- in Christ Jesus.." (Eph2:10) we must use the definitions which also fit the context of having the word "workmanship" in there. "..to form, to shape... to completely change or transform" or "cause to exist, bring into being". The fact that there was "something" there is evident in the fact that we were "dead in trespasses and sins" (vs1) There was "something" there, but it was "dead". (Something which doesn't exist isn't called "dead". It simply doesn't exist. Something which doesn't exist isn't even talked about, because there is no consciousness or knowledge/perception of it.) Thus, to that which is 'dead' He gives life, and follows through that life by forming/creating it into a "vessel unto honor". (Rom9:21, 2Tm2:21)

Loving: "by nature"? -Eph 2:11-22

READER COMMENTS:

Now though I believe that also I have the Holy Spirit of God, it is maybe only my hitherto interpretation of Titus 2:4 that was faulty where I thought the Scriptures teach that also Christians must be taught how to love, even their husbands and their children. (The Lord Jesus gave this to us as a command, ie to love one another, else, we would not have been willing to fulfill it[automatically, out of the "new nature"] .) If that goes for us too, in these last "hours" we are living in, how do we "reconcile" the above harsh statement of yours?

BTW we as Christ_ians also must, according to the Scriptures, learn how NOT to be angry, how to become meek and humble and so forth. It does NOT come automatically with the "new nature". I thought these things were evident from Holy Writ. What do you think?

VW ANSWER:

You speak of "Holy Writ" but quoted only one reference... out-of-context. Tit2:4 is instructing the women in their proper Godly roles. You could have listed: Phil1:9 "this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more.." As Believers our love will "grow". Eph4:15 speaks of being loving in the context of spiritual growth. But love is a characteristic of the new birth, as given in the Scriptures already cited in what you are calling "harsh".

Since you didn't accept it from the Scriptures, let's consider a little object lesson from nature. After all, God created all things to help us learn of Him more and more...

When kittens are born, and are frolicking around...if you go to one and tickle it on its tummy, it is going to grab your hand with its forepaws, bite at you, and start kicking you with the rear paws. It is not yet ready to start catching prey...it learns to hone its skills as it grows...but as a small kitten, it has the basic inclination to grab, bite and kick. On the other hand, if you were to try to 'tickle' the tummy of a chick or duckling, you will get a totally different reaction...they will run away. The kitten does "cat" things, and birds do "bird" things.

By the same token, Christians "love"...by nature. When they are yet "babes" (1Pt2:2, Heb5:12-14) they are new to loving and learn to 'develop' their love and "grow" and "increase" in it. But if they are not 'CHARACTERIZED BY' love, the Scripture is quite clear... they "[do] not know God..." (1Jn4:8)

If you wish to call that "harsh" ...well, it is God's Word... not mine. If a person wishes to argue with God, you will answer to Him in the day of judgment. Amen!

Don't need to Define: lowliness, gentleness, etc?? -Ephesians 4:1-6

READER QUESTION:

i'm not on your mailing list, as i don't always keep up with my email very well. but for probably a couple years now, i've visited your site every week or two to read, not wanting to miss what you share. sometimes, you post things ahead, and i read those too, so this article that i'm quoting from might not have been mailed out yet. i'm not sure. anyway---

here's the quote. it's from the Ephesians study.

"all lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering" and "bearing with one another in love".(vs2) Do we need to spend time defining these terms? I don't really think so. If a person isn't characterized by them, it is not because the terms are "not understood". It's a 'heart' problem. "

i have a question which is laying pretty heavy on my heart: i agree with what you say, but why not preach these things? i know from other readings you speak of the burden you have in preaching is one of calling people to repentance and warning them. you also speak much of the Bible and how if we're to avoid falsity we need to be intimate with it's truths. are these not worthy traits to preach and expound then-as truth? can we not understand better how we're *not* to be as Christians, by hearing preached about the traits we *are* to be? my heart longs to hear this message of repentance too-- not just what falsity i should turn from, but what i should be turning to and how to walk in it. that's what repentance is, a turning away from, but also a turning to. your burden against falsehood is apparent and commendable, but where is your burden for the other half of the message, and why do you not also preach that? you talk about it, but you rarely preach them.

VW ANSWER:

First of all... The reply I sent this person individually will not be posted here.

But since we have now also had the 4:7-16 study, it seems good to address this question before we proceed to vs17 and beyond; because vs17 begins the 'practical application' to all the 'theoretical' things we have considered thus far. Actually, there is nothing "theoretical" about what we have studied. But it is all part of the "walk by faith, not by sight" (2Cor5:7) aspect. At vs17 we begin looking at the actual physical implications of everything we've looked at up until this point. So far, everything has been God's workings, by Jesus Christ, applied to us through the Holy Spirit, dispensed in learning to each of us individually by the pastors and teachers whom Christ gave as "gifts to men". (4:8)

Now we are ready to do some comparing where the 'rubber meets the road'. Exactly -what- was our previous life characterized by? And as a result of our new nature, -what- is our new life characterized by? We "...put off, concerning [our] former conduct.." (4:22) and we "...put on the new man.." (4:24)

However, if we do not understand what we have studied up to this point, it will be futile to continue. Having grown up in the kind of childhood I did, I understand all-too-well the vanity of trying to "do right" according to "lists". This was the problem Israel had. They had the Law, but could not keep it because their "hearts" were not right. "Oh, that this heart of theirs would be like this always, that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deu5:29) But as we know... "But with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were scattered in the wilderness." (1Cor10:5) because of rebellion and "unbelief" (Heb3:19)

The 'concerns' this person voices come from the same source that continually objects to the statement we observe from Scripture periodically about love. How do we know and recognize Christians? By their love. In Jesus' own words, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn13:35) And John reviews, "I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning..." and makes application of Jesus' words, "He who loves his brother abides in the light...but he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness.." (1Jn2:7,10-11) And we have taken these words and applied them to today... If you see groups and associations that are seeking "to love" one another, because they don't have love... BY DEFINITION, they are not Believers, no matter how many "christian" labels they may attach to themselves. A Believer loves. An unbeliever does not love. If a person does not have love, they do not know the Lord. Simple as that! And no amount of defining "love" will change whether a person has it or not. As difficult as love is to define in words, if a person doesn't understand it, they are not a Believer. It comes with the 'territory' of what it is to be a follower of Christ. It is part of God's essence, and in turn is part of the Believer's essence. How does one define essence?

Why/How is this so? A Believer is one who "abides" in Christ. (Jn15) We are "in Christ". We are "new creations". (2Cor5:17) We are no longer "by nature children of wrath". (Eph2:3) We are characterized by the nature of Jesus Christ, our "head" (1:22) If a person "does not love" he "does not know God, for God is love" (1Jn4:8)

A person can study "how to" fly an airplane. All about compass readings, flight controls, stall speeds, pre-flight checks, etc. but there is nothing that can define and instruct on the "feeling" when the plane takes off from the runway. There is only one such sensation I know of, and that is actually taking off from a runway. If students were taking turns, when the first ones got back to the airport all a-chatter about their experience, their excitement

means nothing to the ones who haven't been up yet, until they actually get in the plane and take off.

What we are talking about from Ephesians is not about "feelings". But the same principle applies. A person who has been up in an airplane 'knows' the sensation, just as a Believer 'knows' lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, love, etc. If the later students ask the ones who just got back from flying, "Hey, explain this to me... what's it like?"... they're going to excitedly exclaim..."It's a rush, man! You gotta go up!" This is why we said that it is not necessary to define terms. If it is not understood, it is a "heart" problem. Either the person is not saved... or, as we will also address; some Believers have impediments between themselves and the Head. They need to "go up". They need to be connected to the Head; first in salvation, and then in a life of being "filled by the Spirit". (5:18)

Now, the study: this person is raising objections to it, because they think I 'OMITTED' something... do we see how, if we understand that study, I really didn't omit anything? If there is "one" body, spirit, faith, God and Father, etc that is "IN YOU ALL" (4:6), we DON'T NEED -definitions- of the characteristics of a Believer. As John further says, "you have no need for anyone to teach you". Why? "...but as the same anointing (Holy Spirit) teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (1Jn2:27)

Perhaps we got carried away with the illustration of the 'headless chicken'? If we are abiding in Christ, and Christ is the "Head", how can we -BUT- obey the Head?! When a body is healthy, and functioning as God designed it, when the brain sends the right nervous impulses to the muscles, they 'respond'. When the mind says, "Arm, raise up" and it sends the right signals to the arm...the arm responds. It doesn't NOT respond. It is the "nature" of the arm to move as the head directs. The arm does not have its own set of understandings and will by which it "interprets" what the head sends down the pike. It is part of the body. It responds. When the hand burnt itself, once, on a hot stove, it is the -head- that remembers the pain; so it is the head which keeps the hand away from future similar encounters. Is the hand to pat somebody on the shoulder? ...or double up a fist and punch them in the mouth? Does the hand need to understand how "patting" is different from "punching"? If it is connected to the head, the head gives it its directives, and the hand merely follows/responds.

Again...what keeps the hand from 'patting'? If the body is sick, and communication between the head and the arm is broken or hindered, a sick body often goes into convulsions. When that is happening, sometimes the arm/hand will flail about, and end up hitting somebody. But that was not the head's command. When communication is unhindered between the head and the hand, and the head says "pat", the hand 'pats'.

We've illustrated in another way recently. A tiny kitten, taken from its mother barely weaned, 'KNOWS' how to groom itself like cats do. When

tickled, it bites, grabs and kicks. Kittens instinctively know how to stalk and pounce. Nobody has to teach them to do this. While they hone their skills as they grow, it is their "nature" to do these things.

In the same way, since this Ephesians study is -TO- "Believers", when I said that we don't 'really' need to "define these terms" (lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, love), it was in the context of what that lesson (1:1-6) was about. Being part of the Body of Christ. Jesus being the "Head". We being the body. The Holy Spirit being the nervous system communicating between the Head and the Church through the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vs3) When all is healthy, just like that kitten knows how to stalk-n-pounce, a Believer abiding in Christ INNATELY - KNOWS- "lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, etc".

Again, it is not that "I CAN -DO- all things" (bad translation!), but rather... "I have strength for all things in Christ who strengthens me." (Phil4:13)

But yes... as we progress through the rest of the book we will learn about what we are "putting off", and in its place, what we are to "put on".

But if we approach it from the standpoint of -lists-... First we learn how to "NOT DO this, this, this and this" and on the other hand we "DO this, this, and this"... we will have missed the whole point of these beginning chapters... and of the Christian life. Just as Salvation was not of works, but was a gift... something which God did in Christ through the Holy Spirit, so too, the Christian life is not so much about "doing", but about "abiding" ...IN CHRIST... If we are abiding, the doing will flow out of our relationship as being part of the body, following what the Head directs through the Holy Spirit... "BY NATURE"

And this is something we talk about a -LOT-. A Christian is not somebody who keeps lists of dos and don'ts... "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh". But a Christian is one who follows the Lord from the whole heart. "With my whole heart I have sought You.." (Ps119:10) "..he is a Jew [Believer] who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the [Holy] Spirit, and not in the letter [of the Law].." (Rom2:28-29)

Remember that the Father is the "vinedresser" of the Vine in which we "abide". (Jn15:1,4) Branches don't -do- anything. They "abide" and "bear fruit" Whatever direction they grow is the work of the Father (vinedresser) as He prunes, trains, and cares for. "..for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Phil2:13)

What about Unmarried Women?-(Eph5:22-24)

READER QUESTION:

I wish you would have answered some of those questions for those of us who have no husband to ask. The one I am really wondering about is women's hair length. So many women have virtual crew-cuts nowadays. I know that some women have had chemotherapy that causes their hair to come out. Do you think, otherwise, a woman should not cut her hair? No firing squad is aiming at you for your answer, if you would.

VW ANSWER:

While you ask about "hair"; let us consider this legitimate question more generically: "...us who have no husband to ask.." --about 'whatever' the question/topic might be.

First of all, let's understand one thing. In the Q/A which accompanied the study, I made mention of some women who go chasing after men in the ministry, using the cloak of "minister to" to get next to God's servant. I'm not the only one who experiences this. Other men in ministry do, too. Ladies, understand also, that there are ministers who prowl after women, using the deception of "partners in ministry" to lure women to themselves. In response to these studies one lady shared one lure that has been used against her, quoting from Scripture, "...those in authority over you.." - "obey those in authority over you, and be submissive.." (Heb13:7,17,24)

This is how cult leaders twist the Scriptures. They take passages like these, that are referring to "leaders", and turn their meaning into "dictator". Let's face it... in how many protestant-type churches isn't the pastor endowed with almost pope-like powers! Whatever the pastor says is 'law'. And I dare say you'll find a lot of that in the aforementioned "pharisee belt", too. When, actually, the pastor's role is more as "oversight". Peter speaks of "overseers", "...not exercising dominion over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1Pt5:2-3) Even though Paul spoke of the option he 'could' have had, which he didn't exercise, to wield his authority as an apostle (1Cor9:12,18), rather, he exhorted the churches to follow his 'example' in living the Christian life. (2Th3:7,9, 1Tm4:12) And this is how Jesus taught, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (Jn13:15)

If the wives are instructed to ask their "own" husbands, and the church leaders are husbands of "one" wife (1Tm3:2,12, Tit1:6); it should be obvious that a single woman is not under the husbandly authority of the leader. If that were the case, it would be as though he had more-than-one wife.

There are two sources for the single woman... or, perhaps three? And I expect each case will be determined by each woman's situation and

circumstances; and somewhat, also, the culture of the country in which she lives.

Let's consider the "cultural" one first. Women who were either divorced or widows tended to go back and live in their "fathers' house". (Gen38:11, Lev22:13) And if you read Numbers ch30 regarding the vows a woman would bind herself to, her authority over even those vows was either her father or her husband. In today's world, some nations still observe this order, and some don't. For a Christian lady, this kind of thing will be related to whether or not her father's house is Christian, and how they receive her or not.

Then, there are the "older women". "...the older women likewise...that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children," (Tit2:3-4) Now, there doesn't seem to be a specification that the "young women" are married or unmarried, other than the reference to "husbands". In fact, the text says, simply, "young". Translators have added "women", I'm sure, due to the context, since it would be obvious that a "young man" is not going to "love his husband". It can only mean a "female" in its context. Thus, the text more specifically says the older women train the "young". Thus, any single woman, lacking a father (or father figure?), might find herself looking to the older women for guidance and counsel.

Now, while there are Believing "brothers" in Christ (and this actually introduces a sort-of 'fourth' option), who can interact with women, the relationship is like she is a "sister". (1Tm5:2) But a brother's authority over a sister is not the same as that of the father or husband, except in whatever case she may choose to place herself there... or, perhaps, in a similar fashion that a sister might be under a brother who takes over the leadership of a family when the father dies? But in this latter case, she is part of her "father's house", being under the leadership of her brother.

So, what about when there is no "father's house" or believing "older woman"? Ultimately, who is the single woman answerable to? Remember that in God's eyes, as far as the Believer's relationship with Him is concerned, there is "neither male nor female". (Gal3:28) Who is the "Master" before whom she either stands or falls? (Rom14:4)

"There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world; how to please her husband." (1Cor7:34) What is said about the "virgin" here can also be said about a widow from Anna's example, "And there was one, Anna...She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." (Lk2:36-37)

The divorced woman, for whom there is no possibility to "be reconciled" (1Cor7:11), and if she shared in any of the guilt and has received forgiveness and cleansing subsequent to confession (1Jn1:9), is in the place that Paul calls, "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called." (1Cor7:20) She is now single. If she has no "father's house" or "older woman", she still has the Lord.

SPECIFICS:

So, now, what about some specifics? This question asks about hair. There might also be other things like cosmetics and clothing. There are 'two' basic issues in answering these things, and they are tied into the 'third'.

First of all, men should be men, and women should be women. "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to Jehovah your God." (Deut22:5) While this specifically addresses cross-dressing, and dressing "in drag", and anybody familiar with these terms knows what we are addressing as the "extremes" in this matter; just as with anything that has an extreme, there are also "tendencies" which begin to "lean" in those directions.

This questioner speaks of "crew-cuts". Indeed, this is a tendency towards feminism and lesbianism. Both, positions of rebellion against God's order of "male and female". (Gen1:27, 5:2) Attitudes of a woman usurping the male role for themselves. However, is short hair, in and of itself.. "male"? Is it only long hair that is female? Let us not forget Samson who was instructed by God to not cut his hair. Some of the most macho "tough guys" have longer hair, pulled back into a pig-tail. But there is no mistaking the fact that they are "male". In the same sense, for some women, short[er] hair works better. Having been married to a person whose hair was more "springy/wirey" (inherited from her mother), I know very well the considerations of trying to let such hair grow long. It is hard to make it look nice. As anyone knows, it is possible for a woman to have short[er] hair, and yet look very "feminine". Notice carefully the difference between "feminist" and "feminine". The two terms, while being quite similar in spelling, are essentially -opposite- in meaning and every ideology they represent.

This matter also can apply to "dresses vs pants". Many in the 'pharisee belt' also condemn women wearing any kind of pants. Pants are no more intrinsically "male" than skirts are "female". e.g. the Scottish -male- "kilt". But there is a difference between men's pants and those designed for women. Let men be men, and women be women.

And then... there is a difference between "feminine" vs "alluring". Does the woman's attire present a "lady" or a "seductress"? And what constitutes a 'seductress'? Do we follow the rules of the pharisee belt, where there is so much hypocrisy? As an example of this hypocrisy: years ago I considered,

briefly, the notion of applying to teach music at one of Canada's prairie province Bible institutes. As I was reading through their catalogue, on one page related to dressing standards, I remember distinctly the exhortation to women about "form revealing clothing"; and then, a few pages later there was a picture of one of their students or staff in some campus setting, wearing a 'tight' knit sweater. Where/when I went to Bible school, there were standards for the women; a certain measurement in relationship to the knee. And yet the school's hypocrisy allowed some of the women who were either 'more popular', or in one case, a grad student who, due to her prior education, was also a music teacher, to 'get away with' skirts considerably shorter than the standards. And certain of these ones also were flirts.

So, is the female "form" evil? God obviously made men and women 'different' in that department; and He designed and created each to be 'attractive' to each other. How do we know we are seeing a man or woman, unless we see the differences? God did not create such a thing called, "unisex"! In the O.T. a beautiful woman was noticed for being "beautiful of form and appearance". (Gen29:17) Just like the Jews had their "Sabbath day's journey", nowhere taught in the Law; the modern pharisees give tape measurements. So-many inches above/below the knee, so-many inches below the neck, so-many inches of sleeve; the hair to the shoulder, to the mid-back, to the waste. Whose rules are right?

While -WHAT- a women wears is certainly part of the equation, the biggest part of this question is answered by understanding -HOW- she wears it. Does a shorter skirt automatically translate as "seductress"? Or is it the "attire of a harlot"? What is involved in a seductress? She is one with a "crafty heart"... loud and rebellious, feet that do not stay home, lurking at every corner, with a face of "impudence", and enticing speech and flattery. Find her described in Proverbs ch7. Her heart manifested out through her behavior...

You see, you can be dressed as a pharisee, but if you are possessed of sensual impudence instead of the the "meek and quiet spirit" (1Pt3:4), your phariseeism is for naught.

Thus, perhaps you now understand the repeated "Don't you Dare"s in the study. If you are dressed like a pharisee, but not minding your husband; and you condemn another man's wife for wearing (for instance) a shorter skirt, but she does so in a "meek and quiet spirit" under the authority of her husband, not flirting nor otherwise behaving alluringly to others; in God's eyes she is the righteous one, and you are not. If you look in the Scriptures, the only place God gives instructions that include rulers or tape measures, is in the building of the tabernacle, temple, utensils of worship, the New Jerusalem, etc.

So... how short a skirt is too short? How long should the hair be? Like I already said... these things I am not going to answer publicly. If you are

married, that is between you and your husband. If you are unmarried, that is between you and God. If you have considered the matter of the "stumbling blocks" (Rom14:13,20, 1Cor8:9) and your conscience is clear and you are operating "of faith" (Rom14:23), don't pay the pharisees any mind! No, not "..even for an hour". (Gal2:5) Just remember that, no matter what you do, if it is different from what the pharisees do, somebody will find something to criticize in you... 'because' it's not the same way 'they' do it! But also remember: You stand or fall before your Master. (Rom14:4) Don't forget that most of those pharisees are not going where you are going. (Rev2:5) You are of two different citizenships. (Phil3:20) So, whose "well done, good and faithful servant" do you want to hear? (Mt25:21)

Amen!