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**THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE
EPHESIANS**

by

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

to "New Creation" Commentary Series

The Commentaries which have been prepared, and which are in preparation for this series, are intended to be modest both in their material and format. There are reasons for this kind of production.

Although the first consideration is not that of cost, we will, nevertheless say that it is an important reason. Many books are made to be attractive, and welcome as this is, it adds to the cost. We have tried to keep the price within that range which makes it easy to purchase the volumes as they appear. Secondly, we make no claim to have produced a work of either great scholarship, or one for the meticulous exegete. It is for those whose time is limited in looking up many commentaries. We have done this work for them, and in that sense the commentaries are the result of the fruits of other men's labours, with a modest addition by the writers, who themselves gather impressions by the way and often, even have helpful insights.

Those who use these commentaries will not find them inspirational, for that was not their intention. They simply present valuable material and insights on the books with which they deal. Is it too high a claim to say that the material presented is worthy of trust, and should prove valuable to those who teach classes, groups, and who preach from pulpits and other places? We think they can be valuable, if not, always, wholly sufficient.

The Editors.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AV English Authorised Version (King James)

NEB New English Bible, 1961

RSV Revised Standard Version 1952

Abbott *Ephesians and Colossians* (The International Critical Commentaries) by T.K. Abbott.

Allan *Commentary on Ephesians*. (The Torch Bible Commentaries) by J.A. Allan, 1959.

Barry “*Ephesians*”, Ellicott’s Commentary for Students, by A. Barry.

Beare *The Epistle to the Ephesians Vol.10*, The Interpreter’s Bible 1953, by F.W. Beare

Commentary

Ephesians in the Speaker’s Commentary, Series and in Matthew Henry’s Commentary.

Dale *The Epistle to the Ephesians 1883*, by R.W. Dale.

Foulkes *Commentary on Ephesians* (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) by Francis Foulkes

Guthrie *Introduction to the New Testament*, by D. Guthrie

Moule *Ephesians Studies*, 1900, by H.C.G. Moule.

Robinson *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* by J. Armitage Robinson, 1904.

ABBREVIATIONS (continued)

Simpson: *The Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians,*(New London Commentary) by E.K. Simpson and F.F. Bruce.

INTRODUCTION

As our notes indicate, many scholars think Paul did not write the letter we are introducing. Their reason for thinking this is that it is so different from all other epistles with the exception of Colossians, and even here there are marked differences.

Without doubt this Epistle does not deal directly with great themes such as justification, sanctification and the like, although they are by no means excluded. Paul has in mind the very reason for creation, and it is God's plan for filling out His Fatherhood in the Family. The planning of His sons-to-come, the present gathering together of the family in the Household of God, and the production of the New Humanity in His Son, by the Cross, so that Jew and Gentile distinctions disappear - all of these make for a rich understanding of the nature of the Father.

The plan, from before creation, to head up, or unify all things in the Son, and the exaltation of Christ, not only to be head of all things for the Church, but to fill up all things, by Christ as Lord also points us to the nature of Christ as Son. The fact that all things happen *in* Christ shows us that not only are we dependent upon the Father for our fullness, but also upon the Son. His work of salvation, and the final unification of all things are both cosmic.

The holy spirit is also very present in his ministry, in this epistle. It is through him that both Jew and Gentile, now part of the New humanity, come to the Father, and are incorporate in the Household of God. He holds the unity of the Church, and is grieved when love, forgiveness and tenderness are with-held by any member. It is in fullness the family lives, and their relationships are worked out. That fullness derives from the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

There is much more, of course, but perhaps it is in the first six verses of the fourth chapter that we see the rich unity that now grips the Church. Participants in one faith, one baptism, it is held together in fine harmony by the unity of the Spirit, the Lordship of Christ, and the “one God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.”

As the Epistle to the Galatians is needed today to recall us from a programme of works which justify us and our existence, so this Epistle is needed to refresh us in the understanding that everything is moving towards its wonderful and appointed end. Here is no philosophical determinism, but a grand view of the purposes of God, etched panoramically, and designed to build faith and serenity in the viewer.

Yet not only faith and serenity, but a gripping excitement, that which springs from the knowledge that God has designed great things for His people, and for their home - the universe - which will one day be purged and renewed, a place fit for a new race born in the Cross, and springing from the eternal purposes of Him Who is Father to His people.

Hence, when we read these great themes we need to work at them, in detail to get their importance, and to relate it to ourselves. Likewise we need to step back, from time to time, from the detail and see where the Epistle is leading us to, first to the eternal purposes of God, and then, in the light of them, to live as the New Humanity, here, now, in the business of life and all relationships and in fact to fight the powers of

evil and conquer them.

It is a grand Epistle, and deserves the time, prayer, devotion and attention we can give to it. In it we meet the Father, the Son, the Spirit and the Family, and so, ourselves.

1. AUTHORSHIP

In our study we will not discuss the matter of authorship to any degree. Two scholars, E.J. Goodspeed and C.L. Mitton have argued quite strongly for the non-Pauline authorship of the letter. J.A. Allan has put their views clearly in his commentary. They feel on linguistic grounds that it cannot be Paul who writes the Epistle. The letter differs from the epistles which are generally agreed to be Pauline in authorship in matters of style, emphasis and doctrine as well as the type of words, and patterns of teaching and argument. Both these writers agree that Ephesians (whose destination is not known see below) and Colossians (whose destination is known) have many parallels. However, they say such parallels tell against Pauline authorship for various words used have different meanings in the two epistles, as Ephesians also differs in word usage from other Pauline writings. The conclusion is arrived at that it is a student of Paul - one who espouses Paul - who writes the letter. He writes in a different style but has basic Pauline thought, although extended beyond St. Paul in some ways, and perhaps falling short of him in other ways. Allan suggests he is “St. Paul set to music”. In other words it is St. Paul’s basic thought developed and presented by one who sees elements of value not contained in St. Paul himself. The theory has a certain element of attractiveness particularly as the Epistle does not have the actual name “Ephesus” in the earliest manuscripts. Some writers such as Mitton feel (a) that the references to Paul in the first person are awkward and unconvincing and (b) that the doctrinal differences from other genuine

Pauline epistles are so great as to rule out acceptance of the Epistle as Pauline .

The arguments for genuine, Pauline authorship are very strong Until the 19th century it was never contested that Paul was the author. It was included in the earliest formal canon - that of Marcion the heretic who acknowledged only Paul as his authority. Its title was not “Ephesians” but “Laodiceans”. Other collections of New Testament books agree that it is Pauline. Elements of its language are traceable in the writings of Clement of Rome (about A. n . 95), Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas and possibly the Didache. It must then, have been written before AD 95.

The Epistle itself has the name of Paul in its opening, and also in the body of the Epistle (3:1) and has a number of details concerning himself for which see 1:15, 16, 3:1, 4:1, 3:3ff, 3:7, 13, 14, 17, 5:32, 6:19, 20, 21, 22. He obviously knows the circumstances of his readers, as also they have knowledge of him, even apart from the Epistle. The structure of the Epistle can be shown to be essentially Pauline, including its language and literary affinities. Those who are for and against the Pauline authorship both agree that its ideas are essentially Pauline although the former see new ideas which they cannot concede are contained in any way in the corpus of his writings. For example, the concept of the church has new emphases. It is doubtful however that this can be pressed.

The reader should read Guthrie pp. 100-110 for the arguments against Pauline authorship and pp. 110-127 for a refutation of this position.

II. DESTINATION

Naturally enough, if the authorship is debated, so will the destination be, particularly as the oldest Greek codices have the word “Ephesus” omitted. On the other

hand many ancient manuscripts, and all later manuscripts included the words “in Ephesus”, and this evidence is by no means to be rejected. Irenaeus cites Ephes. 5:30 as being in the Epistle to the Ephesians and Clement of Alexandria cites Ephesians 5:21-23 in the same way. Tertullian contests Marcion’s statement that the letter was to Laodiceans and indeed Epiphanius infers that Marcion only had parts of the letter, anyway, so there is no substantial argument for it being addressed to Laodicea (cf. Col. 4:16 which could possibly refer to what is known as “Ephesians”).

Internal evidence does not seem to suggest a particular church, as Paul mentions no names - most unusual for him. This lends weight to the idea that it was a circular letter, but again there is no evidence that such letters were the custom of the day. Still, Paul may have devised this idea. Ephes. 1:15 does seem to indicate personal knowledge of a church, but then this could have been of a group of churches, and if the letter had been a circular one have fitted them all.

It is possible that the “in Ephesus” may have been dropped for some reason. We cannot be sure either way. One thing is certain, that the letter was written, and remains most valuable for all readers today, as it would have been then.

III. PLACE OF WRITING

It is debated whether Paul wrote his epistle in imprisonment in Rome or in Caesarea. We know it was written from prison (3:1, 4:1, 6:20), and the strongest evidence (which we do not here examine) seems to be for the imprisonment at Rome. If this were the case then the date would be about AD 61. Some modern writers think it to be post-Pauline, and even a second century composition.

ANALYSIS

- 1:1-2 Salutation
- 1:3-14 Praise to God for His purposes and blessings in Christ.
- 1:15-23 Paul's First Prayer - for their enlightenment
- 2:1-10 New Life from the Dead
- 2:11-22 The Apart One - Jew and Gentile - Now One, in On Family
- 3:1-13 Paul, and the Proclamation of a Mystery
- 4:1-6 Maintaining the Unity
- 4:7-16 The Unity, the Gifts and the Growth
- 4:17 - 5:21 Practical Outworking of the Unity and Heading Up
- 4:17-24 (a) New life contrasting the old, and replacing it.
- 4:25 - 5:21 (b) New action replacing the old
- 5:3-14 Light and Darkness; walking in Light
- 5:15-21 A further (practical) stage in the New Walk
- 5:21-33 The New Life, the Fullness of the Spirit, and the true Marriage.
- 6:1-4 Children and Parents
- 6:5-9 Slaves and Masters
- 6:10-20 The Christian Warfare
- 6:21-24 Paul's Conclusion

COMMENTARY

Salutation: 1:1-2

Paul affirms his apostleship - an important matter (see 2 Cor. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, cf. Romans 1:1, Gal. 1:15ff). Apostleship was authoritative as no other office or calling could be. Cf. Acts 2:41f. What he says in this epistle will relate to that authority and knowledge. "The will of God" is a significant phrase. So the epistle is authenticated. "To the saints" covers the people set apart for God's purposes (cf. 1:4ff) and should be seen in the light of Daniel 7:22, 27. "The faithful" means the ones having believed and who live by faith and are thus faithful. Whilst the location (Ephesus) is debated, the saints are in *some* location, ie. "not out of this world." Not their basic location - IN Christ Jesus. See verse 3 below for this great doctrine wherein is both *Location* and dynamic *being*.

"Grace to you" - with "peace" is part of the ancient eastern salutation ("Peace") with *grace* added, grace being Hebraic, but now very Christian. Grace is God going towards man who is undeserving, to do him good. Whilst God keeps going towards man, He has (in Christ) already done him good. "God our Father" and "the Lord Jesus Christ" discloses the *source* of peace and grace. The word "Father" with "our" sets the tone for the epistle. It is the letter of Father, sonship, and familyhood. "The Lord Jesus Christ" discloses the Lordship, the humanity, the Messiahship of God's Son. The word Lord relates to Old Testament words "Jehovah" and "Adonai" - names for God.

Praise to God for His purposes and blessings in Christ

1:3-14

Note: The first chapter introduces the themes of the epistle. God's predestination, man's sonship, Christ's total Lordship with a view to "all things", the ministry of the Spirit - all these are introduced. We start at the mountain-tops.

1:3. Paul's spirit rises to bless God, because God first blesses man. "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" speaks of Christ's pre-incarnate, pre-time existence, as also God's pre-time plan (see verse 4) - see John 17:5. "Has blessed" - note the tense. This will refer to the *act* of Christ (God's act), as also to the personal giving of this to believers - all of it in the (and their) past. See also 1:17-18, 1 Cor. 2:12. To *have* the gifts is one thing; to know them, another. Notice that the blessings are *spiritual* this not excluding the temporal. However, they relate to *eternal* matters. We should see that "every" can mean "all" and "every kind of".

We now come to "IN Christ Jesus". This is the great doctrine of faith-union, with Christ. We need not be bothered with an emotional, subjective union as such. Everything that is authentic or "full" (see verse 23, 4:7-9, etc.) is IN Christ. 1:10 makes it clear that all things will be summed up in Christ. "In Christ" then is both the *source* and the *sphere* of all authentic blessing and life. Here, too, "in heavenly places" is nominated, ie. that is where the blessings obtain. "Heavenly places" is an important phrase in the epistle with varying connotations. See 1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12. Sum of teaching:- Place of authority and ruling. Place where this authority is contested by powers of evil. See also Phil. 3:20, Col. 1:20, 3:1,2, 1:5, Titus 2:13, I Peter 1:4, Matt. 6:20,21, etc. From this vantage point God's will outworking is seen by supramundane powers. The will works out through the church (Ephes. 3:10-11) which

relates to this sphere (Ephes. 2:6-7). Rev. 12:1-10 shows how evil powers operate in the heavenlies (cf. Job 1:6, etc.) but the supramundane sphere will be one day purged (Rev. 21:1f, 2 Peter 3:11-13).

- 1:4.** “as”, that is, the blessings now received had been planned before time and creation. They are not an after thought, a sudden affusion of grace. We should not here enter into philosophical arguments on the predestination and election (ie. the way in which the doctrine can be reconciled with God’s will and man’s responsibility) but see that the end is what concerns God (as also, us). The end is “that we should be holy and blameless before Him.” Also (verse 5) that we should be His sons, the both being the one. Yet we should recognise God’s sovereignty, His right, and His power to effect what He wills. “Is men’s free will to be deemed inviolable? Much more so must the perfect will of the Most High have free scope and suffer no abridgement by reason of His creatures’ lapse into revolt.” (Simpson, “Ephesians” ad loc.) If God *must* exercise grace, then grace is not grace. “In him” again shows God’s mediator of blessing - His eternal Son, Christ Jesus. The end is “holy and blameless before Him.” This is the triumph of man, having been created in God’s image, ultimately being (becoming again) just that. It shows that God is not surprised and embarrassed by the Fall. All is within His sovereign will. Holiness is a great theme in the Epistle (5:1ff). “In love” as an adverbial phrase may belong either to this verse or verse 5. The love in any case is His.
- 1:5.** “He destined us in love to be His sons”. He set our destination as sonship. Sonship with Paul means “adoption” (see Gal. 3:26, 4:4-6, Rom. 8:14-15, 21-23), that is, we are now in His family (cf. 2:18-19) and are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) becoming like His own Son (Rom. 8:28-30, I John 3:1f) as Col. 3:9-10 shows. “Through Christ Jesus” (cf. John 14:5, 1:11-13) is the means (or mediation) of this will, for until Christ is manifested true sonship is not seen. In Christ true sonship is translated into truly human terms, and

thus is understood. God is essentially Father (cf. 3:14, 4:6) and His Son essentially Son. The Old Testament doctrine of God as Father should be studied as (a) Creator/Father (Mal. 2:10, Isa. 63:16, 64:8, and Luke 3:38, Acts 17:26ff), (b) Father to/of Israel - Jer. 31:9, Exod. 4:22, etc. The plan before time plans that in time, through Christ true Fatherhood shall be revealed, and sonship become “filled up” *in* and *through* the incarnate Son. *Note* the phrase “unto Himself” or “for Himself” has not been brought out in the RSV This is His personal desire, as Father. “According to the purpose of His will” is quite final. This will will be best, and that is that. However, we see that such happenings are *not out of His will*.

- 1:6.** “To the praise of His glorious grace.” Nothing in us deserved His love (verse 5) so that His grace is a reason for endless praise. Also God has revealed Himself as grace, where nature of man would see Him only as vengeful judge. God’s grace then, has to be praised. Grace is not only grace, but it is glorious, ie. has glory. It is this glory God will manifest, which is, in fact His own *essential* glory. Creative glory we can understand as being God’s but we do not see that grace is of His essential Being. This is what creation - when it is redeemed truly shows. “Which He freely bestowed on us” or “His grace with which He favoured us”, ie. “accepted us and bestowed on us”. The “in the Beloved” means that such grace is not manifested outside of Christ. God sees nothing acceptable outside of Him (1:10). All things relate to the Father through the Son, and all things pertain to the Son, that are authentic (acceptable). “The Beloved” (see John 3:35, Col. 1:13, Matt. 3:17, Isa. 42:1, etc.)
- 1:7-8.** “In whom”, ie. the Beloved, (all is IN Him). “Redemption” = emancipation, liberation, and relates to captives, slaves and debtors. Cf. Mark 10:45. Israel was redeemed from Egypt. Here it is “*the* redemption.” “Through His blood” cf. Heb. 9:22. Relating to the whole sacrificial cultus, life given in death. “The forgiveness

of sins (trespasses)” is a phrase not often used by Paul. Here it is highlighted. Redemption relates to forgiveness, and to blood. Forgiveness relates to covenant (both the old and the new) and is no trite affair, cf. Col. 1:14, Gal. 1:4, etc Blood of course is the sacrifice for sins. It should be seen that redemption is not only from the *penalty* but the *poser* of sin, since the two closely relate. Such complete deliverance from sin/s shows how great is His grace, how much and many its riches. The word “lavished” (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) means “made to abound towards us”, ie. no paucity in actively gracing and liberating us.

1:9-10. The “wisdom and insight (prudence)” is primarily, of course, that of God, but it does not seem that we should even need this stated, so that it is best to see the grace of God revealed to wisdom and insight, which He also gives. Grace is thus understood as the plan of God is revealed by God, and understood by His people. Wisdom and insight grasp this great plan of God. There was a wisdom extant in Paul’s day which dabbled in esoteric mysteries and gnosticism elevated intellectual wisdom to a saving force itself. Prudence is “understanding which leads to right action” (Robinson, ad. loc.). Wisdom is “the knowledge which sees into the heart of things, which knows them as they really are.” (Robinson). Man who is redeemed is equipped to understand God’s plan. This plan is “according to the mystery of His will”, ie. that which no man could evince from the world as he knows it, is actually the will of God but is opened to -the spiritual man’s understanding. It is in fact a revelation from God, so that wisdom and prudence grasp it. (N.B. The word “mystery” was also the term used for esoteric religions, and only the *initiated* knew the *mystery* (secret). God’s “secret” is opened to all who will see it. What is this secret? Answer: It all relates to Christ. It is all in Him. He is it in its outworking, that is, God has planned for the consummation or climaxing of time, to head up, or consummate all things in Christ. *All things* (Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:3) are all true things, -redeemed, restored, rehabilitated (cf. Acts 3:21.,

Rom. 8:20ff, Rev. 21:1ff, 2 Peter 3:9ff), ie. those things which have their true being in Christ. The *fullness of time* (or “the dispensation of the fullness of time”, ie. God’s stewardship or arrangement, or carrying out process) means that the things which are, do not exist indefinitely and without purpose but all things move to a given end, purpose and climax, and that is revealed here. To the natural eye things are not so moving, and thus man does not know the mystery of His will. Col. 1:15-17 (cf. Heb. 1:2-3, John 1:1-4, 1 Cor. 8:6) makes it clear that He has created all things (ie. the Son has) and now He will head up all these things. They will exist truly, and essentially in Him, alone. F.F. Bruce “When all the times and seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority have run their course, God’s age-long purpose which He planned in Christ will attain its full fruition.”

1:11-14. Note in v.12 the “we” which will refer primarily to the Jews, since *nationally* their hope had been in Messiah (long before He came, and even if some did not accept Him - John 1:11- yet some did - John 1:12 - since the promise was primarily to Israel, cf. Acts 28:20) and chronologically they had first believed in Christ. Thus in verse 13 “you” refers to the Gentiles. From Acts 10:43-11:18 we see they later believed and received the Spirit. Thus the verses can be explained as here amplified:- In Christ, Who is to be the Head of all things, because God is working it that way according to and in order to fulfil His will, we Jews who long ago looked for Messiah, and who as a race were appointed by God to live for His glory (cf. Exodus 19:5-6) are now as Christian believers to carry out that task fully. You who are Gentiles are also likewise accepted, in Him. The saving word of truth you have heard, understood and accepted, that is, you have known and believed the gospel of salvation, and are redeemed and forgiven. You have been sealed as belonging to God, and this seal is by the Holy Spirit Who came to you in this sealing action at the time of your believing. Without such a seal we would live in doubt and indecision, and the end-action of inheritance would be without assurance to us. Such an inheritance, which is to the praise of *His* glory could have no viable basis.”

The Gentiles then (the “you”) have assurance that redemption is for them, as also inclusion in God’s people and purposes (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10 with Exod. 19:5-6) because the Holy Spirit has come to them both dispensationally (Acts 10,11) and personally (“you believed and were sealed”). There are only two points to clear up: (a) Does the Spirit seal, or is *He* the seal? (b) Are the believers the (God’s) inheritance, or do they inherit an inheritance? We say for (a) that the *seal* relates to the end as verse 14 makes quite clear. Thus by the Spirit, or in having the Spirit the (Gentile?) believer is sealed as belonging to God. The seal in the Old Testament for the people of God was circumcision. At the end-time the believer (who lives in hope) will have been accepted, for the Spirit is Himself the earnest (or token) of that which is to come (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21, Rom. 8:23). The answer to (b) is that two renderings are possible so that (i) having been sealed we are sure we will acquire possession of our inheritance or (ii) that we are sealed by God with a view to Him redeeming us in totality, cf. Rom. 8:23 where redemption is completed in that day for we appear to be His inheritance (see Ephes. 1:18 cf. Mal. 3:17 LXX “They shall be for me a possession, saith the Lord, in that day which I make.” 1 Peter 2:9 “a people for God’s own possession”.) All of this is for “the praise of His glory.”

Paul’s First Prayer - for their enlightenment (1:15-23)

1:15-16. “For this reason”, ie. “on the basis of and relating to what I have written”, so the apostle prays for the people of the church to which he is writing. That he knows them is clear, for he commends their *faith* (cf. Rom. 1:8, 2 Thess. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:3, Col. 1:4,5), which must mean faithfulness, ie. “adhering to the faith” though not all - see “among you”, and their *love*. The two conjoined are “a wondrous pair” (Chrysostom) for in Rev. 2:1-7 faith is not linked with love at the Ephesian church. The love is practical “you show to all the saints”, whilst the faith is primarily towards God.

“Remembering you in my prayers” must be understood as something significant, as Paul’s prayers are deep. Here the *content* of the prayer indicates this. Paul gives thanks for their faith and love which shows it counts with him.

1:17-19. This is *what* he prays for, ie. (a) The Spirit of wisdom and revelation that (b) they may know. First he lifts their sights to the One to Whom He prays, ie. “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”, and “the Father of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:6 and 2 Cor. 4:6, James 2:1 cf. Psalm 29:3), but it is best to think of the great glory and power which is His, out of which comes the answers to (Paul’s) prayer. His prayer is for “spirit of wisdom and revelation”. This is for the Ephesians, who, presumably have the Spirit as 5:18 indicates. 1:3 states they have the blessings. I Cor. 2:6-13 especially verse 12 shows they need the ministry of the Spirit to *know* what has been given (how else may faith rise to action?). Whilst the term *spirit* here may mean “Your spirit be of such quality, etc.” the main thrust is “You may have the (a) spirit of instruction” rather than “a spirit to be instructed.” Thus we arrive at the conclusion that it is the Holy Spirit, the Teacher (cf. John 14:26, 16:14, 1 Cor. 2:10). “Wisdom and revelation” (cf. Isa. 11:2) we have seen above what wisdom is, and revelation is the unveiling upon which wisdom may work. This unveiling is of the very plan nominated above, which needs *wisdom* to understand it, after revelation has shown it. The “full knowledge” is the thing to which man must come, that is why it is to be highly prized (cf. Jer. 9:23-24, John 17:3 etc.). Full knowledge is not simply propositional, it is also experiential, existential, complete. It requires illumination of the heart (ie. the inner man, the “core being”, where will, emotions and intellect operate) for knowledge pertains to one’s total being. The knowing is of things to come as also things present, so:

(i) “*What is the hope to which he has called you.*” If Gentiles then (2:12) they had no hope and no calling. Calling, however, is primarily *external*, by God, and so

effectual (ie. they do not initiate or complete a calling; because God has called them they have a calling), see 2 Tim. 1:3, I Thess. 2:1-24. It involves present experience of God, particularly in obedience and holiness (Ephes. 4:1, Phil. 3:14, Heb. 3:1), but it relates to *future certainty*, cf. Rom 8:28f. Without such hope (cf. Gal. 5:5, Rom. 8:24-25) men are hopeless. Some scriptures show that hope will (must) come to fruition. See Phil 1:6 I Thess. 5:24.

(ii) “*What are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints*”. This again is a future thing. See v.14. Some see it as that which believers possess and share at this time, the riches of being in Christ, and that surely, is not excluded, but the verse quoted shows that God sees His own possession and treasure as His people. This is revealed throughout the epistle, especially in ch. 2 v.11-22. God’s glory is His family, and whilst His children are heirs of Him, He too “inherits” them. The word “heir” in Scripture is almost synonymous for “owner”, e.g. “The Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance”. It is God who will complete and perfect His inheritance, find this is what we must *know*.

(iii) “*What is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe...*” God has called, He will complete His inheritance; He is working. Phil. 3:21 speaks of a power which will change the body of humiliation to the body of glory. It is the same power operating now. The little word “eis” has been translated (AV) *towards* and RSV *in*. We need not think of it locationally so much as actively. This power operates to, for and in us (cf. 3:20). We know the power *is*, that it is *immeasurable*, and that it *is operative*. The power in its *action* we see below. But we know why wisdom and revelation are needed. We cannot really know God until we see Who He is, and *how He is*, and what He is doing. Then we will know.

1:19. Verse 19 has three words concerning power. They can be translated as “according to the *operation* (energising)

of the *might* of the *strength* of Him.” Difficult to compute, Paul is interested mainly in the practical outworking of this knowledge. God can God *does do* all that is required. (for “might” see I Tim. 6:16, I Peter 4:11, 5:11, Jude 25, Rev. 1:6, 5:13).

1:20-23. The power is now shown in its greatness. The claim which Paul has made has been visibly demonstrated in the greatest event of all time - Christ’s resurrection, see Acts 2:24, 32, etc. Belief in this is necessary for salvation (Rom. 10:9). This power is called “the glory of God” (Rom. 6:4). Human flesh had not known an eternal resurrection as such, but exaltation (ascension - see 4:7f) is the vindication of resurrection, as indeed of the entire work of God in Christ. The ascension and session (at God’s right hand) are Messiah’s attestation. Psalm 110:1 is so quoted (cf. Acts 2:34f, Heb. 1:2,13, 10:12, Rom. 8:34, Col. 3:1, I Pet. 3:22, etc.). There is now a regnant *man* in the heavenlies. Then we see the power (v.21 in placing this man above every angelic and heavenly power - ie. in the place of highest authority) so that every entity is subject to Him, cf. Phil. 2:9-11. This is the same power that is working on our behalf, ie. to fulfil God’s plan.

Verses 22-23 make it clear that the highest authority is given to Him with a view to the church. Messiah is Head *over* the church, and also *for* the church. The church is His body (cf. 1 Cor. chs. 12 and 14, Romans 12:3ff.) and operates in accordance with His authority, as also it is equipped with the same power. Cf. Matt. 28:18ff. Messiah, then, in history is operative by His body, the church. *Verse 23* is a much debated verse. The following explanations have been given:

- (i) Christ is filling all things by means of His church,
- (ii) Christ is in some sense unfulfilled, and is being fulfilled by His church, in some sense He is not complete until it is “filled up” even if by Him,
- (iii) Christ is the fullness of God, and that fullness He has chosen to give to His church, and by it He is fulfilling, or “filling up” all risings.

is fulfilling, or “filling up” all things.

The last explanation seems preferable to the other two. The concept of *filling* is a rich one. The opposite to “full” is “empty” (or vain, in wrong context, functionally useless). To *fill* anything (cf. Ephes. 4:9-10) is to give it reality. For all things to be “filled up” is much the same as saying “headed up” (1:10) or “reconciled” (Col. 1:21). One conclusion we may come to is that Christ, by His body the church is filling all things.

The Son, by creation (Col. 1:15-17) is Head over all things, and all things relate to Him and are upheld by the word of His power (Heb. 1:2-3). The creation has been subjected to futility and frustration, and will eventually be freed from such bondage of corruption. This will be because of Christ Jesus the Redeemer. It is the *man* Christ Jesus who is giving to all things their true fullness and reality. Note the *all things* of 1:10 and see the term in many other New Testament writings.

New Life from the Dead 2:1-10

2:1-3. Translations naturally include “he made alive” or “quickened” supplying what is missing, by adding it from verse 5, so that the sense of the long statement will not be missed or confused. It should naturally come when “resurrection power” has been spoken of in 1:19ff. “You being dead”. What does it mean to be *dead*? There is no doubt from passages such as Romans 5:12, 6:23, Col. 2:13, Ezek. 37:1-14 that man died (Gen. 2:17, 3:6ff) when he sinned originally. Calvin says, “We are all born as dead men, and we live as dead men, until we are made partakers of Christ..... Out of Christ, we are altogether dead, because sin, the cause of death, reigns in us.” Man is dead (to God) by original sin. Meanwhile by active sin (Rom. 3:23) he “lives” in death. The dative (“tois”) here is generally taken to be instrumental, ie. “through” sin we are dead. It is also true that living in sin, men are dead. Sin is “deathness” because

it is a state (as well as acts) which constitutes death. The “you” here, if it refers to the Gentiles will show how Gentiles are dead (see 2:11-12, 4:17-19) which is a dreadful state of alienation from God, and horrible loss of the life which is glorious. *Sins* and *trespasses*, are virtually the same. Technically sins = “fallings short of the mark” and *trespasses* = “falling from the way.” The *state* of sins relates to the *action* described in the next few verses.

2:2. So verse 2 “in which you once walked”. “Walked” = a manner of living, a course of action, a state of being a general approach. Note that this is, in fact all *death*. What is *action* is evil, and not the *action* of life; indeed it lacks living action. Cf. Heb. 6:1, 9:14 “dead works”.

“Following the course of this world”, ie. in the ‘walking’. Note “world” = “aeon” or system, whose god is Satan (2 Cor. 4:4f). It is an “age” (cf. Gal. 1:4) contrasting with the true age or “the age to come” (Heb. 6:4). Other Pauline references to the “age” are 1 Cor. 7:31, Romans 12:2. I Cor. 1:21ff. speaks of its “wisdom”. (N.B. The two Greek words “aeon” and “kosmos” can be often used interchangeably as in I Cor. 1:20). However, the “age” is a dynamic one, however evil its dynamic may be.

“Following the prince of the power of the air” is virtually a parallel passage because the “prince” (cf. John 12:31, 14:30) of this evil system determines what his subjects shall do. He has a *system* (cf. Col. 1:13, Acts 26:18, Matt. 12:26, Gal. 1:4). “Prince of the power of the air” implies

- (a) these evil powers (cf. 6:10f), and Satan no less, are *above* the earth, and yet *below* the heavens, yet
- (b) we should not think so much *spatially* as related to *authority*.

Thus this prince is powerful, reigning above humanity,

as he seeks to reign over it. He is not just substantial, and so not weak as are men, in that respect.

“The spirit that is now at work” - ie. Satan is not static but dynamic in his pursuit of evil. We could say that evil cannot lie passive. “Energising” is the word used as of God in Phil. 2:13, cf. 1:11,20. “Sons of disobedience” opposite to “sons of obedience, cf. Luke 16:8, 20:34, and see opposite 1 Thess. 5:5, Ephes. 5:1,8.

2:3. “Among these we all once lived”. If he has been talking to the Gentiles, he now includes the Jews. *Essentially* they were as evil. They ought to have been “sons of obedience” but in fact were not. Sin is universal in men. “In the passions of our flesh.” Flesh is humanity (in all aspects) as conditioned and dominated by sin. The flesh of the body is not, of itself evil. The *Dusts* (passions) of the flesh, are those of the body, out of control “desires” of the flesh point to a deeper level than strong physical passions. The flesh is anti-God in its drive. Its deepest desires are egotistical. They are also of the mind or “the understandings”, which touches man’s physical being as it relates to the intellectual, cf. Romans 12:1 “reasoning service.”

“Were by nature children of wrath”. Cf. “sons of disobedience”, ie. “objects of wrath” because disobedient and lustful. Cf. Romans 1:18f. Man is guilty, suffering God’s wrath, anticipating its climax. The phrase ‘by nature’ is most significant. It means “innately”, “by birth” and this is certainly *no t* how God created us. It must mean then “by fallen nature” although it does not say so. It approximates (although it is another word) to “the natural man” (1 Cor. 2:14) who is, in fact, creationally an unnatural man! So it means, as sinners we naturally do the things which brings us under wrath. How horrible this is in God’s eyes he does not say, but the thought is included here.

2:4. “But”. This is a powerful contrast-introduction.

“God who goes on being rich in mercy (for that is His nature)”. There is no thought of *mercy* except where one is in misery and under wrath from which he is unable to extricate himself. The “under wrath” of the above shows man’s desperate condition. God is not simply “merciful” (cf. Islam’s view of Allah-the-merciful, helping because of the creational weakness of man!) but “rich in mercy”, ie. His task of redeeming, and the scope of redemption is vast - guilt is so “illimitable” (Titus 3:35). Mercy is not only pity but pity which acts (effectively). “Out of the great love”, “out” can mean “from the course of” or “by means of”. Mercy is an attitude; love is the source of action, as also motivation. Yet love is expressed (and actuated) in the saving.

2:5. “Even when we were dead, etc.” The horrible state described above where holiness ought to have left us under wrath. *Yet* “He made us alive together with Christ.” The teaching of Romans 6:1-10 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15) is not explicitly here, but the thought is. Out of the death-state we have been brought to actual life, yet not apart from, but *together* with Him! How this happened, Paul does not say, but his converts will know - for that was the Gospel they first heard - the parenthetical “by grace ye are (having been) saved” shows that. The word grace insists that an action relating to wrath (otherwise why ‘mercy’?) has taken place, hence we are not only “made alive”, but saved. Redemption of the body is the ultimate of salvation, but removal of the guilt is the first part of true redemption. This redemption has been referred to in 1:7ff.

2:6. “and raised us up with Him.” The use of the “together” is to show us this did not take place apart from His resurrection, indeed it happened on it. Likewise “and made us sit with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” relates us to the ascension. Of course both these elements have eschatological reference (ie. will one day be totally fulfilled, for as yet they are ‘in part’).

The great points are:

- (a) We are not dead, and under wrath.
- (b) We are not under the domination of the aeon or ‘the prince of the air’ for we are *alive* (not under doom as is that prince!) and are raised *above* Satan and so his authority. Note the “*in* Christ Jesus.”

2:7. “that in the coming ages he might show, etc.” Paul does not use the term “the coming *age*” as such (cf. Heb. 6:4) but he does contrast the “old” with the “new”, cf. Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17, etc. Here he means the future time - whatever epochs it may entail - that “always to all creation”. Note that this relates not simply to salvation, but to the very fact (as the chapter goes on to show) of the “we” or “us”, ie. Jew and Gentile being made one. When both are redeemed from sin, both are brought together - that is why Paul says “*us*”, ie. Jew and Gentile being made one. When both are redeemed from sin, both are brought together - that is why Paul says “*us*”. “The *immeasurable riches* of His *grace* in *kindness* ...” ie. He has redeemed that whole horrible situation of death and division, and His kindness to us made a new creation (v.10).

2:8. The plenitude of *grace* and *kindness* is in saving, that is why he uses the “for” in verse 8. Since there is NO merit on the part of the saved (How could there be? grace is truly grace. The *initiative*, from beginning to end, is God’s as also the work. That is why he says, “this, not of yourself, it is the *gift* of God.” He means salvation is the gift, rather than (directly) faith, although faith must be included (cf. Phil. 1:29. Dale:- “Grace is love passing beyond all claims to love, conferring on a revolted race honours which no loyalty could have earned.”

2:9. “not because of works”....Paul safeguards the total truth of grace. Man tends to works, since law’s requirements

are written on his heart (Rom. 2:14-15) yet he never does those works, and anything resembling them (Luke 16:15) springs from inadequate motives. At best these works are dead (Heb. 6:1, 9:14) since man is dead. *Boasting* not only excludes the work of God (total grace) but it includes the work of man (totally dead). Man cannot know the joy of God until he sees his own (total) failure.

2:10. “For we are his workmanship”... Note the “for” ie. nothing but grace could have done anything, ie. raised, saved from death, etc. So far gone were we that only great mercy could move, great kindness effect, great grace save - great power re-create. The original creation (trinitarian in power and act) was a mighty work of grace - that mankind should be brought into being and life. The new creation is a mighty act - of grace. The assurance to man lies in the fact that *he had no hand in this new creation!* Whatever it may appear to be to the human eye, it cannot be faulty, since He has created it (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-17). Note now “created *IN* Christ Jesus” (cf. Col. 1:15-17 for the ‘original’ creation). Christ the *source* of creation. Note:- “for good works”. The purpose is not rescue only, but renewal unto the true purpose. See Gen. 1:28ff. for man’s original creational purpose. In other words these rebellious ones, having gone far from the *will of God* are now re-created in order *to do His will*. The word “works” is a word with good connotation in the New Testament. (Cf. Titus 2:14, Col. 1:10, Rev. chs. 2 and 3). Surely the good works constitute God’s entire plan, in which He has called men, as His sons, to share (cf. Rev. 21:7). That they are *so constituted* that they can do good works is wonderful - a complete contrast with their doing only evil. Now they have life.

Note: Ephes. 2:5-6 and Col. 3:1ff relate closely, ie. being raised, our citizenship - both in *status* and *action* - *is* in heaven. Hence we do His works, and are being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us (Col. 3:10).

The Apart One - Jew and Gentile - Now One, in One Family 2:11-22

Introductory Note: What has gone before in this chapter is with “a view to” what follows, ie. the reconciliation of the two divisions of mankind. That they were irreconcilable is no less a truth than that man and God were the same (so far as man was concerned). Now the glorious truth of the *family* comes into view. Perhaps, for man, there is no higher truth than this.

2:11. Here the state of Gentiles is described - and it was terrible. “Therefore remember”. The “therefore” (or “wherefore”) is based on what has gone before - the great work of God in saving Gentiles. “Remember” means they must cast their minds back to their previously hopeless state in order to remember that they were not always in the family of God. Then they had *no covenant sign or seal* of being God’s people, and in His grace (ie. no circumcision, for uncircumcision put them out of the covenant), secondly they were Gentiles (in the flesh) ie. *racially* they were not God’s people.

2:12. More than this they were without Christ, ie. they had no promises of Him (as did Israel), and even following the ‘Messiah-event’ they had no ‘right’ to Messiah He was of Israel. They could not be “in Christ”. So they were alienated from the household of Israel (see Rom. 9:1ff for the great gifts to Israel) with all the joys that came from such familyhood, and they not only did not know of the covenants of promise (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, “New”) but had no claim to them. “Having no hope” is perhaps one of the most tragic descriptions of the Gentiles - for they were “hopeless”. No hope *in* this world or the next. “Without God in the world”, ie. “atheo” (godless). To have and to know God is very life itself, in any world. This had been their dreadful state.

2:13-22. Here we see the transition, and then the attainment.

2:13,14. “But” - another of Paul’s contrastive “but’s”. Again it is “IN Christ Jesus” that the other has been cancelled, and the new created. Their death, their being bound into the world, their being without God are all cancelled. “Far off” was the Jewish term for the Gentiles as “made nigh” was the term for proselytes. The essential nature of man makes him lonely when he is “afar off”, and his total being is enriched and fulfilled when he is “made nigh”. When we look at the great work of salvation we should see it is “with a view to” and leads to just this - man finding God, but in the context of His - God’s people. Notice that “made nigh” or “brought near” is also a sovereign act of God. “By (in) the blood of Christ” clearly means “through the sacrificial death.” We must understand that no *fiat* or welcome of God would bring us nearer, but only that death. Only in relation to that death can one come near to God, and to His people. 1:7 has shown that there is forgiveness. Now verse 14 shows that it is the matter of reconciliation. “He is our peace” relates first to God and then to man, ie. man-to-man. 2 Cor. 5:19f. shows us that Christ has to be made sin that we might become the righteousness of God IN Him. Now Jew and Gentile are made one. This is because the dividing wall which kept the Gentiles out has been broken down. *Hostility* there was, between Jew and Gentile. Jew knew himself to be God’s chosen one, but often he thought “I am God’s favourite one,” or, “I am truly worthy to be God’s one,” both thoughts being outrageously wrong. God is not the God of *partiality* but *purpose*. Gentiles often thought the Jews to be so self-righteous as to be intolerable. Something of 1 John 2:11-12 also prevailed. Then also the Jew had the (written) law which kept out the Gentiles and *kept in* the Jew. So the enmity was bitter, even to death.

2:15. How then was the hostility abolished? By “abolishing in His humanity, the law of commandments and ordinances”,

which means that the Mosaic law, given particularly to the Jewish people was fulfilled by Christ in its *moral, ceremonial, and judicial* elements. The moral core to it was not dissolved, for that had been before Mosaic law, and would ever continue. The ceremonial related to two things:

- (a) Penal demands and their absolution and
- (b) to Him Who was to come (Heb. 10:1ff.) both *as a* “visual aid”, and also to teach of the greater Sacrifice needed and promised.

Whatever - the law was fulfilled. We can say that Christ went beyond fulfilling only the Mosaic demands, and fulfilled all that the moral law demanded of man (see Romans 8:1-3) in which case both Jew and Gentile are liberated from the *condemnation* of the law. Probably, however, what is meant here is that the Jewish law being fulfilled both as to demand and penalty, that the age of that law had passed and neither Jew nor Gentile was bound to it. This then, removed the *enmity*. The Book of Acts is concerned with showing that Jew and Gentile came together, and decided (see Acts 15, cf. Gal. 2) that both could (should) now live together.

“That he might create in himself one new man”. Again it is “IN Christ” that the action takes place (because of the nature of the case, and the power). This *new man* or, better, “*new humanity*” is not a *nature* existing apart from Him, but a new *concorporate being* dependent essentially for its being upon Christ. “In place of the two” means that now there is “neither Jew nor Gentile” (Gal. 3:26-29), that is, there is another entity which is not an amalgam of the two, but a *different* thing. This is the true reconciliation, and all who would belong to it must cease, in that sense being either Jew or Gentile. “So making peace”. At last not only has division been destroyed but unity created.

2:16. This verse does not tell us how the reconciliation came about, although the Cross is involved. We mean we do not know how - at the cross - the enmity was destroyed

between races, but we know that the hellish bitterness of man, as well as his destroying guilt was removed within Him who took the horror-tensions of the world. The “one body” means primarily the one body of humanity, rather than directly teaching the doctrine of the Church, although it amounts to that, eventually. In this body essentially there is unity, and no hostility. The historical fact confirms this - that both Jew and Gentile met in that body and knew the love of God. The dreadful hostility dies. We might cogitate on the fact that man’s guilt before God makes him an enemy before others.

2:17. Paul compounds his beautiful statement “He came and preached peace” etc. of two Isaianic passages (Isaiah 57:19, 52:7). Christ proclaimed this peace. He “gospelled” peace both to Jew and Gentile, for *both* needed it, as a Jew, as a Gentile, and as those needing the new “one-body-being.”

2:18. This is a most significant verse. The Old Covenant promised that one day the Gentiles would come into blessing through Israel, but here is the Old Covenant *at an end* for the Jew, since it exists no more. He has a new beginning in the New Covenant. So does the Gentile. What Paul was saying was soul-shaking to the (orthodox) Jew. It was a new thing for the Gentile. Not only, as it were, does *each* have access, but *both together*, for it is in “one Spirit”. Not one as against two (or more) but the “one-ness” Spirit. In Him only those who have unity (given to them) may come. The depth of this mystery is seen in 1 Cor. 12, particularly in verse 13 (which see). This is why in 4:3-4 Paul talks about the (*essential*) unity of the Spirit. This needs to be pondered.

“Unto the Father.” Here Paul lets loose a wealth, a flood of meaning. How? In that he speaks of *man* coming to the Father (cf. story of lost son, and notes on 1:4f) and *men* coming as *one* to Him which is what they must do with the “one-ness” Spirit. To understand “one Spirit”

almost substitute ‘one Body’ meaning “one-ness Body”. Then understand that as the true family of God, not *sentimentally* but *functionally*. See 4:4.

2:19-22. “So then”. This conclusion contrasts with the awful state of the Gentiles (verses 11-12) and rounds off the terrible struggle for unity (verses 13-18) with the *fact* that days of Gentile sinfulness, and Jewish exclusivism have gone utterly and finally to be replaced with the new ‘miracle’, the new humanity. Those who were “strangers” and “sojourners” - titles given to the non-Jewish people - are now “fellow-citizens with the saints”. See for “saint” note on verse 1. This means they are in the Kingdom, part of the very house of God. Western ideas do not run to eastern concept of a household which embraces all who relate to the (one) father. Generations servants, all are warmly *one* in this household, sharing its privileges and responsibilities.

2:20. The figure of being built on the prophets and apostles with Christ as the cornerstone, need not be pressed too particularly. It means in fact the *apostolic doctrine*, and so, of course, the great soteriological facts of Christ, without which the foundation could not stand or cohere. The incarnation, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, the ascension and session at God’s right hand is the foundation upon which this living temple (or shrine) are built.

2:21. It is IN Christ that the whole structure - which is living - has its specific parts, and its incorporate whole being. It is a growing shrine, a living thing, taking into account and use the entirety of Christ’s people, and of the personal beings of each with gifts creational as of grace. These “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5) - or whatever they are make for a palpable entity - alive.

2:22. The “you also” must refer to the Gentiles. Passage after passage in acts speaks of them as “cleansed” or “purified by faith”. They too are clean, “fit for the Master’s use”, and here they take an essential and needful part in the whole holy Shrine. Its growth to fulfilment has as its goal God the Indweller, and this growth and this *indwelling* all pertains to the Spirit, ie. it is through the Spirit that the foundation comes into being and the Chief Corner Stone is incorporated, that all holds together in an essential concorporateness, ie. Jew and Gentile in Christ, and that its growth towards ultimate maturity is affected. “Acts” is the account of how this was initiated and established. As all is “IN Christ” so equally, and meaning much the same thing is all “IN the Spirit”. This is a holy and spiritual temple, and whilst in one sense insubstantial, yet nevertheless very real.

Paul, and the Proclamation of a Mystery 3:1-13

In Galatians 2:2 Paul speaks of the “Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles”, by which he means the Gospel, but including this brilliant truth which we have seen above - not two units (Jew and Gentile) coalescing, but a new humanity - which is the true and full Gospel. Paul is about to enlarge on this fact, and this Gospel, as well as to indicate that suffering for the Gentiles is part of Christ’s commission, as well as essentially part of proclamation - “They that would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.”

3:1 “For this reason” - which? Primarily what he has been saying (in chapter two, ie. Jew and Gentile one body). So moved is Paul by this that he is about to pray for his brethren, and primarily those who had been Gentiles. However he does not launch fully into this until verse 14 where his prayer catches them up. He is diverted by reference to his being a prisoner for the

Gentiles. This is the first really personal note. See also 4:1, 2 Tim. 1:8, and Philemon 9 to see that Paul looks upon his state of being a prisoner as an actual calling, an integral (at this time) part of the Gospel preaching (see v.13). It relates primarily to the Gentiles, for had he not espoused them or “the Gospel I preach among the Gentiles” he would not have been imprisoned. “Acts” shows that this is so.

3:2-5. “Assuming you have heard” is a correct translation, if not literal. There can be no doubt that Paul is known as the apostle to the Gentiles. Acts 26:16-18 (cf. Gal. 2:8-9, etc.), and that is what Paul is saying - “In a special way I have a stewardship, a special affusion of grace to tell grace to the Gentiles. I have written in brief, as you can read in this letter, about that grace. The whole matter is a revelation. What you read will make it very clear to you what is otherwise a closed and sealed secret. In other ages, even those of Israel who were God’s people this whole matter (that I have expounded in chs. 1 and 2 and in particular ch. 2) of the church was not known.” Paul is saying that the “mystery” of the church is not the same as many an Old Testament prophecy that Gentiles would receive blessing through the Jews. The church is a new revelation, however much it is concealed in the Old Testament teachings. The whole matter has been unveiled to the New Testament (holy) apostles and prophets. The word “holy” needs to be looked at, for it attests that these men were specially chosen and set apart for this ministry of revelation of *seeing* the mystery of the church. “Acts” shows us that the early church truly understood the mystery, however much difficulty Jews had, from time to time in accepting it in practice (cf. “Hebrew” for a re-iteration that the old economy had passed). “Apostles and prophets” would relate (cf. Acts 2:41) to the apostolic teaching, and the prophetic ministry of building up this very church (cf. 1 Cor. 14:4b and Ephes. 2:20). Note the revelatory ministry of the Spirit (verse 5).

3:6. This verse is explicit - Gentiles are fellow-heirs, or “co-heirs” with the Jews. They constitute a “jointbody” and are “joint-sharers” of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. That is the totally *new entity* of the church gives no precedence to Jews, nor makes the Gentiles to be appendages to Jewish blessings and promise.

3:7. In verses 7-10 Paul has three audiences:

- (a) The Gentiles.
- (b) All men.
- (c) Principalities and powers.

In verse 7 Paul speaks of being made a minister of the Gospel, ie. he has received a “servantship” (no man dare take this upon himself) which is also a *gift*, God has ‘graced’ him that he might have this ministry, for it is a privilege (cf. Col. 1:24). This was “according to the ‘energising of His dynamic’”, that is God had worked towards Paul in converting and equipping him for this task - and what great power that required. We assume also that the same power sustained Paul, although the “launching” or the commissioning is what is spoken of here. For a parallel passage see Gal. 2:8 “He that worked mightily for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought also for me unto the Gentiles.” Although a little late in our commentary it is probably helpful to see that Gentiles were not just “non-Jews” but actual nations, people. This then demands a mighty commission, as also a mighty ministry - to bring in the *nations*.

3:8. In this verse Paul’s honest humility disclaims any innate worthiness. He knows himself to be less than the least of all the saints (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9) because he persecuted the church of God. More than this, however, Paul sees himself as the recipient of grace - ‘for grace’s sake’ and marvels at it. He is thus enabled to do that which rejoices him, preach to the Gentiles the riches

of Christ.” The word “unsearchable” (“inexhaustible”, “untrackable” are some of the ideas contained here) deserves some attention (see Simpson ad. loc. for a remarkable literary description). Paul does not enlarge, but his theology in this and other epistles means that the riches of God are contained in Christ, covering the whole spectrum of God’s wisdom, since in this one all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and He is made unto God’s wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (Col. 1:19, 2:9, 1 Cor. 1:30-31, etc.) but in fact here it relates to the whole “mystery” and the new covenantal action of God to redeem the Gentiles and make them jointly one with the people of God. Could this be done apart from Christ? No, not apart from Christ’s moral and spiritual riches.

3:9. The grace is given to make all men see the plan which has been concealed all down through the ages, that is the mystery which has been hidden, *namely the very purpose of God IN creation*. The phrase “hidden in God” ought not to be translated “by God”, for although God may have hidden it, it is simply (whether because of man’s sin or not) concealed in the very being of God until He chooses in the ‘fullness of time’ to reveal it. However we cannot get away from the thought that creation came into being with this end in view. Robinson (ad. loc.) says “The purpose of God is an eternal purpose ‘a purpose of the ages’, as he says below in verse 10. It has remained concealed since the beginning of things; but it was the very purpose of Creation itself.” If this is not the case then the inclusion of the statement “who created all things” is simply an unnecessary addition. Notice too that Paul is not making all men see what is the *mystery*, but the plan (stewardship) *of the mystery*. The mystery might be an interesting idea or concept, but here it is an actual outworking in which the nations are participating. This is the time - it has come!

3:10. “That”, ie. “in order that”, etc. The natural man lacks a true theodicy (“vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil”), a true understanding

of the universe and its right rule, for evil appears to have triumphed. The whole universe is now treated to a revelation of what was always inherent in God’s creation - this outworking of His plan and purpose (cf. Col. 1:25-27). Whilst man, egocentrically (or anthropocentrically) thinks of himself, there are other powers and persons in the universe. Angelic powers which have amazing authority and ability, are interested in seeing what is the unfolding plan of God. They, too, have not known it before. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). That is what makes Paul’s ministry not only basic, but to much point. He is aware of this exciting and most significant fact. It is *through the church* that the manifold (variegated, many-coloured, many-aspected, varied) wisdom of God (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10) is made known. We are not told whether the powers and authorities are good or bad; some argue for one or the other, and some for both. Little matter, for man relates to man by virtue of procreation and “mannishness” whereas angels are separate created beings, without procreational affinity, and they see an amazing thing - men, disparate through sin, and “hateful and hating one another” brought together in the church, the family and people of God (cf. Titus 3:3 ? Ephes. 2:18-19).

3:11. Now it is stated clearly. God’s eternal purpose - that which ever was, for, and with a view to, all time - was ever that Christ should bring about the mystery of the church, and fulfil God’s purposes for creation in redemption, reconciling all things, filling up all things and summing up all things. As F. Foulkes comments (ad. loc.) “Behind all the events of this world’s history there is an eternal purpose being worked out. God’s plan is no *ad hoc* plan, but one conceived from eternity and eternal in its scope.” He has not only purposed it, but He has made it to be so (ie. formed it) IN Christ Jesus, our Lord. We must not miss the fact that the plan is *Christological*, that it involves the man *Jesus*, and He is *our lord*. That is, God’s eternal purpose relates, in totality, to the eternal Son becomes incarnate and then becomes Lord by the Cross, etc.

3:12. “IN Whom” swings the breathless panoramic view back to Christ Himself. We are in the plan. We are in Christ. *We have access*. This word *access* has been used in 2:18 to contrast the non-access of the belated Gentiles with the glorious Fatherly acceptance of them. Well, here, we see that however awesome and vast the eternal plan, yet in Christ we have warm access to the Father, the might, planning, Creator-God. *Faith* is required in God as the One Who has planned our access to Himself. RSV translates “we have boldness and confidence *of access*” which is fair enough for it is in access that we have no fear, only holy boldness and confidence that we will not be rejected.

3:13. Seeing this vast plan, knowing this personal confidence relating to access, why should the readers be downcast by Paul’s suffering. It is no sign of defeat for the vast plan of God calls for suffering (cf. Col. 1:24, Romans 8:18ff, etc.) - but is something to glory in, existentially, as they move into the dimension in which Paul lives and operates. Buffeting and failure often depresses believers. Failures seem to indicate God’s absence from the matter. This, however, is not so. Christ’s suffering remains a mystery to cold logical reasoning, but not to the ‘knowledge of the heart.’

3:14-19. Paul’s prayer now comes into view. It must not be thought of as an “emotional-devotional” exercise. It is more. It is a prayer in context with what he has just expounded.

3:14. “For this reason” - carried on from verse 11. A long time getting there, but not without (parenthetical) purpose! Now he carries right into the presence of the essential nature of God - Father! He is about to expound this essential being of God - Father. This is where prayer is generated (“When ye pray say, ‘Our Father...’”), and has its reason for being. Note that standing prayer was the general rule, and kneeling indicative of unusual.

emotion (Luke 22:41, Acts 21:5). Kneeling is eastern, indicating reverence, a posture. Is Paul, then, kneeling in his prison cell? Is he so moved by the great sweep of history which he sees, and the sovereign God whom he worships, and is he so moved by his own part (through grace) in the proclamation that he wishes his readers to see and experience it no less? Probably. Bringing together all the references in the Epistle to Fatherhood is quite impressive - 1:2, 3:17, 2:18, 3:14, 4:6, 5:20, 6:23.

3:15. Now we see that every fatherhood that is, derives from this fontal Fatherhood. One has said that this is the true Fatherhood, and all other fatherhood is merely figurative. This is not so, for His Fatherhood is fontal. Whilst that which springs from it is not other than derivative, and therefore fatherhood as relates to man being-father. Every family derives its “family-ness” From the Father. The Greek word for family “*patria*” is derived from the word for father - “*pater*”. The English word family is not as expressive, meaning “household”. Thus we can translate, “the Father from whom all fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth.” We can scarcely ask *what* are the families on earth, and in heaven. Simply we say, wherever is family, He is Father. It may even mean that all things being reconciled, and summed up in the *Son*, then the Father’s Fatherhood will be finally revealed.

3:16. The Father of all is the source of all. God’s glory is His being in all its moral, spiritual, intellectual, actional and creational elements. In 1:17 He is “the Father of glory”. It is out of these resources that one is “strengthened with all might through his Spirit in the inner man.” We note that God’s power does not Operate apart from the Holy Spirit. Notice that He does not simply give out *of* His resources (of glory) but *according to them* (Gk. “*kata*”). The operation of the Spirit relates to the *inner man*, we might say the essential core-Person which is the new man in Christ. (See

comments on 1:18). Romans 7:22 speaks of the rightness of the inner man, but that context shows its *innate impotency*. Here the Spirit (cf. Romans 8:13) is necessary to give power (Acts 1:8, 1 Cor. 2:5-6), and so the inner man becomes strong (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16, Romans 12:2, Ephes. 4:22-23, Col. 3:9-10). Why strong?

3:17. Verse 17 is not easy to translate. There is no “hina” in Greek which equals “in order that”, but the form of the verb “to dwell” is called the aorist infinitive and gives the sense not of another action but of a cumulative action, so “that Christ may dwell in your heart” is the result of the action of the Spirit. And yet it has to be said that it is almost a parallel, that is that being strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and Christ dwelling are one and the same thing. This is born out by the “through faith”, ie. both the Spirit’s indwelling and action, and Christ’s indwelling and action obtain where there is faith. Notice that the *indwelling is* of a permanent nature. Some versions add “in love” as though Christ’s indwelling is by faith in love, and whilst this may be true the balance of the sentence demands the translation as in AV, RV. and RSV so that the indwelling of Christ results in being rooted and grounded in love.

This “love” concept is strongly emphasised in all the epistles of the New Testament, no less this one and must be significant. How significant we can possibly never know in this love. John’s statement (1 John 4:7ff.) that God is love is no mere abstract idea. God is essentially love, and if that is so then the eternal plan must be of this quality, and Christ’s fulfilment of it likewise. Thus His indwelling must not only exhibit His love but demand their total participation. So they must (as the images of foundation and roots show) be truly integrated into this love. Roots are radical, so radical love must be experienced. Roots - as foundations - mean a firm consolidation. We might think faith were that but see Galatians 5:5.

3:18. This “**grounding**” is to give power or strength to apprehend the dimensions which a believer may apprehend. It is not perfectly clear whether these dimensions are of love or of God, but it must ultimately amount to the same thing. 1:17-19 showed much the same thing, where the Spirit again, had to enlighten them. It needs strength to enter into and know existentially these dimensions of God, so that they do not lie merely along the intellectual plane. Notice, too, the statement “with all saints” indicating that love (a social thing) can never be known in individualism or personal isolation. The processes of living in love (by which we know it in experience) demands the group, not all of whom are direct aids to love. Yet through them we learn.

3:19. The two verses run into each other, showing that to know the dimensions of love or God are to know (in depth and experience) the love of Christ. It could not be otherwise. To know Christ’s love is to know it in the Father, to know it in redeeming, in revealing God, in gripping us (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14, 1 Peter 1:8), for whilst we cannot know this love in intellectual grasp (since that is not its nature) we can know it in experience. This is where the Spirit’s work is - 1 Cor. 2:9-13. The Spirit searches *all things* even the depths of God! 1 Cor. 8:1 says *knowledge* (as such) puffs up, but (by contrast, and in fact) love *builds up*. How could one know God apart from love, since God is love, and one knows God through the Son, Who loves. One then has to experience that love. Whilst one will never know it *absolutely* there is a present experience of its absoluteness. Thus to know Christ’s love, is, in fact to *be filled unto all the fullness of God*.

Of course no one person, nor the aggregate of all contain the entirety of God’s being, but God does indwell - as Father, as Son and as Spirit (see John 14:23, Rom. 8:9-11, Col. 1:27). It is not the entirety of His fullness that we contain, but the *quality* of that fullness all that man as man can contain. The Epistle says enough about fullness for us to see it is the opposite of emptiness

or vanity. To know His plan, to know His love is to know God, and all that action, that plan and that love to grip us in every aspect and facet of our being. That is containing the fullness of God. John could say “Of His fullness have we all received”, ie. they were recipients of what He was on earth, yet we are recipients of Him.

Paul’s prayer reaches a brilliant climax and sets the fullness of life for every believer. None may suffer from *ennui*. All are in His plan, and all experience Him. (cf. John 17:3, Jer. 9:22-23).

A Doxology 3:20-21

Paul’s prayer did not finish at verse 19, for prayer without doxology (praise) is weak. Nor could Paul, we assume, pray a higher prayer than that he has prayed. His doxology is to strengthen those for whom he prays, to see what power is actually working in them. We see

- (a) God is *working within us*, ie. Jew and Gentile, each member of His church, and every member. His inworking (cf. Phil. 2:12-13),
- (b) His *inworking covers more than we surmise or ask*. Phil. 2:12-13 show that it is what God purposes to do that He accomplishes. So see Phil. 1:6, 1 Thess. 5:24. However Ephes. 3:9-11 tells of the extent of what he is doing.

Undoubtedly redemption, sonship, holiness, are some of the things He is effecting and completing, whilst the programme of summing up all things relates to what He is doing within us. To see this is to know that God takes the initiative, and that His power in accomplishment is illimitable.

3:21. God is to have glory given eternally, that is the “ages upon the ages” are to witness His glory, and in particular this is to be evidenced in:

- (a) the Church, and
- (b) IN Christ Jesus.

There is more than a hint here of the Bride and the Lamb, of the final union, in God’s purposes of His Son and His people. They are to be the agents of His glory. His glory is to be seen in them. This is to say that the wonder of union of Jew and Gentile, the redemption of sinners, and the forming of the Family - these things will forever glorify the God Who is even now doing them.

Maintaining the Unity 4:1-6

Note: It has often been said that the first three chapters form the doctrinal section and the last three chapters the practical section. This is not strictly true, but it is right enough to say that the last chapters are very practical in their application. Note that when Paul uses a doxology he generally has finished that section of his treatise.

4:1. “I, . . . a prisoner of/for the Lord.” This is true enough, though Paul is not making much of it. At least it makes his imprisonment not seem a thing of shame but rather glory. However notice the “therefore” which relates to the previous section (including the doxology). Having seen the high calling of the believer, having realised that one comes to the fullness of God, one is now *able* to work out this vocation in a worthy manner.

Note the word “beseech” which is better translated “exhort”. Exhortation is for what is necessary, not what is simply desirable. Such exhortation presupposes the right mind and sense of responsibility to respond. What then is the “calling”? It is participation in that great unity of the body, that plan and purpose of God.

4:2,3. The *way* to walk includes lowliness, meekness—with patience. These things are not weak, but strong,

“Learn of Me”, said Christ “for I am meek and lowly in heart” which seems to mean the *disposition* and *action* of an *obedient* spirit. Christ’s humility was never weak. “Lowliness of mind” cf. Phil. 2:3, means a mind which is not high and heady, over-estimating itself, forgetting its dependence on God. “Patience” is surely needed where, in a situation which calls for perfection, none is perfect. On the one hand the high calling, and often, on the other the “low-falling.” The *ethos* of the Body is complete harmony; the execution of these things as *ethical goodness* so much as the very *essence of the life* of the Body. They are not done because they are good, but because they are necessary. Thus to “forbear” or be patient, is to “suffer long” that is beyond us known as the reasonable limit of endurance. Note however the dynamic “in love.” Verse three shows the source of such - an eagerness to maintain the unity. The unity is from the Spirit - indeed His essential being, unity. This unity does not have to be created, only maintained. It is the *experience of the unity* which makes one eager to maintain it. The four “tempers” above are what maintain it. They are all *in love* and constitute the bond of peace.

4:4-6. Here we have to pause from Looking at unity as an abstract entity and look at it in its reality, trying to imagine the church of the day, with its many racial, social and cultural backgrounds, as well as the varying religions from which all had come. Chs. 1 and 2 have spoken of the breaking down of barriers and so we see the unity here is the sharing of an *essential unity*. There are seven elements of the unity.

- (i) *One Body*. All *are* one in this (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13) as it is essentially one.
- (ii) *The one Spirit* is the One by whom the Body is vitalised, directed, etc. There are not different “spirits” for different members. 1 Cor. 12:5 ff. expounds this well; all that the spirit does comes out of His essential unity.

(iii) *There is one hope*, or goal. None will reach a different one. The hope is what we will be, and it is the hope that relates to our call - for which we were called.

(iv) *One Lord* (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6) means we are redeemed and kept, and *commanded* by One.

(v) “*One faith*” is *one way to life*, trust in Christ and His work, and *one way of life*, faithfulness that is continuing trust in God the Father and His Son. As with each “one” here it is a fact common to all within the unity. None has a special “thing” of his own.

(vi) We participate in one baptism. All have been baptised into Christ, into the Body (Gal. 3:27, 1 Cor. 12:13) and nothing could make us more one, for it is not only a matter of water, but of the Spirit, and into Christ.

(vii) “One God and Father of us all” makes it clear that we participate in the unity that comes from His creation of us, as also His Fatherhood, over and towards us. This Fatherhood is not known outside this essential unity, and chapter 3 shows us that it is the very character of the family. That is, there is no area where His Fatherhood does not reach, and none where it is not effective. Without Fatherhood there is no unity. The true unity, as we have said, issues from this Fatherhood and depends upon it. We must not think of this unity as something simply “spiritual” unless we understand by that word “practical” and “living” and “palpable.” Here are human beings, integrated into this unity and partaking of it and *maintaining* it - eagerly! The question is, is this a new thing, or does it mean reconstituted, living as he always was intended to live?

To sum up, Paul sees the unity of the Church, as the unity of the Spirit and all alike share in a like life and like things. If we see 1:10 clearly we see that *Christ* unifies

all things, that this unity lies *essentially* in the Father, and is brought through practically *by the Spirit*, whilst *believers*, are committed to it, and have to maintain it.

The Unity, the Gifts and the Growth 4: 7-16

The “but” of verse 7 is obviously significant. The thought in mind is the unity, and some are questioning how this can be? If so then the “gift” of Christ is the answer. We have to ask why the word *gifts* (plural) is not used. It could mean:

- (a) A gift is given to each - for the unity, or
- (b) *The* gift, ie. the Holy Spirit Who certainly came as a result of Christ’s ascension (see verse 8). Certainly the *gifts*: are from the *Gift* the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:5).

However, verse 7 really means “In this matter of unity, each one has grace enough to maintain the unity for each is engifted, and as such all have that over which they may not boast (it is a gift, cf. 1 Cor. 4:7), and each needs the other in order to be sufficient. Unity results from this diversity of gifts. “Grace ... given” should be compared with 3:7-8.

4:8. This verse is from Psalm 68:18, but is from an aramaic Targum which is, in effect, a paraphrase, for the Psalm speaks of receiving gifts from men, the figure being of a triumphant king ascending the citadel of Zion. Here, however, He distributes from His largesse (cf. Luke 11:22, Isa. 53:12). Certainly in ascending to the throne Christ has poured out the gift of the Spirit see Acts 2:33.

4:9-11. Ephes. 1:23 tells us that He “fills all in all”. This means that all things, apart from Him are unfilled or “empty”, ie. are vain, or purposeless. As Creator-Mediator

(Col. 1:15ff. John 1:1ff, Heb. 1:2-3) all creation relates to Him, has its order and function from Him. By redemption He restores its powers and purpose. Thus we need not be much worried by “lower parts of the earth” and “far above all heavens” for they simply mean “from tip to toe - top to bottom”, ie. there is nothing He has not filled. It is the same as saying He is the head of all things. Undoubtedly His going down is in the suffering of the Cross - “humbled Himself”, and His ascension in His enthronement at the right hand of the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24ff.). Without enthronement He cannot send the Spirit Who is the Agent for the filling of all things. (Cf. “emptiness” and “vanity” of Ecclesiastes.)

4:11-16. “And his gifts were”, ie. not gifts to persons to use for themselves, but gifts to the church; we might almost say the apostles, prophets, etc. were gifts to the church, rather than say certain men had been given such gifts. This takes away personal pride, and emphasises personal responsibility.

Apostles. Perhaps three categories; firstly the *apostle* who was essentially called of God, and from whom came the word of truth and authority - the “apostles’ doctrine” cf. Acts 2:42). Such apostles had to be well attested. (1 Cor. 15:5, Rev. 21:14). Others are included with the apostles such as Barnabas, (Acts 14:14) and possibly James the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), Silas (1 Thess. 2:6), etc. Finally it is a term used to designate a messenger such as in Phil. 2:25. The main thing to be seen here is that they are necessary for the church, at this point.

Prophets, are well avowed in the Acts and the epistles. Acts 2 shows that the coming of the Spirit is with a view to prophecy, and 1 Cor. 14:1 suggests it is a gift to be sought and prized, since it edifies the church. Prophecy, whilst relating to foretelling, is primarily for building up the church.

Evangelists are essential to the church, e.g. Philip

(Acts 21:8), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5) as their work relates to the initial proclamation.

Pastors and Teachers may well be, in fact, the same. The word for pastor is really “shepherd”, and such was Christ, and all under Him in this ministry **are** “under-shepherds” (see John 10:11, Heb. 13:20, 1 Pet. 2:25, 5:4, Acts 20:28). To *feed* the flock is to be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2, cf. Tit. 1:9).

4:12. However, the ministry of these gifts is “for the equipment of the saints”, that is to equip the saints, and that “for the work of the ministry”, that is “the servanthip” which each exercises, all of which builds up the body of Christ. Without it it cannot be so. Again it is *in* the unity that servanthip is *for* the unity. We see that the body of Christ needs building up.

4:13. “**Until we all attain**” makes it clear that what is spoken is in the future - a goal to which we strive, that *is the unity of the faith*. The “unity of the Spirit” is spoken about as structural, functional reality of the church, but unity of the faith demands that each saint with every other saint, having the same faith, reaches the goal which is, in this faith, unity - the sort of thing spoken about in 1:10. “We all” means “together”. No free-lancing in this experience! This also means, concurrently, knowing the Son of God. We know Him in His unity with the Father (John 17:20ff.) and His people, and giving them that unity with His people. This is to come to “a complete man”, a matured adult. This mature manhood is *con-corporate*, every member contributing to what is “one new man.” Each in this humanity must himself be a full man, yet cannot thus be without all others. That makes great stature! Already in 1:23 we have seen that the fullness of Christ, Christ has given to His church. Therefore we attain only to that fullness we have already been constituted, ie. Christ’s fullness, in moral and spiritual stature. Undoubtedly there is a sense in which all of this is simply innate fullness

fully realised, and we must not forget that this results from the possession and operation of the gifts.

4:14. The reason for this maturity is to be rid of immaturity, for this is dangerous, as foolish. Such immature ones are like small boats tossed on angry waves lacking stability. “Winds of doctrine”, ie. false doctrine, can be very dangerous. See how that Galatians were carried on a wild dangerous tide! See how the gnostics and others play havoc with the immature faith. Every pastor knows the tug and pull of these tides and winds amongst his people. The figure changes somewhat and now the false teachers are like cunning tricksters with dice and games about which Paul has been speaking.

Note:- Our security lies in matured stability which is personal, but nevertheless *always corporate*, that is we need each other, as being essential to each other, and we constitute protection for one another.

4:15. As against the false-dealer, the tricksters, we (together) are to “speak the truth in love,” ie. “to truth it in love” as against falsity, for in love lies the truth. This love “builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1), and so growth comes from such, being headed up in Christ, that is related to Him, polarised to Him, “doing His thing” which is love, for nothing in this action is not His and in Him. Christ heads up the growth!

4:16. This is born out by the fact that the body is dependent upon the head. The body for its part is a *functional whole* (see Col. 2:19 “holding fast to the Head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God”) so when every part is one with Christ, and in harmony with every other part then growth (as is physiologically the case) will come about. Each part is *functional*; each part is *essential*; all together cause an upgrowing. The growth, is then, *in love* which brings us back to the point of the epistle, the unity of God’s

people, the unity of the Spirit, the unity of the faith. This is what God has always been about doing.

PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF THE UNITY AND HEADING UP

4:17-5:21

(a) New Life contrasting the Old, and replacing it (4:17-24)

4:17. Paul now presses home with application. The “we” and “you” now call for a certain pattern of living. No one, whether of *Jewish* or *Gentile* origin is to walk, ie. have that manner of life, as the Gentiles who are about them. The whole life of the Gentile world must have pressed up against them as much as any permissive society. There would be the constant temptation to set aside the great themes Paul was teaching, and live as others lived, about them (cf. Romans 12:2). Paul immediately plunges into a description of Gentile life, after he has solemnly “in the Lord” declared against it. He mentions the “futility of their minds”, ie. the *emptiness* (purposelessness and vanity) of their living. We are reminded of Romans 1:19, and the darkened mind and foolish heart. So verse 18 shows their intellects do not think correctly, because they do not now participate (morally) in the life of God. Once “living souls”, that can no longer be said of them, and because God was not to them the living God, they lived a life out of contact with Him. They are *ignorant* of the true knowledge of God, and as Romans 1:19ff. shows us this is fatal. In ignorance, as well as the hardness of heart there is moral responsibility. Man was not created this way. That is why the word “gentile” has such bad connotation.

4:19. Moral sensitivity and feeling have gone, and they have become callous. Being out of the way of true love

and unity (that which Paul has expounded) they are the opposite. Hence they give themselves up to licentiousness or lewdness, relating to sexual matters, not simply being gullible in such, but *greedy* to accomplish uncleanness, and this in every possible form.

4:20, 21. Here the contrast - for they have never learned these things from or concerning Christ. This truth was seen in a man Jesus who never acted in the way of the Gentiles’ evil, for He was not such a man as the *old* man. He was a *new* man and what He *did* constituted the real, the essential (moral and spiritual) truth.

4:22. It is unfortunate that the RSV does not carry on the thought, for there is a connecting “that” or “to” (in the infinitive) for Paul means “You learned the truth, to put off the *old* man.” The word *nature* which is used can be misleading. The *old man* (see Rom. 6:6 where he is called our old man) is a corporate entity, just as is the new man. It is the old Adamic being in which we participated, the sort of thing the Gentiles are still *doing* and *being*. The Adamic way was the former way of life, and one must put it off (aorist - one act). Look at this old man, it is getting more and more corrupt, rotting away as its lusts increase its inevitable doom. One might think such a putting off is impossible. However, morally, it is impossible to allow him to stay on! Besides, one has had a dynamic experience of Christ and the Spirit. The old man has no *legal* right to remain. Off with him! No Gentile ways of evil here!

4:23. As against the old - the new! Not new meaning different, but meaning “young” as against the “old”. “The spirit of the mind” is, again, the internal centre, the inner core, the true, the essential core of a person. Here the mind or the “nous” has to be renewed, undoubtedly by the truth as it is in Jesus, by being in Jesus, by the indwelling Spirit - by the obedient exercise of the will to the will of God.

4:24. Positively then one not only puts off the former evil way of life, and cuts all connections with it, but one puts on the new humanity. This, in one sense is Christ, for one was in Adam, the old man. At the same time one's participation in Adam had a personal (or individual) side to it; so too in Christ, and thus one is being renewed as Col. 3:10 puts it so powerfully. The full renewed man that will be, is now being fulfilled, and the original created image - so defaced by sin - is being brought to full, re-creational glory!

(b) New action replacing the old 4:25-5:21

Note:- This section shows that the old way of life must be practically replaced by the new. The new is the true way of the believer, the member of the body, and the old is the way of sinful men bound up in old Adam. If all things are to be united, restored and headed up in Christ, then the *process* must begin immediately.

4:25. "Therefore", ie. on the basis of participation in the new man, all the following must be done: "putting away falsehood" is the same verb as for putting away the old man. Lying is part of the old man - deceit as against truth (cf. quote from Zech. 8:16), the reason being "for we are members one of another". In the new situation lying is foreign. To lie now is to "let down" another (or other) member/s.

4:26. Anger of the kind nominated here is evil (cf. Ps. 4:4 RSV) for such anger divides and hurts; it cannot be tolerated in the body. A study of anger is interesting and revealing. There is an anger which is righteous indignation and acceptable if not *self-righteous*. "Let the day of your anger be the day of your reconciliation" is someone's comment on "and let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

4:27. This verse brings out the point that Satanic intrusion follows wrong or extended anger. Since the deepest point of evil is to divide the relationships of man and God, and man and man, it is evident that such entrance to Satan must be withheld by denying anger (cf. James 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:8f). Otherwise he has an entrance, not only to a person, but to the body.

4:28. Stealing was a Gentile pattern. For some it was a living. For some it was the evasion of the creational demand for labour (Gen. 2:15, Exod. 20:6). In all these precepts not only is the evil negated, but the good positively emphasised. Self-gain is not only put aside, but the need of the indignant brother displayed. The church has always been concerned with the poor (cf. Matt. 19:21, Luke 14:13, John 13:29, Acts 2:44, 4:32, Romans 15:26f, 2 Cor. 8:9, Gal. 2:11, etc.). Paul insisted personally on earning his own support. Cf. 1 Cor. 9, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8f, and insisted that "if a man will not work, neither let him eat." Where a man *could not work* he was supported by those who could. Again the act of love within the Body.

4:29. The "evil talk" that is rebuked is such that infects the Body with "rottenness" like one rotten apple infects the lot. Whilst it may not all be impure it is at best worthless, empty, not edifying. It is good to read the parallel in Col. 4:6, each of which is a commentary of the other. The sum of the matter is "Speak positively, graciously, so that what you say will be upbuilding and not degenerating."

4:30. "Do not grieve the Spirit of God". This statement must be seen in the context of the verses preceding and following it. The Spirit is grieved (vexed, cf. Is. 63:10) by anything that is not of Christ, anything that goes against the Body and unity. The very term *Holy Spirit* also indicates His essential nature. He is the Spirit *who serves* (see 1:13-14) with a view to the full outcome

of redemption. His sealing is with a view to the future. Being thus sealed we ought to be consistent with our sealing and its divine intention. We know that in other places the Spirit is shown as the Spirit of unity, of love, and produces moral fruit in the life of the believer (Ephes. 4:2, Phil. 2:1-2, Gal. 5:22f, etc.).

4:31. All the things that pertain to the former Gentile, sinful ‘old-man’ life are to be rejected with the old man himself. Six harsh and bitter things are to be rejected. *Bitterness* is that which refuses reconciliation and turns in on itself, *wrath* and *anger* are the things which disturb the saint internally, and the saints as a whole and presume to place themselves in the position which only God may - should He wish - operate. Here - with the saints - there is deliberate settled opposition and action against another. *Clamour* suggests loud, vocal and deliberate self-assertion against another. *Slander* which is actually the word for blasphemy is the sort of thing a man does against another who is in God’s image. This derating, denigrating, and downgrading will be venom injected into the Body of unity. *Malice* is sheer bad feeling, a person pitted against another.

4:32. The gracious contrast is of positive things which vitally edify the Body (cf. Col. 3:12). *Kindness* is compounded of goodness, concern for another, practical consideration. *Tenderness* is a rare word even in the New Testament and related to *feeling* for another (cf. 1 Peter 3:8). *Forgiveness* having been received from God because of His action in Christ, calls for forgiveness from each other. This is stressed strongly in the New Testament, because non-forgiveness binds both the unforgiven and the non-forgiver. God’s whole thrust, in Christ, was towards forgiveness, (and at what cost!) so that it ought to be the believer’s thrust, indeed the thrust of the entire Body, to which it is essentially indispensable.

Introductory Note to Chapter Five:

As we have seen, Paul is on the matter of the *essential* unity of the church. The change from Gentile and Jew, without regeneration has altered in the new humanity, or unity into which they have moved. Old ways must give way to new ways. The old ways were not only godless, but corrupt, and these have to be put away with the “old humanity” from which they are now divorced. The Spirit of God has come amongst them in this new unity, and in fact constitutes that unity. He must not be grieved, and any harshness, any break in relationships grieves Him. This, and because God has been shown to be Father of the Family, impels Paul to say what he says in 5:1ff.

5:1. The ‘therefore’ of this verse links all that has gone before with what he is now saying. God (the Father) forgives. Let also His children forgive (cf. Matt.5:4348). They are to be *imitators*. This at first seems like an unnatural straining but children *naturally* imitate their parents for it is native to them, inherent in them. They have the capacity. These too are not just “children” but “dear (beloved) children.” Jesus is known as “the son of His love” (Col. 1:13). Of course they are children *together*) ie. the family.

5:2. They are to walk in love. To walk means the manner of life. When it is seen that God is love *essentially* then the children to be *children* essentially, must also love; but love is not a quality. It is all of life (if God-in-all is *love*). Again the *example* to imitate is Christ. This we have seen. The way He went about it was to offer Himself up for us, in a fragrant way, ie. we should do this for one another. *Because* Christ has done this we too love (cf. 1 John 4:19, Ephes. 5:25). For “sweet sacrifice” understand acceptability before God (see Gen. 8:21, Exod. 29:18,25,41, Lev. 1:9,13,17). We must not think the sacrifice was *pleasant*, although it was *pleasing*. The sacrifice of Christ was awful, but so gracious for He gave *Himself* and for us. Thus we are to do likewise.

Light and Darkness: walking in Light 5:3-14

- 5:3. True Love** is outlined above. This love they know and experience. There is a 'love' which is not true love. It is evil. It is the perversion of love - fornication, uncleanness, and greediness relate to the misuse of the relational faculty of love. The first refers to unchastity, the second to uncleanness that relates to sexual elements, and the third to the way all of this is gone about so that "ruthless greed" could describe it. "As is fitting amongst saints" gives the direct contrast to the way in which Gentiles lived, where these things were the norm of secular living. Even Christians were needing teaching, as this area in man is perhaps the most vulnerable of all, love being the dynamic of life, whether pure or perverse.
- 5:4.** Saints are different; they are "set apart" from the world's ways. So then "filthiness" or "baseness" is foreign to them. "Foolish talking" must be understood, as being not simply empty but degrading. The *fool* in the Scriptures is the one who opposes God, and so this sort of talk is actually stupid. "Raillery" or "light jesting" is quite witty talking which grips, and moves a person to the edge of that which is not fitting. It is in fact flippancy and this is deadly in destroying serious categories. Thus Paul contrasts these things with "thanksgiving" or as some have it "gracious speech" ie. speech which ministers grace, and does not destroy godly reality.
- 5:5.** Now Paul comes to a warning note, such as he uses in other places, and such as other writers of the New Testament also use (e.g. Gal. 6:7, 1 Cor. 6:9, Heb. 3:12f, etc.), namely, that *believers* must not imagine that they may live in sin and be excused by God. He simply reiterates the forms of evil above, adding that the "greedy" ("covetous") one is, in fact an idolater.

He would be shocked to hear this, but since true love relates to true relationship, a perverse relationship is equal to idolatry, ie. in the Scriptures idolatry = adultery. The statement is categorical, none who is such will inherit the kingdom. To inherit is to come into, to be an owner of (cf. Rom. 4:13ff, Gal. 3:18, cf. Matt. 25:34, James 2:5, 1 Cor. 15:50j). It is interesting to note that it is not only God's Kingdom but also that of Christ, cf. Col. 1:13. Christ has conquered and the Father has given Him power and authority, cf. Ephes. 1:19-23.

- 5:6.** The words intended to deceive are empty (vain) as they have no relation to reality, the order of things as they (truly) are. The children of disobedience, cf. 2:2 - are under doom, as the children of wrath and it is dangerous to heed them. We take it here that they are Gentiles or pagans.
- 5:7-14.** We are still keeping in mind that at 4:17 (and following) Paul spoke of the break from the Gentile way of life, because of the holy calling believers have in Christ and the church. Undoubtedly in Ephesus the local community must have butted up against this people of God, and it would be a constant battle to live in moral sensitivity and awareness of the issues. The believers are not to associate with these children of darkness, and verse 11 shows this means taking part in their evil activities. Paul nowhere seems to assert that they must live in total segregation from people in the world.
- 5:8.** This verse makes it clear that they were once participators in this evil that now surrounds them, but with which they have no affinity. They are children of light (as against having been children *in* and *of* darkness). They should live as they are, ie. *see* what they are and *be* what they *see*. Note that *light* and *darkness* do not refer to abstract ideas. "God is light" (1 John 1:5) is not an abstract statement hut a practical one.

So “the fruit (result, product) of light is found in all that is good and right and true.” That is *in an* actual way of living. “Good” as against evil or malice, “right” as against the wrong and unrighteous and “true” against the false, the empty, the deceitful. These adjectives are in fact nouns.

5:10. By doing and being in this way, they actually *test* out the things that must be done to have the approval of the Lord. In *verse 11* these works of darkness bring no (authentic) fruits. One is not to associate with them, have part in them. One has to *expose or reprove* them which is in fact “bringing them into shame.” *Verse 12* shows how shameful are these things. The “for” shows that the *method* of dealing with these sins is not to name them, but to expose them, by one so being of the light that that which is darkness will be ashamed, exposed, rebuked and eventually submit to being visible and so defeated. Not naming these things may have many meanings, but one will surely be that this is not the method of dealing with them. It may also be that the very naming of them is dangerous.

5:13. It is clear that the method of exposure brings the unfruitful thing of darkness into the light. It is uncovered. This will constitute a crisis at this point of evil. John 3:19-21 says that those who do evil will not voluntarily go to the light, for their deeds will be seen for what they are. Here verse 14 says that the outcome of exposure is not only *to reveal but* to deal with the evil. Not only does the light expose but it makes luminous, ie. makes *into light*. Paul then lightens darkness into true light. Practically explained it means that evil things and evil deeds are put at discount and the subject of these, lightened, now does what is “good and right and true.” This *makes verse 14* most relevant. It is both an invitation and an exhortation to the sleeping one (the one in darkness and death) to awake to light and to life. Christ (only) may accomplish this, by his salvation and personal aid. The

lines of verse 14 seem to be a hymn and is looked upon by some as a baptismal hymn, speaking of one who- has gone down into death in the watery grave, and rises now to light and life. The point of it, anyway, is that life and light come from Christ no matter how deeply the person has been involved in evil, death and darkness,. We must remember that it is the “walking in the light” of the believer which brings such a one to this point of saving and renewal.

A further (practical) stage in the New Walk 5:15-21

- 5:15.** The Christian walk, or manner of life is still the subject, as against that of the Gentile (see 4:17ff). It is, however, one thing to walk as one is advised. True wisdom is not intellectual or “knowledge” ability, but relates to true moral perception, as to the order and action of things. It avoids wrong and fruitless ways (as above).
- 5:16.** Carries on the point. One is to “buy up the time”, ie. use the time wisely. The days are evil; there is not much time to live wisely. Other pressures are coming (increasingly) which will make the action of wisdom even more difficult.
- 5:17.** In verse 10 Paul has virtually called on them to know what the Lord’s will is, ie. to know what He requires of man, of one personally. Not to know the will of the Lord is innate foolishness, or lack of wisdom. The days are of great pressure, judgment may come. A believer must be earnest. This seems to be the meaning of the “therefore” which follows verse 16 and its dark overtones of impending climax.
- 5:18.** This famous verse is introduced along the same lines. Gentiles (in particular) look upon drunkenness.

without criticism. It is part of the pattern of life. It is spoken against in 1 Tim.3:3,8 and Titus 1:7 and 2:3. In these cases responsible people cannot afford to be under the influence of liquor;. (One cannot be wise and drink heavily. One cannot drink heavily and be wise. It causes dissipation of one's abilities, time, and senses. The more positive, and necessary advice is to be filled with the Spirit. If any intoxication is needed this is the best intoxicant - the Spirit. However, we cannot be sure that this is what Paul means.

Let us see what this part of the verse can mean. It can mean any of the following:

- (i) "You be filled *in* the Spirit" (cf. Acts 1:5)
- (ii) " You be filled *through* the Spirit."
- (iii) "You be filled *in your* spirit."
- (iv) "You be filled *with* the Spirit."

In the first case one finds the infilling *within* the Spirit, in the second by means of the Spirit, in the third one is filled full *in one's own* spirit, and in the last one is filled *with* the Spirit Himself. We can certainly come to one clear conclusion:- We can be filled in our spirits and go on being full. When we look at the term *fullness* in this epistle then the matter becomes clear (cf. 1:23, 4:10, 3:19, etc.). The other thing that is evident is that apart from the Holy Spirit we cannot know this fullness. We do not object then to understanding the verse to mean, "Be filled in your Spirit, in, by and with the Holy Spirit". Even then we have not explored it completely. It does mean "Go on being filled, etc." It is a constant filling which is not the *beginning* but the continuance of what has already (initially) begun. Other Scriptures that relate are Rom. 12:11, Phil. 1:19, Rom. 15:13.

5:19-20. The next two verses (19,20) show the *result* of the fullness, that is, spontaneous (but not irrational) worship. It seems these compositions were not Psalms, hymns and songs already composed (although they could too, have been included) but creative worship inspired

by the Spirit in His revelation of the Father, the Son and the "plan". Linked with this in Colossians 3:16 1S "admonishing", so that the worship was didactic as well as praise. Also (verse 20) it included thanksgiving. We know from the "Acts" that the presence of the Spirit gave great power, purpose and joy in suffering to the early church. So seeing the truth of God, and refusing to live as the Gentiles they would know a rich rapport with God and fellow-believers and the giving of thanks to God would be both spontaneous and natural. The Father would be seen as the Source of all blessings, and the Lord Jesus Christ as the One through whom blessings were offered.

The New Life, the Fullness of the Spirit, and the true Marriage 5:21-33

5:21. This verse is probably a piece of advice that relates to the fact of worship, and thanksgiving. The essential "unity of the Spirit" and the "unity of faith" are expressed in the submission of one to the other. Notice that it is in the "fear (or reverence) of Christ", which is much the same as "the fear of the Lord" in the Old Testament.

5:22. The word "**reverence**" of verse 21 is also in verse 33 where a wife has this for her husband. Without doubt this section commences with two things in mind:

(a) the corporate worship, (b) the necessary subjection required within the fellowship, and in this case between wife and husband.

The same verb that requires general subjection serves this sentence from verse 21 so that "the fear of Christ" is still the motivating factor and not (so much) "fear of the husband." The detail with which *subjection* is treated is a fair indication that Paul saw a basic structure to all relationships, and part of the new life is to maintain this. This wife must be subject to her husband "as to the Lord". This family is according to the

heavenly pattern of the family, where the Father is the Head.

5:23,24. The theme now runs on naturally. The church is to Christ what the wife should be to her husband. The church is Christ's body; the wife is the body of the husband, ie. he is her head. Christ is the Saviour of the church; so the husband relates to his wife. The church is subject to Christ. Similarly wives should be subject to their husbands.

5:25. “**Hast thou seen the measure of obedience?**” says St. Chrysostom, “Hear also the measure of love.” If the subjection of the wife to the husband is in every way functional and structural, and of the order of things then so is the love of the husband. In 5:2 this love for the church has been mentioned, so Paul takes their knowledge of it for granted. Those of God's elect the ones **who “were not” “but now” are, that is all who** were “afar off” or “near” but without Christ - for these He has died that they might be “washed, sanctified, justified” (1 Cor. 9:11) and so be a cleansed Bride. As He is Saviour in raising her up, so He is Saviour in preserving her, and will have her faultless in that day - the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb.

5:26. This verse speaks of the two elements by which the cleansing is effected - the water and the word. This is taken as meaning baptism, where water is used, and the word of Christ is pronounced. Of course the *source* of cleansing is the Cross where he gave Himself up for her. The great point is Christ, the Spouse, loves His bride!

5:28. It is interesting to see that the verb for *love* is that used throughout the New Testament for true or divine love. It is this love a man must have for His wife. The same style of relationship? between Christ and the Church must be between man and wife. The

husband will go to any sacrifice for her. His love *is*; his love will express itself in action. Christ's Body is the church, and He loves it. A man's body is His wife. Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. A husband does this with his wife. Christ and the church are the archetype and thus the principle obtains for man. Man and wife are not an analogy, any more than a human father is an analogy of the true Father. The human structure derives from the archetypal. It is interesting verse 28 cont., that a man is said, in life, to love his own body; so he loves himself for he has loved his wife, who is his body.

5:29. This verse shows that in practice no man has hated his own flesh. So he cannot hate his wife, but rather love her. Primarily Christ loves the church, nourishes and cherishes it, because we are members of His own body. Thus Paul shows us the tender intimacy between Christ and the church, Christ and the members.

5:31. In this verse which Paul quotes from Gen. 2:24 is the intimacy described which is between man and wife for there is nothing but that relationship for them.

5:32. In this verse Paul is virtually saying, “Don't brush over this ancient truth. It is no mere cliché. It has a deep truth, a mystery, for it relates to the essential love of Christ and His Church, and the human analogy is not sufficient to exhibit its depths, since the human situation is *human*, and not divinely deep.” “Nevertheless”, he adds in verse 33 “the *principle* is the same. The human husband must love his wife, and she for her part must have her husband in reverence.” It would be difficult to gauge the vast difference that would result in society if this were the case!

Children and Parents 6:1-4

Verse one commences a new section, although it is related to what is above. We may observe the fact that children cannot be exhorted to be godly except on the necessary basis of the parents being in the right relation, each to the other. In this context Paul's advice to children is perfectly logical.

6:1-3. This command is basic to a truly peaceful and well-integrated society. The commands in the Pentateuch are interesting for they demand honour to *both* parents cf. Exodus 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Deut. 5:16 sometimes the mother preceding the father. Children are to do this "in the Lord", where in fact they are, and "this is right", ie. acceptable to God, functional in fact.

In *verse 2* the fifth commandment is quoted, showing that it is an ancient functional pattern. The command is motivated by promise, as often commands are in Scripture, the promise being long life. In the Pentateuch this was a promise concerning the land in which they were to enter. Here it is anywhere on the earth. Whilst the verses do not say it, as such yet we conclude that parental obedience brings peace, stability and security and so, long life. However, the great point here is the reverence for the Lord brings true familial relationships.

6:4. Paternal authority does not call for harsh authoritarianism. Whilst a father may demand obedience, his child can also be subject to discouragement. Too heavy demands, endless pointless corrections and the like may break the spirit of a child.

It needs encouragement also. The "discipline and instruction" of the Lord is necessary to apply. The father must insist on obedience, but again *in the whole context of the fullness of the Spirit (5: 18)*. The command to fathers indicates that they must take pains in doing their part, since this

process necessarily takes time. The "instruction" ("nurture", "admonition") of the Lord is by the Father but *of the Lord*. That is, it is bringing the child up in Christ, out of which experience his obedience is realised.

Slaves and Masters 6:5-9

6:5. The whole Christian community must operate on a right social basis. The same obedience (same word) that children are to offer to parents are slaves to offer to their masters. For good or ill slavery was part of the order of the day. Some slaves were badly treated, but many, for the most part, were beloved by their masters and their lot was not too onerous. A servant was free to come and go, but not the slave. Yet these injunctions fit servants of today, ie. employers. The church was composed of many slaves, and so the exhortation is, again, in the light of their being "in the Lord". "Fear and trembling" seems quite strong to us today, but this fear is a wholesome and not "slavish" fear, for it is "as to Christ." "Singleness of heart" whilst it relates to the master, relates primarily to Christ. Harsh as it may seem, it has yet to be said that God's sovereignty relates even to a man's being in slavery, and there he serves the Lord.

6:6. This verse shows that the obedience is not to be mere servility or toadying. It must have noble character about it, not seeking the *earthly* master's favour as such but being the slaves *of Christ*. "Doing the will of God from the heart (soul)" is a statement which means one is not forced but gladly does God's will in this matter, ie. obeys the master, witnessing to his living faith.

6:7. The spontaneous rendering of service with a goodwill has the Lord primarily in view, and that is the criterion for all obedience and service, ie. it is to the Lord.

6:8. None needed encouragement more than slaves, yet inane cheerfulness accomplishes nothing. The slave is doing everything “unto the Lord”, and so he will be rewarded for it by the Lord. A free person will have no greater reward for what he does in his freedom. We might note here that *work as* such is often thought more in terms of the *curse* than of the natural order of the universe. Work is good for the soul of man. He *must* work as this is of the functional order of things. To do it graciously; indeed to love it will have its own reward, both here and after, cf. 2 Cor. 5:10.

6:9. Christian masters are to take exactly the same view of their relationships with slaves, as slaves with them, ie. doing all “as unto the Lord” with “a goodwill” and expecting rewards from the Lord, or judgment where they fail. As the wife is to obey the husband who loves her, so the servant is to be able to expect good treatment by his master. “Forbearing threatening” reminds us that few make good masters, for authority is not a thing easy to handle. The *master*, however, has a *Master*, and it is to Him he stands or falls. He has no respect to position, since all are alike to Him. If the servant is to serve with fear and trembling because of *the* Master, no less must the earthly master treat his servant well. We might add that such labour so graciously done for the master, with a high view of labour, should also receive due appreciation, ie. of the dignity of work. From this whole passage we cannot escape the fact that Christ is immensely interested in all that we do, whether employed or employers. It gives the whole matter of vocation a high standing and dignity as well as functional usefulness.

The Christian Warfare 6:10-20

Note: The Epistle has shown us our oneness in Christ, the essential unity of the Body, and the way of going about that unity, especially in the rejection and defeat of darkness, as being and living in light. It relates

to the corporate unity of husband and wife, children and parents, slaves and masters. All provide an impregnable fortress against the Evil One, and his cohorts. The following passage shows that this Body is not left “well alone” by Satan, but constantly comes under his onslaughts. This is why we must be equipped against him. In 4:27 and context it was shown that entrance could be given to the evil one. Now as a fellowship they must not only defend themselves against Satan but engage and defeat him.

6:10. “Finally”, ie. the whole matter of Christian membership of the church and one another, with its demands to be consistent with one’s calling all demand great power and stability. “Be strong” is better translated with a view to the passive, ie. “be strengthened”, but note

(a) one cannot strengthen oneself,

(b) one has to be strengthened, since the very word is in the imperative.

This accords with such statements as “be filled with the Spirit” - one submits to such action which springs from God. Also it must be *in Christ* (Phil. 4:13) and, here, *in the Lord*, because it is “in the might of the strength of Him.” Of course Christ with His mighty exaltation, authority and actual power can make anyone strong, and powerful (cf. John 15:1-5).

6:11. The battle is unremitting, the enemy is ruthless; his devices are many. Is there any armour that can withstand against him? The answer is, “Yes”. It is the armour of God. Isaiah 59:17 must have been in mind when Paul spoke. However, it is the armour the believer may wear. In another place Paul says “We are not unaware of Satan’s devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). The venom of the Evil One is shown in passages such as John 10:10, 2 Cor. 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8, Rev. 12:10, etc. In Ephes. 4.14 we read of “cunning craftiness.” The soul of man, and even more of the believer is that against which Satan pits his hatred. It must be held at all costs.

The actual composition of the armour will be shown, but it must be strong to resist Satan.

6:12. “We wrestle” - that much we know. It is not against “flesh and blood”, ie. human beings. We would know the devices in that case. The enemy is more subtle, more powerful; beyond our natural power. We do wrestle with him, with them. They are these great princes and lords, of whom the New Testament often speaks (e.g. Romans 8:38, I Cor. 2:8, Col. 1:13, etc.). The battle is spiritual, it is in the heavenly places. The very rulers of the world of which Satan is Chief, are those with whom we have to contend. These are hosts - myriads. As we observed, their warfare is unremitting.

6:13. “Therefore take the whole armour of God”. This is the second injunction. It insists on every part of the armour, without which one is vulnerable. Christ is already conqueror by the Cross and resurrection (I Cor. 15:55-56, Heb. 2:14-15, John 12:31, 16:11, etc.), so that His might will make one proof against the Evil One. “The evil day” is in one sense always coming; evil will make a time to pit itself furiously (cf. Rev. 12:12) and certain passages in Scripture which refer to the “last times” refer to a quickening of the bestial forces of evil and calamity (e.g. Mark 13:4-23, 2 Thess. 2:3). However, each day can be such an evil day. One is to battle and not be defeated; to win, and yet to stand, still prepared for further battle.

6:14. The parts of the armour are now designated.

(i) *Loins girded with truth.* We have seen the part that truth plays in the life of the church and its members, in this Epistle. Psalm 51:6 speaks of “truth in the inward parts”. Without truth one is open to assaults because of an impure conscience. The *girdle* was worn about the loins before the armour was worn. It tightened up one, as in Luke 12:35, 1 Peter 1:13, and Isaiah 11:5 shows the

integrity that one has in truth and righteousness. In practice we might say, “Be truthful and Satan will be baffled.”

(ii) *The breastplate of righteousness.* Again we are referred to Isaiah 59:17 (cf. 2 Cor. 6:7). It surely refers to practical righteousness of life rather than simply justification, on which, however, it depends. Righteousness is also unassailable by evil. Romans 6:17f tells us where righteousness leads us, and where unrighteousness lands us.

6:15. (iii) *“Feet shod with the equipment of the gospel of peace.”* If the feet are not shod warfare and living is impossible. The gospel of peace is what makes a man impregnable. He is right with God - who shall accuse. The peace of God keeps his mind because he is at peace with God (Rom. 5:1, Phi. 4:6). Yet whilst he cannot be moved because of this, he is so identified with the Gospel that he must also declare it (e.g. Romans 10:15, Isa. 52:7). It is best to think of both elements being involved. If one brings good news one is in fact fighting positively, and not simply, defensively. Note just how it is the gospel of peace - the conscience is at rest because its guilt is destroyed. Man is at peace with God. Man receives peace from God (John 16:33).

6:16. (iv) *“The shield of faith.”* The great shield or “scutum” was of sufficient length to cover the body, even with its armour. *Faith* here means faith in the victory of Christ- and the power of God. See 1 John 5:4, cf. 4:4, Col. 1:13, 2:14-15. Heb. 2: 14-15, where Satan is defeated. However his darts of scorn and accusation are deadly if they lodge. See Rev. 12:10, Romans 8:33, where accusations are designed to destroy. Faith quenches accusation, as the shield the flaming wounding darts. Note that

the Evil One is viciously out to destroy.

6:17. (v) “*The helmet of salvation*”. Also Isaiah 59:17 for the head is vulnerable, and needs protection. Receiving salvation, and depending upon its completed work for us make us invulnerable against evil, for we are secure. 1 Thess. ~:8 which speaks of “the hope of salvation” also gives it a future look. What we will be assures us of what we are now, and we are secure against Satan’s accusation that “we will never make it.”

(vi) “*The sword of the Spirit*.” This is defensive and more. God’s Word is deadly to the enemy. Hence Christ is depicted in the Book of the Revelation as having a sword going out of His mouth (1:16, 19:15) whilst the sword’s cutting power is shown in Hebrews 4:12. Isaiah 11:4 may be the origin of the phrase “sword of the Spirit” which equals “breath of His mouth” when placed with the revelation 19:15 statement. See also 2 Thess. 2:8, remembering that “breath” and “Spirit” are the same word. In the wilderness Christ aimed deadly blows at the enemy, when, under the Spirit He quoted Scripture and defeated Satan. It is to be noted that the sword is the Spirit’s. Yet we are to take it, and use it, for it is powerful (see Ephes. 3:5, 2 Tim. 3:16, Heb. 3:7, 9:8, 10:15, 1 Peter 1:11, etc.)

6:18. We are inclined to speak of *prayer as* the next of the weapons. Or it could be seen that the armour is girded in order to accomplish the warfare of prayer, for it is prayer that wins the victories in battle with the enemies. Anyone is to be *praying* at all times. Four times the word “all” is used in this verse. Note, too, the mention of the Spirit. This is the concluding reference but He has been much mentioned. Now in the realms of prayer the minis-try has to be in the Spirit, rather, than, perhaps in Christ. He is the Spirit of prayer

and worship, and His intimate ministry within the believer is in no doubt, as Romans 8:26-27 shows. See also John 4:23f., Phil. 3:3, Jude 20, etc. The use of the imperative shows that to pray is not an impulse that comes from time to time but an exercise that has to be practiced. In this great battle the Spirit is there to help the several members pray in the context of, and for the entire body - “all saints.” So the battle rages, and so prayer is an indispensable part of it.

6:19. Paul, as in other places (Col. 4:3, 1 Thess. 5:25, 2 Thess. 3:1, etc.) seeks prayer for himself. He knows both its power and necessity. He knew the constant barrage of hostility that meets one who preaches the Gospel, and this can be seen in the book of the Acts, as also in various accounts in his epistles. It is not that he seeks human bravery, but the boldness that is of the very nature of the Gospel. The second thing is that the Gospel is a “mystery” (see 3:3f, 3:9, etc.) and he needs the power to bring through such a revelation of God (cf. Acts 1:8, 1 Cor. 2:5, 1 Thess. 1:5, etc). That Paul covets the fellowship of prayer with his brethren is proof of his understanding of the essential unity of the body, and his own personal need of it. Paul cannot be called a “loner” on any score.

6:20. Paul continues his prayer for boldness, and points out his situation - an imprisonment. Many another might have quailed even at the prospect of being bold in the Gospel within a prison!

Paul’s Conclusion 6:21-24

6:21-22. Whatever the letter may be - a single one, or a circular one, it has with it a courier from Paul -Tychicus. Acts 20:4, cf. 21:29, Titus 3:12, 2 Tim. 4:12 show that this person was one who had travelled with Paul, and who had done courier service in other situations. He is the man for the job. He is a “beloved

brother” and a “faithful minister (servant) in the Lord.” Paul has known his personal fellowship and aid. It seems that he served Paul well in his last days. Such a person would bring through warm personal news of the beloved apostle. Paul’s purpose in sending him is that he may encourage or comfort the readers of this epistle.

6:23-24. The final greeting ought not to be taken to be conventional. The prayer for “peace” is no light prayer, nor for “love with faith” a cliché. *Faith*, here, means faithfulness. Gal. 5:6 speaks of “faith working through love”. It is enough to see that love comes when faith has seen and believed the work of God in Christ, and love keeps on needing faith. In the light of his great treatise on the church and its *function* in history, as well as its defence against evil we can see the point of the prayer.

6:24. This verse speaks of loving Christ with love undying. There is not a lot spoken of in the New Testament about loving Christ, as such. Generally it is Christ’s love which grips us (2 Cor. 5:14-15, Gal. 2:20, cf. Ephes. 5:2) but the pattern of the New Testament is that “we love because He first loved us”. So in 1 Cor. 16:22 anathema is called down upon those who do not love the Lord. 2 Cor. 11:1-4 shows the initial love of the believer is as a bride for her husband. It can, however, be lost. One must remain aware of His love and continue to love Him. In such a case grace be to that one. Grace is never separated from the *Person* and *action* of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Love undying” has the thought of love that is incorruptible, immortal, persistent, of the very quality of heaven. Loving is an action. The verb demands that the process continue, without cessation. This, perhaps, is the most valuable key in understanding the whole matter and substance of the Epistle.