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P.O. Box 6611 Tyler, TX 75711-6611 (903) 939-1201

Toll free: 1(877) 326-7729 www.BibleTeachingResources.org

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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

Volume XV (January–June)

Daily Devotional

by Don and Pearl Anderson

P.O. Box 6611
Tyler, Texas 75711-6611
(903) 939-1201 or
Toll-free 1-877-326-7729

www.BibleTeachingResources.org

Scripture quotations are noted within the text.

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Bible Teaching Resources

by Don Anderson Ministries

What Do We Do?

Formed in 1972 as a non-profit organization, Bible Teaching Resources is dedicated to excellence in Bible exposition and the provision of tools for teaching the Word. Our mission is: To glorify God through a national ministry that will continue to change lives based on the belief that "Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11b).

Communicating God's Word accurately and clearly is our primary focus. Teaching the Word by means of technology is providing a larger platform. Classes are being taught weekly on the internet at OnePlace.com and six days a week in the Philippines by way of radio. Classes are also being taught in Texas cities by videoconference. Webcasting and camcording will be used in the days ahead.

Because our goal is to convey the Good News of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, the BTR media division produces biblically-based messages on CD and in Mp3 format. Marriage videos and CD series are also available. BTR's team also distributes Don's many books. These resources for teaching, study, and spiritual enrichment are listed in our media catalog and are available at nominal cost from our office. Orders may also be placed online at www.BibleTeachingResources. org. A quarterly magazine, *The Grapevine*, and a daily devotional, *A Great While Before Day* (distributed semi-annually), are sent without cost to anyone who requests to be on our mailing list. To receive a personal weekly email from Don and Pearl, contact BTR at dam@bibleteachingresources.org. Hundreds of copies of Don's series, *God's Invitation: How to Become a Christian*, have been given out in classes or mailed from the office through the years. There is never a charge for this timely series and our constant prayer is that it will be used to bring others into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

he gospel writer Mark records that Jesus "rising up a great while before day ... went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (1:35 KJV) Whenever and wherever you spend your time with the Father each day, we hope that these devotional verses and thoughts will be encouraging. Unless otherwise noted, New Testament verses are taken from Don Anderson's translation from the original text.

We will continue our journey through the book of Colossians, study the book of Ephesians, and then finish with the book of Philemon.

JANUARY

January 1—Seeking the Things Above (Colossians 3:1)

Colossians 3:1: "Since, therefore, you were raised with Christ, be seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

<u>Verse 1</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides."

We are going to follow five commands through these next eleven verses.

Command #1 (verse 1): Be seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Command #2 (verse 2): Be setting your mind upon things above, not the things on the earth.

Command #3 (verse 5): Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.

Command #4 (verse 8): Put away also all these things.

Command #5 (verse 9): Stop lying to one another.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Since believers have not only died with Christ but have also been raised with Christ ... they should set their hearts on things above. That is, believers' lives should be dominated by the pattern of heaven, bringing heavenly direction to their earthly duties."

"Since we were raised with Christ," there are <u>two</u> things we should be doing. We see the first in this verse:

Command #1: Be seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:33 (NASB): "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

As Christians, we should be concentrating on "things above" instead of seeking fame, wealth, popularity and honor. In essence, we should focus on communion by thinking about heaven and home.

Billy Graham in his book, *Nearing Home*, says: "While growing old has been the greatest surprise of my life, the greatest triumph is yet to come, experiencing victory over death that will usher me into the eternal presence of my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. I often wonder if God in His sovereignty allows the eyesight of the aged to cast a dim view of the here and now so that we may focus our spiritual eyes on the ever after."

The command, "be seeking the things above," is a present imperative. This should be done daily in our lives.

Eadie says: "Their union with Him will lead their thoughts to Him. Whatever the character of the things to be sought may be, they are to be found with Christ."

Ironside says: "Occupation, then, with Christ risen in the energy of the Holy Spirit, is the power for holiness."

MacArthur says: "Because of their union with Christ, believers spiritually entered His death and Resurrection at the moment of their conversion and have been and are now alive in Him so that they understand spiritual truth, realities, blessings, and the will of God."

Spurgeon says: "What a magnet to draw us towards heaven should this fact be—that Christ sitteth at God's right hand."

The Message beautifully paraphrases Psalm 46:10: "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything."

Gary L. Thomas in *The Glorious Pursuit* says: "An undisciplined inner life—one that is attached to the world even as it seeks to fight it—is misery defined. Some of us live spiritually like a person on a diet who has a freezer full of Häagen-Dazs ice cream. If you're serious about the diet, you'll get the ice cream out of the house, right? Otherwise, you'll simply make yourself miserable. We halfheartedly want to follow God and live holy lives, all the while surrounding ourselves with temptation."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "The Heavenly Vision (Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus)": "O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There's a light for a look at the Savior, And life more abundant and free! Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."

January 2—Setting Your Mind on Things Above (Colossians 3:2)

Colossians 3:2: "Be setting your mind upon things above, not the things on the earth."

<u>Verse 2</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective."

"Since we were raised with Christ," there are <u>two</u> things we should be doing. In verse 1, we were commanded the first and now Paul states the second:

Command #1: Be seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Command #2: Be setting your mind upon things above, not the things of the earth.

Romans 13:14: "But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires."

We have a positive and negative emphasis in this verse. Positively, "be setting our minds upon things above," but negatively, "not on the things of the earth."

The only way to seek heaven is to think heaven.

Have you made Christ the Lord of your mind? Are you concerned about your thought-life?

Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Eadie says: "The sure safeguard against seeking things below, is not to set the mind upon them."

MacArthur says: "Such heavenly values dominating the mind produce godly behavior. Sin will be conquered and humility, a sacrificial spirit, and assurance will result."

As a present imperative, this is a daily discipline.

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Life on the Highest Plane*, asks: "Is it not conceivable that God would have us become acclimated to our eternal home in heaven with Christ during our transient stay on earth?"

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of "The Heavenly Vision (Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus)"?: "Through death into life everlasting He passed, and we follow Him there. Over us sin no more hath dominion, For more than conquirors we are! Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."

January 3—Hidden With Christ (Colossians 3:3)

Colossians 3:3: "For you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God."

<u>Verse 3</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God."

Think of the tremendous truth in these first three verses:

- 1. We died with Christ.
- 2. We were raised with Christ
- 3. Our life has been hidden with Christ in God.

"And your life has been hidden with Christ in God." The way to life abundant is through death. What a glorious sense of security this brings to us!

John Newton expresses it well in "Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord": "Rejoice, believer, in the Lord, who makes your cause his own; the hope that is founded on his work shall ne'er be overthrown. Though many foes beset your road, and feeble is your arm, your life is hid with Christ in God beyond the reach of harm."

MacArthur says: "'Hidden with Christ in God.' This rich expression has a threefold meaning: (1) believers have a common spiritual life with the Father and Son; (2) the world cannot understand the full import of the believer's new life; and (3) believers are eternally secure, protected from all spiritual enemies, and with access to all God's blessings."

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: "The true test of a saint's life is not successfulness but faithfulness on the human level of life. We tend to set up success in Christian work as our purpose, but our purpose should be to display the glory of God in human life, to live a life "hidden with Christ in God" in our everyday human conditions (Colossians 3:3). Our human relationships are the very conditions in which the ideal life of God should be exhibited."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "The Heavenly Vision (Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus)": "His Word shall not fail you, He promised; Believe Him, and all will be well. Then go to a world that is dying, His perfect salvation to tell! Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."

January 4—Christ, Who Is Our Life (Colossians 3:4)

Colossians 3:4: "Whenever Christ, who is our life, is made visible, then also you with Him shall be made visible in glory."

<u>Verse 4</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "But when He will appear at the Rapture, believers will appear with Him and will be glorified. As John put it, 'We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' So Paul added a new direction to the believers' focus of attention: they should look upward to Christ's reign over them in heaven and also forward to His return for them in the clouds."

To the apostle Paul, Jesus Christ was more than the giver of life. He was and is life itself.

The life of the vine is in the branch. As we are abiding in the Father, so the life of Jesus Christ is flowing through us.

Reading a Christmas letter from the holiday season made me chuckle.

The hymn writer says: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it ..."

I respond: "Pruned to prosper, Lord, I need it!"

Yesterday morning, we read over these wonderful truths:

- 1. We died with Christ.
- 2. We were raised with Christ

3. Our life has been hidden with Christ in God.

Now, we have the capstone:

4. Christ is our life.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "You are nearer home than you thought you were, and every moment you are getting nearer still."

Let's join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of "When We See Christ": "Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear, We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair; But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away, All tears forever over in God's eternal day. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race till we see Christ."

January 5—Cleansing From My Sin (Colossians 3:5-6)

Colossians 3:5: "Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication (immorality), impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Colossians 3:6: "Because of which things there is coming the wrath of God."

<u>Verse 5</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Put to death ... whatever belongs to your earthly nature."

We had the first two of our five commands in this passage in verses 1 and 2:

Command #1: Be seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Command #2: Be setting your mind upon things above, not the things of the earth.

In this verse, we have our third command:

Command #3: Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.

Paul lists <u>five</u> of these: (1) fornication (immorality), (2) impurity, (3) passion, (4) evil desire, and (5) covetousness, which is idolatry.

Since we are seeking and thinking upon things above, we need to: "put to death [our] members which are upon the earth."

Our bodies can be instruments of sin or temples of the Holy Spirit. Each of the "members" listed is an outgrowth of *self-centeredness*. They are indulged for *self-gratification*.

While fornication is the outward act, impurity regards the hidden thoughts of the mind. Passion is love based on the physical, lust rather than love. Evil desires are lustful intentions. Finally, covetousness is the desire to have something that belongs to someone else. That desire is so strong that it actually becomes an idol, the desire for more.

Scripture warns us to flee, stand, and not conform.

MacArthur says: "Because it places selfish desire above obedience to God, greed

amounts to idolatry. Covetousness is the root cause of all sin."

<u>Verse 6</u>: In this verse, Paul states the reason for putting your members to death: "because of which things there is coming the wrath of God."

Warren W. Wiersbe in *The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2* quotes A.W. Tozer: "But God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings we dare not so trifle with our eternal future."

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Rivers of Living Water*, said: "To master my will He had to melt my heart." She further says: "Surrender is a crisis that develops into a process."

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: "Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your own independence."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "When We See Christ": "Sometimes the sky looks dark with not a ray of light, We're tossed and driven on, no human help in sight; But there is One in heav'n who knows our deepest care, Let Jesus solve your problem just go to Him in pray'r. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race till we see Christ."

January 6—Create In Me A Pure Heart (Colossians 3:7)

Colossians 3:7: "In which things also you once ordered your behavior when you were living in them."

<u>Verse 7</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Though the Colossian Christians used to walk [live] in these evil ways, before they came to know Christ, Paul commanded that they do so no more."

Galatians 5:25: "If we are living by the Spirit, let us also order our steps by the Spirit."

When your life has been hidden with Christ in God, you are thinking about things above, not the things on earth.

Peter shares about this change in life in 1 Peter 4:3: "For adequate has been the time that is now past to have accomplished what the Gentiles (pagans, unsaved) desire to do, living in sexual excesses, in desires, in drunkenness, in carousings, in drinking parties and in unlawful idolatries."

In 1 John 2:15, John says: "Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation;

the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "What a strange medley are we of the diabolical and the divine, the sinful and the heavenly, so sadly wedded to the earth, and yet so gloriously born from heaven."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "When We See Christ"?: "Life's day will soon be o'er, all storms forever past, We'll cross the great divide, to glory, safe at last; We'll share the joys of heav'n a harp, a home, a crown, The tempter will be banished, we'll lay our burden down. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ; One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase, So bravely run the race till we see Christ."

January 7—Wash Me & I Will Be Whiter than Snow (Colossians 3:8)

Colossians 3:8: "But now put away also all these things: anger, wrath, wickedness, evil speaking, abusive language out of your mouth."

<u>Verse 8</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk."

In this verse, we have the <u>fourth</u> command of the <u>five</u> in this passage:

Command #1: Be seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Command #2: Be setting your mind upon things above, not the things on the earth.

Command #3: Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.

Command #4: Put away also all these things.

In verse 5, the command was "put to death," but we are to "put away" in this verse. Paul lists <u>five</u> things to "put away" just as he listed <u>five</u> things to "put to death."

"But now put away." The apostle describes this putting away the same way you would put away a suite of clothes that were worn out.

The list in this verse regards speech—out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. This list harms others while the list in verse 5 harms the sinner.

Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, to the end that you know how you ought to answer everyone."

In *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success* by John Wooden & Jay Carty, they share Coach Wooden's prayer:

Almighty God and Heavenly Father, show me if selfish ambition is getting in the way of our relationship and help me to set noble goals that will be pleasing in Your sight and bring glory to You.

Thank You.

Gary L. Thomas in his book, Thirsting for God, says:

Most of us want to be rid of our longstanding sins in a day. We think that by praying, "I'll never do it again!" we can somehow shout ourselves out of years of habitual failure. True holiness focuses on drawing near to God. As the love of God fills our hearts, the desire for sin is cut off and withers. But this is a process, not an overnight experience. Stress, confusion, weariness ... any number of things can resurrect old sinful habits. That is why we must continually apply ourselves anew to loving God.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "If all men's sins were divided into two bundles, half of them would be sins of the tongue."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "Whiter Than Snow": "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole; I want Thee forever to live in my soul. Break down ev'ry idol, cast out ev'ry foe; Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow. Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

January 8—Truth in the Inner Parts (Colossians 3:9)

Colossians 3:9: "Stop lying to one another, seeing you have put off the old man with his practices."

<u>Verse 9</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire."

This is the fifth and final command we are considering in this passage:

Command #5: Stop lying to one another.

This is a negative imperative in the present tense.

"Stop lying to one another, seeing you have put off the old man with his practices." "The old man" refers to what we were before Christ came in. "The new man" is what we are now that Christ is living in us.

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let everyone be speaking the truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another."

Barclay says: "There are three things we should automatically ask ourselves about what we say: (1) Is it true? (2) Is it necessary? and (3) Is it kind?"

Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* says: "The sovereign in the old sphere is 'the old man.' The very essence of the flesh is self-will in the form of this God-resisting, God-rejecting nature. The heart of the flesh is the deep-dyed traitor which hates everything that God loves and loves everything that God hates."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 2 and 3 of "Whiter Than Snow": "Lord Jesus, look down from Thy throne in the skies,

And help me to make a complete sacrifice. I give up myself, and whatever I know, Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Lord Jesus, for this I most humbly entreat, I wait, blessèd Lord, at Thy crucified feet. By faith, for my cleansing, I see Thy blood flow, Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow. Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

January 9—Dressed In His Righteousness (Colossians 3:10)

Colossians 3:10: "And having clothed yourselves with the new man who is being renewed in knowledge according to the pattern likeness of the One who created him."

<u>Verse 10</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it."

We "put off the old man" in the previous verse and put on "the new man" in this verse.

Job 19:14 (KJV): "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment *was* as a robe and a diadem."

Isaiah 61:10 (KJV): "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

"Who is being renewed in knowledge." The more we know of our Savior, the more we desire to know more of Him.

Philippians 3:10: "That I might come to know Him (experientially, personally), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

"According to the pattern likeness of the One who created Him." John says in 1 John 3:2: "Beloved ones, now we are the children of God, and not yet has it been made visible what we shall be. We are knowing that, whenever He is made visible, like ones to Him we shall be, because we shall see Him just as He is."

Ruth Paxson in Life on the Highest Plane says:

Christ Jesus was made like us that we might be made like Him. In the incarnation there was the union of Deity and humanity that in regeneration there might be the union of humanity with Deity. When the Holy Spirit begat in the believer a new nature He opened the door to a living organic union between Christ and the Christian which will exist through the ages upon ages to come. Christ and the Christian are eternally one. The exalted Christ lives now to bestow upon us in all of it fullness His own triumphant, joyous, holy life.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "I live in Jesus, on Jesus, with Jesus, and soon hope to be perfectly conformed to his likeness."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "Whiter Than Snow"?: "Lord Jesus, Thou seest I patiently wait, Come now, and within me a new heart create; To those who have sought Thee, Thou never saidst no, Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow. Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

January 10—Christ Is All & In All (Colossians 3:11)

Colossians 3:11: "Where there cannot be Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all and in all."

<u>Verse 11</u>: Christ <u>is</u> all and <u>in</u> all. He meets all of my needs no matter what they are. He is in all that I do.

In this verse, we have segregation or the Savior—one or the other, but never both.

Charles Wesley said: "Thou oh Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find."

Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Christ crosses all of the barriers:

- 1. Racial—Greek or Jew
- 2. Religious—circumcision or uncircumcision
- 3. Cultural—barbarian or Scythian
- 4. Social—slave or freeman

Christ is all that matters.

In the hymn, "All I Need," by Charles P. Jones, we read these words:

JESUS CHRIST IS MADE TO ME,
ALL I NEED, ALL I NEED,
HE ALONE IS ALL MY PLEA,
HE IS ALL I NEED.
LIVING WATER, BREAD OF LIFE.
WHITE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
CHRIST BE ALL FOR US.
WE OUGHT TO BE ALL FOR HIM.

John Hunter said: "All that he is for all that I need,' is the lesson we learned in this verse."

In his book, *Sacred Thirst*, M. Craig Barnes said: "In Christ, there is no longer a veiled distinction between sacred and secular. When, by the Holy Spirit, we see the risen Jesus in our midst, it's all sacred."

Blind hymnwriter, Fanny Crosby, said: "When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 5 of "Whiter Than Snow": "The blessing by faith, I receive from above; O glory! my soul is made perfect in love; My prayer has prevailed, and this moment I know, The blood is applied, I am whiter than snow. Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow. The blood is applied; I am whiter than snow."

January 11—A New Wardrobe (Colossians 3:12)

Colossians 3:12: "Put on, therefore, as chosen ones of God, saints and beloved ones: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience."

<u>Verse 12</u>: In this verse, Paul commands us to "put on" these new garments. Once we have removed the old garments, we should put on the new ones.

In the previous passage, the apostle pointed out <u>eleven</u> garments to take off. In this new passage, we discover <u>eight</u> new garments that have been provided so we may be properly attired as Christians.

The garments described are a picture of Jesus Christ. They are the same characteristics in 1 Corinthians 13 when Paul describes God's love.

Romans 13:14: "But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires."

Before Paul gives the garments to be put on, he describes Christians in these three ways:

- 1. Chosen ones of God. 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that have become [God's own] possession, in order that you might proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."
- 2. Saints. Colossians 1:12: "... qualified you for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light."
- 3. Beloved ones. Colossians 1:7: "Even as you learned from Epaphras, the beloved, our fellow bond-slave, who is faithful on your behalf as a servant of Christ."

Now, Paul points out the clothing that has been provided in our Savior. It is never out of style and can be worn any time, for any occasion. It will always be the right thing to wear.

In this verse, the apostle notes five of the eight articles of clothing:

1. A heart of compassion.

This could be translated "a heart of pity." It is to be moved to the depths of one's being over the needs of others, concern to the point of involvement. "A heart of compassion" is constructively involved in the lives of others.

2. Kindness.

This characteristic is also described of agape love in 1 Corinthians 13. Ephesians 4:32: "And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave you." This person is as concerned about his neighbor's welfare as about his own. He is learning to be a servant, just as Jesus taught by wash-

ing the feet of His disciples before going to the cross.

This word "kindness" is also a fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22–23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things as these there is no law."

3. Humility.

The false teachers were endeavoring to copy humility. Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, The Glorious Pursuit, says:

Humility is the disposition that makes us available to be blessed by God. The Psalms seem obsessed with God's eagerness to reach out to the humble: God saves the humble, guides the humble, sustains the humble, and even crowns the humble. Notice that everything flows from God to the humble servant."

Pride seeks to reverse this. Pride is self-reliance and self-dependence. Arrogance seeks to obligate God instead of receive from Him.

4. Meekness.

This is the willingness to suffer injury rather than to inflict it. It does not convey the idea of weakness. This characteristic is also listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. Meekness is "strength under control." A great illustration is when Abraham let Lot choose the well-watered plains of Jordan.

5. Patience.

Colossians 1:11: "Equipped with all power, according to His glorious strength, unto every kind of patience and steadfastness with joy." It is the virtue best developed in the midst of problems, pressures and trials that come our way. Patience is another manifestation of the fruit of the Sprit in our lives.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of that beautiful little prayer chorus, "Let the Beauty of Jesus": "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All His wonderful passion and purity; Oh, Thou Spirit divine, All my nature refine Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

January 12—Quick to Forgive (Colossians 3:13)

Colossians 3:13: "Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone, even as also the Lord forgave you, in the same manner also you forgive."

<u>Verse 13</u>: In the previous verse, we were commanded to "put on." In this verse, we are to abide by the rules, to behave in a fair or honorable way.

Paul gives us two more articles of clothing:

6. Bearing with one another.

This is the ability to accept others and love them even when we disagree with them. This is exemplified by the saying: "Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet." Ruth Graham requested this inscribed upon her tombstone: "End of Construction. Thank you for your patience."

7. Forgiving one another.

This means forgiving without holding a grudge afterwards. This garment is further discussed in the next statement: "If anyone should have a complaint against anyone, even as also the Lord forgave you, in the same manner also you forgive."

Our forgiveness should be the same kind of forgiveness as the Savior's. He not only canceled our debt, but blotted it out as though it had never been.

The first words of our Savior on Calvary's cross are the most significant at this point. He was beaten, spit upon, nails driven through His flesh, and His body suspended between heaven and earth. In Luke 23:34 (KJV): "Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Psalm 119:165 (KJV): "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

Corrie ten Boom said: "Those who were able to forgive their enemies were able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that."

Gary L. Thomas in *Thirsting for God* said: "When I truly understand how much sin affects so much of what I do, when I drink deeply of God's grace and mercy, when I look on the holy and perfect Son of God and see what true glory and character excellence really is, what ledge can I stand on to judge? There is none."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of that prayer chorus, "Let the Beauty of Jesus"?: "Let the fruit of the Spirit be seen in me, Grant me grace all sufficient that I may be True and faithful each day, Every step of the way, Pointing souls to the Saviour on Calvary."

January 13—Bond of Completeness (Colossians 3:14)

Colossians 3:14: "And upon all these put on love, which is the bond of completeness."

<u>Verse 14</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it."

In this verse, Paul gives the final, eighth article of clothing:

8. Love.

This garment *holds* everything else together, *covers* all of the other garments, and *shows* the One that people see. This love is produced by the Spirit of God in our lives. It is the oil which keeps all of the pieces of machinery running smoothly.

Notice, this is accomplished by *love*, not *law* or *knowledge* or *philosophy*. Bertrand Russell, an avid agnostic, once made this interesting statement:

There are certain things that our age needs ... the root of the matter is a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention

it for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean, please forgive me for mentioning it—is love, Christian love or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty.

Our living union with Jesus Christ is the only way these garments can be "put on" in our lives. As we're abiding in Him, His love is flowing through us. These garments represent the manifestation of a life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

In the remaining verses of the passage, Paul will continually use the word, "all." It is seen in verses 14, 16 and 17:

- 1. "And upon all these put on love"—verse 14.
- 2. "In all wisdom"—verse 16.
- 3. "And all whatever you do in word or deed"—verse 17.
- 4. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"—verse 17.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Christ loved you when he died; he will love you when you die."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "More Love To Thee": "More love to Thee, O Christ, More love to Thee! Hear Thou the pray'r I make On bended knee; This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee; More love to Thee, More love to Thee!"

January 14—The Peace of Christ (Colossians 3:15)

Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of Christ be ruling in your hearts, into which also you were called in one body; and keep on being thankful."

<u>Verse 15</u>: In our verse, Paul commands the Colossians (and us) to "let the peace of Christ be ruling in your hearts."

John 14:27 (KJV): "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Paul encourages us to "let the peace of Christ" act as an umpire in our hearts. It is the peace of God that acts upon our hearts when we know we have made the right decision in the will of God.

Isaiah 32:17 (KJV): "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

"Into which also you were called in one body." The "one body" Paul references is the church of Jesus Christ, of which the Savior is the head. Those who know Christ are members of that body.

"And keep on being thankful." Learning to be thankful is the secret to a joyful Christian experience. Thankfulness maintains our peace. It is also exemplifies excellent public relations.

In her book, A Place of Healing, Joni Eareckson Tada said:

Just two years later, on another Christmas, I found the very peace and contentment that had eluded me. I also found joy, simply because I had embraced His will for my life.

And what is His will?

That you and I be in the best position, the best place, the timeliest circumstance in which God can be glorified the most.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "More Love To Thee": "Once earthly joy I craved, Sought peace and rest; Now Thee alone I seek, Give what is best; This all my pray'r shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee; More love to Thee, More love to Thee!"

January 15—The Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16)

Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ be at home (dwell) in you abundantly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing each other with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God."

<u>Verse 16</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Let the Word of Christ—The Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!"

We should "let the word of Christ be at home" in us. As growing Christians, our responsibility is to (1) heed, (2) handle, (3) hide, and (4) hold forth the word of God in our lives.

As we are submissive to His Spirit and obedient to His word, we continue to grow more Christlike.

Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* says: "Coldness of heart, callousness of conscience, weakness of will, feebleness of testimony, joylessness in worship, fruitlessness in service, powerlessness in prayer all are traceable to just one thing—ignorance of and indifference to God's Word."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "More Love To Thee": "Then shall my latest breath Whisper Thy praise; This be the parting cry My heart shall raise; This still its pray'r shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee; More love to Thee, More love to Thee!"

January 16—Do All In the Name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17)

Colossians 3:17: "And all whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

<u>Verse 17</u>: This is the golden rule for Christians and all you do. In essence, it comes down to these <u>two</u> areas:

- 1. Word—your conversation.
- 2. Deed—your actions.

"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through

Him." All we do should be done as though we are in His presence, hearing and seeing everything going on.

Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks always concerning all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

This verse encompasses every area of our life, not just the sacred, but also the secular. Everything is spoken and acted in Jesus Christ. This summarizes what Paul spoke regarding the garments that should be characteristic of our lives as Christians.

"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." All of our words and actions should be with the remembrance that we are in vital union with Him. All should be done in (1) harmony with His will, (2) subjection to His authority, and (3) dependence upon His power.

Our lives should be so regulated that anything we say or do is controlled by the authority of Christ and concerned with glorifying Him through us.

MacArthur says: "Believers should so clothe themselves with Jesus Christ that when people look at them, they see Christ."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Do what the Lord bids you, where he bids you, as he bids you, as long as he bids you, and do it at once."

Corrie ten Boom said: "Obedience is easy when you know you are being guided by a God who never makes mistakes."

It is my prayer that as you live in vital union with the Living Word, you might have the experience of the written word dwelling in your heart and changing your life. Remember the key to a changed life is not what I try to do, but what He does in me.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 1 through 4 of one of my favorite Francis Havergal hymns, "Take My Life and Let It Be"?: "Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord to Thee; Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love, At the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice and let me sing Always, only, for my King, Always, only, for my King. Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages for Thee; Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I with-hold, Not a mite would I with-hold. Take my love, my God, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store; Take myself and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee, Ever, only all for Thee."

January 17—When Two Are On a Horse, One Rides In the Back (Colossians 3:18)

Colossians 3:18: "Wives, be submitting yourselves to your husbands, as it is fitting in the Lord."

<u>Verse 18</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master."

In this passage of Colossians, the Apostle Paul admonishes <u>six</u> different groups. God has designed the family to prepare the child for adult life. Let us accept

our Heavenly Father's design for our lives as good and learn well the lessons He desires to teach us in our family. Many in our culture take a very light view of the marriage relationship, yet this is in complete contrast to what the Bible says.

The <u>first</u> group addressed is "wives." Wives should "be submitting" themselves to their husbands. There are <u>three</u> ideas in the word submission:

- 1. Control.
- 2. Obedience.
- 3. Authority.

Someone has said: "The submissive spirit equals the freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority."

Submission is the visible manifestation of a Spirit-filled life. The husband and wife are co-partners in serving the King. They are fellow soldiers of the Cross. They are intimate allies.

This wifely submission should be "as it is fitting in the Lord." It is not a whole-sale abandonment of moral principle and personal conviction.

In When Life and Beliefs Collide, Carolyn Custis James says of the original creation of the woman:

Rather than explaining this to Adam, God used a simple object lesson to cause him to feel his aloneness. As God passed all the creatures before Adam to see what he would name them, a consistent pattern emerged. Every creature had its partner, another creature who corresponded—all of them except Adam. Aloneness settled over him. It was a beautiful first enactment of the words Jesus would speak millennia later: "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt.6:8). Already God had planned what he would do. And so while Adam slept, God took a rib from his body, fashioned it into a woman, and brought her back to his side. Then for the eighth time, the refrain sounded with greater resonance than ever, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31).

Women are responders. When they are served, their security is assured and their self-image is encouraged; this precedes submission.

Regarding the word submission, Gromacki says: "It does not imply personal inferiority or dictatorial rule."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "The Family of God": "You will notice we say brother and sister 'round here, It's because we're a fam'ly and these are so near; When one has a heartache, we all share the tears, And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear. Im so glad I'm a part of the fam'ly of God; I've been washed in the fountain, Cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I'm part of the fam'ly, the fam'ly of God."

January 18—Husbands Be Loving Your Wives (Colossians 3:19)

Colossians 3:19: "Husbands, be loving your wives, and do not have the habit of being bitter against them."

<u>Verse 19</u>: In our previous verse, Paul addressed the wives. In this verse, the apostle addresses the husbands, the <u>second</u> group. Remember, submission comes easy to wives when their husbands love them. Women respond by submission when men (1) assure their security, (2) minister to their self-image, and (3) model servanthood.

It is a loving leadership.

There is a positive and negative admonition in this verse. Positively, "be loving your wives," but negatively, "do not have the habit of being bitter against them."

Unresolved issues lead to a bitter spirit.

In speaking of the husband's responsibility in the marriage relationship, Peter says in 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, in like manner, be living with your wives according to knowledge...." When I follow this guidance, I recognize the need for love and security on the part of my wife. Therefore, I give it freely.

If I am loving my wife, I am living by the following four C's:

- 1. Care.
- 2. Communication.
- 3. Concern.
- 4. Consideration.

We have a plaque in our bedroom that says: "I'm together when we are together." I have a responsibility to my wife. I am to court her and make love to her just like the first of our marriage, and more as the years go by. We had our 62nd wedding anniversary in August. What a flood of memories and special occasions we have created over the years!

Paul emphasizes this negative admonition: "Do not have the habit of being bitter against them." Bitterness develops through (1) resentments that are not talked out or resolved, (2) jealousy, (3) an unforgiving spirit or (4) a failure to yield one's rights in the relationship.

If I am loving my wife, I am learning to move from *selfishness* to *sacrifice* and from *getting* to *giving*.

In The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2 compiled by Warren Wiersbe, Tozer says:

If the husband would get himself straightened out in his own mind and spirit and live with his wife according to knowledge and treat her with the chivalry that belongs to her as the weaker vessel, remembering that she is actually his sister in Christ, his prayers would be answered in spite of the devil and all of the other reasons that he gives.

A husband's spiritual problems do not lie in the Kremlin nor in the Vatican but in the heart of man himself—in his attitude and inability to resist the temptation to grumble and growl and dominate! Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "The Family of God": "From the door of an orph'nage to the house of the King, No longer an outcast, a new song I sing; From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong, I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong! I'm so glad I'm a part of the fam'ly of God; I've been washed in the fountain, Cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I'm part of the fam'ly, the fam'ly of God."

January 19—Children Be Obeying Your Parents (Colossians 3:20)

Colossians 3:20: "Children, be obeying your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord."

<u>Verse 20</u>: Now that Paul has spoken to the "wives" and "husbands," he addresses the <u>third</u> group, the "children." The responsibility of the wife is submission. For the husband, it is love. For children, it is obedience.

Please notice the mention of "all things," not just the things we think are OK. There is no picking and choosing.

Ephesians 6:1: "Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Thomas á Kempis said: "No man doth faithfully rule, but he that hath learned gladly to obey."

Hebrews 5:8 (NASB): "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."

Children must learn to obey their earthly father just as we learn to obey our heavenly Father.

The last phrase states the reason for this admonition: "This is well-pleasing in the Lord." What a powerful reason for being obedient! We tell the Lord we want to please Him and obedience is an expression of that opportunity. I can please the Lord as a child by being obedient to my parents.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Brother, you cannot expect God to listen to you if you will not listen to him; and when you ask of God, you must not imagine that he will give to you what you ask of him if you do not give to him what he asks of you."

He says further: "Those children who are doted upon by their parents are greatly to be pitied, for they are apt to be allowed to have their own way, and a youth's own way is sure to be a wrong one."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "Trust and Obey": "When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

January 20—Fathers, Do Not Be Irritating Your Children (Colossians 3:21)

Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, do not be irritating your children, in order that they may not lose heart (become discouraged)."

<u>Verse 21</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits."

This is the <u>fourth</u> group—Fathers. In the first <u>two</u> groups, we had the husband-wife relationship. In these <u>two</u> groups in verses 20 and 21, Paul focuses on the father-child relationship.

Fathers should be careful to not over-correct their children by constantly saying "do this and do that" or "don't do this and don't do that." Over-correction leads to discouragement. Recognition when improvement is made should be recognized by fathers. Commendation and correction go hand-in-hand.

When Paul writes to the Thessalonian Christians in 1 Thessalonian 2, he describes his ministry to the Thessalonians as that of a father. In those verses, we can discern a <u>three-fold</u> role of an effective father:

- 1. Encouraging his child.
- 2. Exhorting his child.
- 3. Serving as an Example to his child.

When these <u>three</u> ingredients are followed in my role as a father, I will not "be irritating" my child, but will submit him to a balanced discipline.

I believe love, patience, kindness, meekness, unselfishness and spiritual devotion will have a far better chance of revealing themselves in my child's life when they can be seen in my own.

The purpose given for not irritating your children is in the last of this verse: "in order that they may not lose heart (become discouraged)." It is easy to believe we are properly correcting our children at times when we are actually irritating our children by setting standards too high for them or expecting too much when they are already performing their best.

Colt McCoy & Brad McCoy with Mike Yorkey in their book, *Growing Up Colt*, list these <u>four</u> instructions for parenting:

- 1. Prepare your children for the path, not the path for your children.
- 2. Prepare your children to do their best.
- 3. Prepare your children to be leaders.
- 4. Prepare your children for open and closed doors.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Brethren, if you wish to give your children a blessing when you die, be a blessing to them while you live. If you would make your last words worth the hearing, let your whole life be worth the seeing."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "Trust and Obey"?: "Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, But His smile quickly drives it away; Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh nor a tear, Can abide

while we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

January 21—Servants With A Sincere Heart (Colossians 3:22)

Colossians 3:22: "Servants, be obeying in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord."

<u>Verse 22</u>: In this verse, Paul addresses our <u>fifth</u> group of this passage, servants. These instructions can be applied to the employee-employer relationship.

"Servants [employees], be obeying in all things." This is essentially the same message Paul directed to the children in verse 20: "Children, be obeying your parents." "Servants, be obeying ... your masters."

"According to the flesh" is added to address when I am not in the Spirit. There is no question of my obedience "in all things" in the Spirit.

Paul uses the negative and positive approach in this argument. Negatively, my obedience is "not with eye service as men pleasers," but positively, "with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord." "Eyeservice" is used when you are under close inspection or scrutiny by the boss, but behave differently the rest of the time. It makes a false show of working hard as well as a great pretense of diligence, but it is the dishonest service meant only to impress.

"With a sincere heart, fearing the Lord"—God pleasers. This involves an honest heart that recognizes God is the judge of our performance, not merely our earthly masters.

Galatians 6:9: "Now, let us not lose heart in doing that which is good, for at its proper season we shall reap if we are not being exhausted."

J. Vernon McGee says: "Eye-service is a word peculiar in the New Testament to the writings of Paul. He means, 'Don't keep your eye on the clock. Keep your eye on Christ. He is the One whom you are serving.' That is the way you ought to do your job."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "Trust and Obey": "Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay; Not a grief nor a loss, not a frown nor a cross, But is blest if we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

January 22—Working As To The Lord (Colossians 3:23–24)

Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you are doing, be working from the heart, as to the Lord and not to men."

Colossians 3:24: "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as a reward."

<u>Verse 23</u>: This verse is a continuation of Paul's address to the servants. It is very similar to Colossians 3:17: "And all whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." This is also

a restatement of verse 22: "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord."

You will be amazed at your reasons for working to glorify God when you let Jesus live through you.

The apostle instructs us to "be working from the heart, as to the Lord and not to men."

Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* says: "We have seen what yielding is—the transference of the ownership and control of the life from self to Christ. But self will relinquish nothing except under compulsion. So it is necessary to understand at the outset just what the full measurement of a yielded life is."

Anne Graham-Lotz says: "God has chosen you and me for the purpose of bearing much eternal fruit ... fruit that is simply the character of God's Son coming out in us."

Elisabeth Elliot says: "A prayerful heart and an obedient heart will learn, very slowly, and not without sorrow, to stake everything on God himself."

In The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2 compiled by Warren Wiersbe, Tozer says:

In this world where men forget us, change their attitude toward us as their private interests dictate and revise their opinion of us for the slightest cause, is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? That His attitude toward us now is the same as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come?

Verse 24: You will ultimately receive your wages "from the Lord" so "be working from your heart" for Him. "The inheritance" is described for us in Revelation 22:12-13 (NASB): "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

John MacArthur in his book, Found: God's Will, says:

Do you see what the Spirit-filled life is? It is being saturated with the things of Christ with His Word, His Person.

You might say, "Well, you know I'd like that. I'd like to be saturated with Christ. How do I do that?"

The only way is to study the Book that discloses all He is!

Please join me this morning as we sing together verses 4 & 5 of "Trust and Obey": "But we never can prove the delights of His love Until all on the altar we lay; For the favor He shows and the joy He bestows Are for them who will trust and obey. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, Or we'll walk by His side in the way; What He says we will do, where He sends we will go; Never fear, only trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

January 23—No Wiggle Room With The Master (Colossians 3:25)

Colossians 3:25: "The Master, Christ, you are serving; for the one doing wrong shall receive back that which he did wrong, and there is no partiality."

<u>Verse 25</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't cover up bad work."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "He will judge without favoritism ... that is, in full justice, repaying wrongdoers and rewarding those who serve Him."

In this verse, we have the reason we should be working from the heart: "The Master, Christ, you are serving."

What you give is what you get, and what you sow is what you reap.

Joni Eareckson Tada says: "Once we give an inch, God will take a mile. He'll take a million miles. He'll soar on the wings of the wind from heaven to here to show you who He is, to embrace you with His love."

Gary L. Thomas in The Glorious Pursuit says:

There was great freedom in this for me, and transformation. When I insist on control, my anxiety level rises; frustration reaches a boiling point, and my wife and children are most likely to become my victims. At the moment we needed to be drawing closer, supporting and encouraging one another, we could have become alienated with accusation and unfocused anger. Practicing the virtue of surrender was our key to a stronger family life in the midst of disappointment. If God was changing our plans, we needed to get on board with what He was doing rather than become obsessed with what we wanted.

Through this process I realized how trials shape us.

Ruth Paxson in Life on the Highest Plane said:

Yielding to Christ is a *definite* act. It is not a mere expression of a pious desire but it is the declaration of a purposeful determination. It is not an often-repeated wish but it is a decisive act of the will. To yield is to acknowledge Christ's claim to the perfect possession, complete control and unhindered use of one's whole being and then to act upon such an acknowledgment by a definite surrender of it to Him. Desire becomes decision and decision crystallized into action.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verses 1 through 3 of that wonderful little prayer chorus, "Lord, Be Glorified": "In my life, Lord, Be glorified, be glorified. In my life, Lord, Be glorified today. In my song, Lord,

Be glorified, be glorified. In my song, Lord, Be glorified today. In Your Church, Lord, Be glorified, be glorified. In Your Church, Lord, Be glorified today."

January 24—Justice & Fairness (Colossians 4:1)

Colossians 4:1: "Masters, be displaying justice and fairness to your slaves, knowing that you also are having a Master in heaven."

<u>Verse 1</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And masters, treat your servants considerately. Be fair with them. Don't forget for a minute that you, too, serve a Master—God in heaven."

Masters is the sixth group Paul addresses in this passage. These six groups are:

- 1. Wives.
- 2. Husbands.
- 3. Children.
- 4. Fathers.
- 5. Servants (or Employees).
- 6. Masters (or Employers).

The Masters or employers should "be displaying justice and fairness" to their slaves or employees. Having authority over someone does not give us the right to be unjust or unfair to them in the demands we make of them: "knowing that you also are having a Master in heaven."

Our "Master in heaven" has dealt with each of us more than justly and fairly. He has dealt with us in grace.

Isaiah 25:1: "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago."

In A Place of Healing, Joni Eareckson Tada says:

I will add my voice of praise to his.

Thank You, God, for this life You have given me. Thank You for the many opportunities to serve You, even in my pain. Thank You, God, for this wheelchair. For it's been granted to me to not only believe on Your Son, but to suffer for His sake. Oh joy!

... For in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

Listen to the Shulammite as she counsels Solomon in Song of Solomon 2:15: "Let us catch the foxes that ruin the vineyard." Those foxes are bitterness, resentment, jealousy, an unforgiving spirit, failure to yield one's rights in the relationship, selfishness, distance, and coldness.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "My Wonderful Lord"?: "I have found a deep peace that I never had known And

a joy this world could not afford Since I yielded control of my body and soul To my wonderful, wonderful Lord. My wonderful Lord, my wonderful Lord, By angels and seraphs in Heaven adored! I bow at Thy shrine, my Saviour divine My wonderful, wonderful Lord."

January 25—Busily Engaged in Prayer (Colossians 4:2)

Colossians 4:2: "Be busily engaged in prayer, being wide awake about it with thanksgiving."

<u>Verse 2</u>: In this next passage of Colossians, Paul outlines <u>three</u> characteristics of a good witness: (1) concerned enough to pray, (2) careful with his conduct, and (3) communicates with compassion.

Dr. James Stewart, Professor of the New Testament at the University of Edinburgh, said: "The greatest threat to Christianity is not communism, atheism, materialism, or humanism. It is Christians trying to sneak into heaven incognito without ever sharing their faith, without ever living out the Christian life as salt of the earth and light of the world."

The apostle Paul addresses four subjects in these next verses:

- 1. Communion.
- 2. Contact.
- 3. Concern.
- 4. Communication.

He will instruct us in each of these areas with commands. The passage will conclude with the ultimate purpose.

Paul states <u>three</u> things about prayer in this verse: (1) be busily engaged in prayer, (2) be wide awake about it, and (3) pray with thanksgiving.

Psalm 105:4 (NIV): "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." Romans 12:12: "Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, persisting in prayer."

Command #1: Communion—Be busily engaged in prayer, being wide awake about it with thanksgiving.

Communion between the Christian and his Lord is open and clear. The heart of the believer is submissive and obedient.

Dr. Pentecost in his book, *Design for Discipleship*, tells this story of Dr. Howard Hendricks:

Dr. Hendricks tells of leading a fellow to Christ and then taking him to a Bible study and prayer meeting. The fellow was really concerned about his inability to pray like all the other Christians. After Dr. Hendricks encouraged him, this was his prayer:

Lord, this is Jim. I'm the one that met You last Thursday night. I hope You will forgive me 'cause I can't say it the way these guys can. Maybe if I know You as long as they do, I'll do a better job; but I would like You to know from the bottom of my heart I really do love You. Thanks, Lord. Amen.

I have to work at being busily engaged in prayer. It must be a top priority in my schedule. I've got to give it my best shot.

Our prayers are to be offered with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is an expression of my trust.

Corrie ten Boom said:

The most important question is not how much work is being done but how much Jesus is doing through you. Look up; God's ceiling is unlimited. Learn to look on Jesus, and more and more you will find that Jesus is directing your wandering look toward the Holy Spirit.

IN THE MORNING

I MET GOD IN THE MORNING,
WHEN THE DAY WAS AT ITS BEST.
AND HIS PRESENCE CAME LIKE SUNSHINE,
LIKE A GLORY IN MY BREAST.
ALL DAY LONG, THIS PRESENCE LINGERED,
ALL DAY LONG, HE STAYED WITH ME,
AND WE SAILED IN PERFECT CALMNESS
O'ER A VERY TROUBLED SEA.
SO I THINK I KNOW THE SECRET
LEARNED FROM MANY A TROUBLED WAY:
YOU MUST SEEK HIM IN THE MORNING
IF YOU WANT HIM THROUGH THE DAY.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "My Wonderful Lord": "I desire that my life shall be ordered by Thee, That my will be in perfect accord With Thine own sov'reign will, Thy desires to fulfill, My wonderful, wonderful Lord. My wonderful Lord, my wonderful Lord, By angels and seraphs in Heaven adored! I bow at Thy shrine, my Saviour divine My wonderful, wonderful Lord."

January 26—Praying For Each Other (Colossians 4:3)

Colossians 4:3: "Praying at the same time also for us, that God would open for us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, because of which I also have been bound."

<u>Verse 3</u>: Paul uses the word "us," referring to the staff involved in Colossae. He mentions these believers again at the end of the epistle.

This verse is a request: "That God would open for us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ."

Ephesians 6:19: "And on behalf of me, in order that there might be given me utterance in the opening of my mouth in boldness, to proclaim the mystery of the gospel."

Paul has referenced "the mystery of Christ" throughout this letter. It is stated in Colossians 1:27: "... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." In this verse, he states it is because of the Gospel, this "mystery of Christ" is "which I also have been bound." Yet at this time, Paul is writing from prison.

Gromacki says: "The spiritual depth of Paul can be seen here in the fact that he desired an opportunity for witness rather than a release from his imprisonment. He was more concerned for others than for himself."

So much of our praying is struggling against what God has allowed rather than peacefully accepting it and saying, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. I am eager to obey."

John Ortburg in *All The Places To Go* says: "I don't know why some prayers get yeses and some prayers get nos. I know the anguish of a no when you want a yes more than you want anything in the world. But I don't know why. I only know that in the Cross God's no to his only Son was turned into God's yes to every human being who ever lived."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "My Wonderful Lord": "All the talents I have, I have laid at Thy Feet; Thy approval shall be my reward. Be my store great or small, I surrender it all To my wonderful, wonderful Lord. My wonderful Lord, my wonderful Lord, By angels and seraphs in Heaven adored! I bow at Thy shrine, my Saviour divine My wonderful, wonderful Lord."

January 27—Making It Plain (Colossians 4:4)

Colossians 4:4: "In order that I may make it plain as I ought to speak."

<u>Verse 4</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Pray that every time I open my mouth I'll be able to make Christ plain as day to them."

This verse states the purpose for verse 3: "in order that I may make it plain as I ought to speak." It is personal. He uses "I" instead of "us." He wants to effectively communicate the truth of the Gospel as he "ought to speak."

In verse 3, Paul makes a request: "open for us a door." Then, he asks "make it plain [clear]."

Last week, I had a laser treatment on my left eye. Before the treatment, I was seeing nothing out of that eye. After the treatment, I could see clearly. This is the same goal and result Paul seeks from his ministry to the Gentiles.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Happy is our condition when the glory of God fills both heart and tongue! Oh, to swim in a sea of gratitude, to feel waves of praise breaking over one's joyful head, and then to dive into the ocean of adoration, and lose one's self in the ever-blessed God!"

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 4 of

"My Wonderful Lord": "Thou art fairer to me than the fairest of earth, Thou omnipotent, life-giving Word. O Thou Ancient of Days, Thou art worthy all praise, My wonderful, wonderful Lord. My wonderful Lord, my wonderful Lord, By angels and seraphs in Heaven adored! I bow at Thy shrine, my Saviour divine My wonderful, wonderful Lord."

January 28—In Wisdom Winning A Hearing (Colossians 4:5)

Colossians 4:5: "In wisdom be ordering your behavior towards those outside, buying up for yourselves the time (making the most of the time)."

<u>Verse 5</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity."

This verse is focusing on contact and how to connect towards those outside. As an effective witness, our concern should be an effective contact with loving communication.

Paul begins this verse with "in wisdom." James 3:17 (NASB): But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy." James tells us this wisdom is given to us from above.

How do you build a bridge to those who are in desperate need of knowing Christ? Wisdom comes when we pray for individuals. To touch their lives with the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to start with prayer.

While I was in seminary working for years with Young Life, we called this contact work: (1) building a bridge of relationships to students, (2) manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in deep loving concern for them, and (3) building a relationship they can trust where they believe you can truly understand their world, their plight and their need.

Paul gives his second command in this verse.

Command #1: Communion—Be busily engaged in prayer, being wide awake about it with thanksgiving.

Command #2: Contact—Walk in wisdom toward those outside.

It is so important that we reflect Jesus Christ in our lives before others!

In John 3:30 (TLB), John the Baptist said: "He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

As Jesus Christ is seen in our lives, others are attracted to Him.

In the prayer chorus, "Lead Me To Some Soul Today," we read these words:

Lead me to some soul today,
O teach me, Lord, just what to say;
Friends of mine are lost in sin,
And cannot find their way.

Few there are who seem to care, And few there are who pray; Melt my heart, and fill my life, Give me one soul today.

At the end of this verse, Paul urges us to be "buying up for yourselves the time (making the most of the time.)" He gives our <u>third</u> command.

Command #3: Concern—Buying up for yourselves the time.

John 9:4(KJV): "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work." God wants us to make the best use of our time, not wasting it. My life should display the glories of my Savior to those who are outside of Jesus Christ. It is my responsibility to be that witness.

Lorenzo Scupoli in his book, The Spiritual Combat, says:

Remember every day, that He Who gives you the morning does not promise the evening, and when He gives you the evening, does not promise the next morning.

Spend, then, every moment of the passing hour in a way which is pleasing to God, as if it were your last, and so much the more carefully, seeing that for every moment you must give the strictest account.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Lord, Lay Some Soul (My Prayer)"?: "Lord, lay some soul upon my heart And love that soul through me And may I nobly do my part To win that soul for Thee."

January 29—Watch Your Words (Colossians 4:6)

Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, to the end that you know how you ought to answer everyone."

Verse 6: This is Paul's <u>fourth</u> and final command in this passage:

Command #1: Communion—Be busily engaged in prayer, being wide awake about it with thanksgiving.

Command #2: Contact—Walk in wisdom toward those outside.

Command #3: Concern—Buying up for yourselves the time.

Command #4: Communication—Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.

1 Peter 3:15: "But set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being those who are prepared to make a defense to everyone who is asking you for a reason concerning the hope that is in you, but doing this with gentleness and reverence."

Effective communication is dependent first on our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Once this relationship is established and we are maintaining that relationship through fellowship; we can trust Him for the proper words to say

at the given moment.

Our *public* and *private* conversations are included in the word "always." Paul states our speech should have two qualities:

- 1. With grace—reflecting the grace of God towards us, with kindness.
- 2. Seasoned with salt.

Matthew 5:13 (KJV): "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

"To the end that you know how you ought to answer everyone." This is the ultimate purpose. The Lord will give wisdom and the words to say when we are communicating with those who are in search of the Savior. If we will just be dependent upon Him and allow Him, He will control us in these situations.

Psalm 19:14 (KJV): "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

Barker & Kohlenberger say: "Seasoned with salt" may mean that Christian conversation is to be marked by purity and wholesomeness."

Proverbs 11:30 (NIV): "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise."

Sometimes as witnesses of Jesus Christ, we fail because we become so excited about our own life and the joy of walking with the Lord ourselves, we fail to reach out to others. It is very easy to forget about the people outside simply because we are so busy working on the inside.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "Pass It On": "It only takes a spark to get a fire going, And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing; That's how it is with God's Love, Once you've experienced it, Your spread the love to everyone You want to pass it on."

January 30—Tychicus, The Mailman (Colossians 4:7-8)

Colossians 4:7: "All the things concerning me Tychicus will make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bondslave in the Lord."

Colossians 4:8: "Whom I am sending to you for this purpose, in order that you may know the things concerning us and he may encourage your hearts."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, *Thirsting for God*, says: "The apostle Paul endorsed the idea of human examples as part of our spiritual training when he wrote, 'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.' Thomas á Kempis honored Paul's truth when he wrote, 'Gather some profit to thy soul wheresoever thou art; so as if thou seest or hearest of any good examples, stir up thyself to the imitation thereof.'"

Gromacki says:

Solomon wrote that "a friend loveth at all times" (Prov. 17:17). Friends encourage and stand by each other in difficult days (Prov.

27:6, 10, 17). A man who has them is rich indeed.

In this closing section, Paul mentioned eleven personal acquaintances who had been a blessing to him.

The apostle Paul gives us his picture album of friends at the end. There are twelve in this family of friends including Paul: (1) Tychicus, (2) Onesimus, (3) Aristarchus, (4) Mark, (5) Barnabus, (6) Jesus Justus, (7) Epaphras, (8) Luke, (9) Demas, (10) Nymphas, (11) Archippus, and (12) the apostle Paul.

<u>Verse 7</u>: The Message paraphrases this verse: "My good friend Tychicus will tell you all about me. He's a trusted minister and companion in the service of the Master."

Tychicus is the man with the message. He had a shepherd's heart and a propher's spirit. He was similar to Timothy in his willingness to go anywhere, do anything, at any cost for the glory of God.

Paul describes Tychicus in <u>three</u> ways: (1) beloved brother—part of the family of God, (2) faithful servant—his willingness to serve in any capacity, and (3) fellow bondslave—he desires to only do what God wants him to do.

<u>Verse 8</u>: There are <u>two</u> purposes to Tychicus'coming to them:

- 1. They know the things concerning Paul.
- 2. He may encourage their hearts.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verses 2 and 3 of "Pass It On": "What a wonderous time is spring, When all the trees are budding The birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming; That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it. You want to sing, it's fresh like spring, You want to pass it on. I wish for you my friend This happiness that I've found; You can depend on Him It matters not where you're bound, I'll shout it from the mountain top, I want my world to know The Lord of love has come to me I want to pass it on."

January 31—Reports From The Field (Colossians 4:9-10)

Colossians 4:9: "With Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. All things here they will make known to you."

Colossians 4:10: "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you; and Mark, a cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you received orders. If he should come to you, receive him."

<u>Verse 9</u>: Paul states <u>three</u> qualities of Onesimus in this verse: (1) the faithful, (2) beloved brother, and (3) who is one of you.

Onesimus travels with Tychicus to Colosse. He is the slave who ran away from Philemon and went to Rome. While in Rome, Paul had the privilege of leading him to Jesus Christ. Now, he is going back to Philemon in Colosse with a letter of recommendation from the apostle Paul—the book of Philemon. It is the hope and prayer of the apostle Paul that Philemon will receive Onesimus back and will believe the word of the apostle that Onesimus has definitely become a Christian.

Onesimus is on his way back to make things right for the past wrongs which he has committed.

The apostle calls Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of the saints in Colosse.

"All things here they will make known to you." With Tychicus, Onesimus will share the ministry of updating the Colossian churches on Paul's situation.

<u>Verse 10</u>: In this verse, Paul mentions <u>three</u> more family members: Aristarchus, Mark, and Barnabas.

Aristarchus was a real soldier of the cross. He was from Thessalonica, a Macedonian who traveled with Paul and faced the persecution in Ephesus. He was also involved in Jerusalem and the voyage to Rome.

Mark got homesick when traveling with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. He went back home. For some time, Paul would not minister with him. When they began their second missionary journey, Paul chose Silas because Barnabas had chosen John Mark. Later on, Paul was convinced Mark was useful.

"Concerning whom you received orders. If he should come to you, receive him." Paul wanted to make sure Mark's past mistake didn't stand in his way of an effective ministry.

2 Timothy 4:11: "Luke alone is with me. Pick up Mark and be bringing him with you, for he is useful to me for service."

Barnabas, the son of encouragement, was a cousin of John Mark. He lived up to his name. When Saul of Tarsus (who became Paul) came to Jerusalem after his experience with the Lord in Damascus, he wanted to associate with the believers in Jerusalem. They were afraid and suspicious. Barnabas built the bridge of relationship with these believers. The new convert, Paul, was introduced to these fellow believers by Barnabas.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "So Send I You": "So send I you to labor unrewarded, To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown, To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing; So send I you to toil for Me alone."

FEBRUARY

February 1—Jesus Justus (Colossians 4:11)

Colossians 4:11: "And Jesus, the one called Justus, who are of the circumcision; these only are my fellow workers in the kingdom of God; those who have been a comfort to me."

<u>Verse 11</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And also Jesus, the one they call Justus. These are the only ones left from the old crowd who have stuck with me in working for God's kingdom. Don't think they haven't been a big help!"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Jesus was a common Jewish name. This companion of Paul's was also called Justus ("righteous"), also a common name

(Acts 1:23; 18:7). These three—Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus—were Jews (lit., "of the circumcision") by either birth or conversion (proselytism). These three fellow workers for the kingdom of God comforted or consoled Paul by their loving loyalty to him. Comfort is the unusual word par goria ("relief, consolation"), found only here in the New Testament."

Jesus Justus is the <u>sixth</u> member of Paul's family of believers. We know very little of him. Paul mentions he was a great "comfort" along with Aristarchus and Mark. These <u>three</u> family members were "of the circumcision; these only are my fellow workers in the kingdom of God; those who have been a comfort to me."

They are the only Jewish believers who were a comfort to Paul. They had found Christ to be sufficient to meet all of their needs. They didn't pursue any performance of the law for their salvation.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: "There is a note of pathos in Paul's remark about these three: 'These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God.' Paul felt keenly his alienation from his countrymen ... But these three, he adds, 'have proved a comfort to me,' perhaps in a particular time of crisis when they stood by Paul."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "So Send I You": "So send I you to bind the bruised and broken, O'er wand'ring souls to work, to weep, to wake, To bear the burdens of a world a-weary; So send I you to suffer for My sake."

February 2—Wrestling in Prayer (Colossians 4:12-13)

Colossians 4:12: "Epaphras greets you, who is one of you, a bondslave of Christ Jesus, always wrestling for you in his prayers, in order that you might stand full grown and fully assured in all the will of God."

Colossians 4:13: "For I am bearing witness of him that he has toiled (worked hard) for you and those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis."

<u>Verse 12</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Epaphras, who is one of you, says hello. What a trooper he has been! He's been tireless in his prayers for you, praying that you'll stand firm, mature and confident in everything God wants you to do."

Epaphras is the next member of Paul's family that he mentions in this passage. Paul identifies him as one of the Colossians. The apostle identifies him as "a bond-slave of Christ Jesus, always wrestling for you in his prayers."

The purpose for Epaphras' prayers for the Colossians saints is "in order that you might stand full grown and fully assured in all the will of God."

Epaphras was the minister of the church in Colosse. He had gone to Rome to update Paul on the problems in Colosse and seek his helpful advice on handling the heresy of Gnosticism.

Paul recognizes Epaphras' prayer life in his mention: "always wrestling for you in his prayers." Most of us know little of the agony of wrestling with the Lord in

prayers. This is a wonderful verse upon which to build our prayer lives.

We may not know much about Epaphras, but he is described in these <u>four</u> ways:

- 1. Faithful minister
- 2. Fellow prisoner
- 3. Wrestler in prayer
- 4. Servant of Christ Jesus

Renowned Puritan Thomas Brooks said: "God lades the wings of private prayer with the sweetest, choicest, and chiefest blessings. Ah! how often hath God kissed the poor Christian at the beginning of private prayer, spoken peace to him in the midst of his prayer, and filled him with light, joy, and assurance upon its close!"

Ruth Paxson in Life on the Highest Plane said:

Has my prayer life been *powerless* because of some besetting sin?

Has my prayer life been *hindered* by haste, irregularity, indefiniteness, insufficient preparation, unbelief, neglect of Bible study?

Has my prayer life been *fruitless*? Have I had such power with God that I have had power with people? Have I had definite answers to prayer week by week?

Has my prayer life been *restricted* merely to short, stated seasons of prayer or have I come to know what it is to "pray without ceasing?"

Has my prayer life been *limited* to prayer for myself? My family? My work? My church? My mission? Or have I taken the world into my heart and into my prayers?

Has my prayer life been *starved*? Or have I devoted time to the study of God's Word about prayer? Do I know His precepts and promises?

Has my prayer life been *joyless*? Do I love to pray? Or is prayer more of a duty than a delight?

Has my prayer life been *growing*? Do I daily know more of the meaning and power of prayer?

Has my prayer life been *sacrificial*? Has it cost me anything in time, strength, vitality, love?

"Lord, teach us to pray."

<u>Verse 13</u>: This verse explains the reason for Paul's tribute to Epaphras: "For I am bearing witness of him that he has toiled (worked hard) for you and those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "So Send I You": "So send I you to loneliness and longing, With heart a-hung'ring

for the loved and known, Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one; So send I you to know My love alone."

February 3—Greetings From Fellow Believers (Colossians 4:14-15)

Colossians 4:14: "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you."

Colossians 4:15: "Greet the brethren in Laodicea and Nymphas and the church in her house."

<u>Verse 14</u>: In this verse, Paul continues to name his family of fellow workers and believers in Christ. The apostle has recognized <u>seven</u> in the previous verses. He now mentions Dr. Luke and Demas.

"Luke, the beloved physician." He was a close companion of the apostle and ministered to his physical needs for the sake of the Gospel. He also traveled with Paul on some of his missionary trips. Luke is responsible for writing the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts under divine inspiration.

Dr. Luke stayed with Paul until the end. 2 Timothy 4:11: "Luke alone is with me. Pick up Mark and be bringing him with you, For he is useful to me for service."

"... and Demas greet you." Demas became a deserter. We read in 2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas deserted me, having loved this present world, and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia."

Demas will never be able to hear from the Lord: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys I have prepared for you." Nor did anyone say at his funeral that he fought a good fight, he finished the course, or he kept the faith.

The Living Bible translates this verse: "For Demas has left me. He loved the good things of this life and went to Thessalonica." He got side tracked by the temporary and made a choice. He loved the things of this world more than he did being faithful in service to the Lord.

Renowned Puritan Thomas Brooks said: "Surely they do not truly love Christ who love any thing more than Christ."

He said further: "To run from Christ is to run from all life, peace and joy. It is to run from our strength, our shelter, our security, our safety, our crown, our glory. Crabs, that go backward, are reckoned among unclean creatures (Lev. 11:10). The application is easy."

<u>Verse 15</u>: The apostle is concluding his greetings. In this verse, Paul greets "the brethren in Laodicea" and "Nymphas and the church in her house."

The "brethren in Laodicea" were Christian brothers and sisters who formed a church in Laodicea. Paul had never seen them nor had the opportunity to visit them. However, his ministry had been indirectly responsible for the founding of the group of Christians there.

"Nymphas and the church in her house" was possibly a reference to another work branch in the city of Hierapolis, part of this tri-city ministry.

We do not know any more about Nymphas, but thank God her name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We do know by this verse that she has come to

know Christ as Savior. Paul has also recognized that she has allowed her home to be a place of hospitality, where people can come and share together in the Word of God and communion of the saints.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 4 of **"So Send I You"**: "So send I you to leave your life's ambition, To die to dear desire, self-will resign, To labor long, and love where men revile you; So send I you to lose your life in Mine."

February 4—Final Instructions (Colossians 4:16-18)

Colossians 4:16: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and the letter from Laodicea you should also read."

Colossians 4:17: "And say to Archippus, take heed of the ministry (pay attention to your duty) which you received in the Lord, in order that you may perform it (discharge it fully)."

Colossians 4:18: "The greeting by my own hand, Paul, be remembering my bonds. Grace be with you."

<u>Verse 16</u>: The book of Ephesians is the letter Paul references in this verse that was written for the church at Laodicea. It was probably a circular letter. He urged an exchange of epistles between the churches. After reading their letter, the Colossians should send their letter to Laodicea and read the letter Paul had sent to the Laodiceans.

In the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus speaks very strongly to the seventh and final church, the church at Laodicea. Revelation 3:15–17 (NASB): "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

<u>Verse 17</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Archippus, probably the son of Philemon ... was ministering in Colosse, possibly in Epaphras' absence. Paul exhorted his readers to tell Archippus to see to (blepe, "look out" for dangers in) it that he complete the work (lit., 'the ministry') God had given him. Whatever his problem, he was not fulfilling (completing) his work. This was another example of Paul's concern that the Colossians be complete in Christ."

Archippus is the final member of this Christian family that Paul mentions. He was probably the son of Philemon and Apphia. He was serving as an interim pastor while Epaphras was in Rome.

Paul was concerned that he seemed to settle down and take things easy. Promptness and energy are important in the Lord's work. This is a gentle, but firm admonition to Archippus to be busy about the Father's business.

We see urgency in the Lord Jesus in John 9:4 (KJV): "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Leave nothing undone that you ought to do!

Paul provides a warning purpose in the next phrase: "in order that you may perform it (discharge it fully)." The apostle wants Archippus to finish well and not shrink away in shame at the Lord's coming for his unfaithfulness in service.

<u>Verse 18</u>: Paul, himself, was the <u>twelfth</u> member of this family. This command from him is a present imperative: "be remembering my bonds." He wants them to keep remembering his imprisonment in their prayers.

The apostle begins and ends with grace. We begin with grace in our relationship to God. We are kept by grace. Grace will bring us home at last.

Grace is the sweetest sound
That ever reached our ears:
When conscience charged and justice frowned,
'Twas grace removed our fears.

Colossians 3:11b: "Christ is all and in all." He is more than adequate for every situation.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 5 of "So Send I You": "So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred, To eyes made blind because they will not see, To spend, tho' it be blood, to spend and spare not; So send I you to taste of Calvary."

February 5—Faithful in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:1-2)

This morning, we move from the book of Colossians to the book of Ephesians—Heaven's plan for life on earth. Ephesians gives us a picture of what life looks like living according to God's plan.

Ephesians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 1:2: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

During Paul's time, it was a common practice to mention (1) the writer, (2) the readers, and then (3) a greeting before pursuing the subject matter.

<u>Verse 1</u>: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." In God's plan for his life, Paul was called to be an apostle. "An apostle" is one who is separated under divine authority. He used this title when he was required to correct some error or deal with a controversial matter. Since he was writing to a group of churches, he felt it was necessary to use the title of "apostle" to identify the authority of his writing.

His apostleship was not of his own doing, but it was "by the will of God." He is establishing that his actions are under divine authority by divine appointment.

This letter addresses "saints who are in Ephesus" and "who are faithful in Christ Jesus."

The words "in Ephesus" were not included in some of the older manuscripts so

it is believed this was possibly a circular letter to be read by numerous church bodies rather than just these "saints who are in Ephesus."

Stedman says:

Their characteristic is that they are faithful, which means of course, that they can't quit. That's what a true Christian is—a person who can't quit being a Christian. When a young man called recently to tell me how discouraged he was, how he'd lost his confidence in prayer because he felt no answer was coming, and how ready he was to quit, I said to him, "Well, why don't you just quit then? Give up. Stop being a Christian." I knew that if he tried to quit, the first thing he would discover was that he couldn't. And he knew it, too. The minute I said that, he acknowledged it: "You're right, I can't quit." As Paul will describe in this letter, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, so we can't quit. That is a mark of a believer in Christ.

<u>Verse 2</u>: Paul's greeting desires <u>two</u> things for his readers: (1) grace and (2) peace. You will never find these reversed. A man must first experience grace before he can have peace.

This "grace and peace" comes from "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." An unknown author said: "G.R.A.C.E. is God's riches at Christ's expense." It is Christ's death upon the cross that makes peace possible for us.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 and the chorus of "Find Us Faithful"?: "We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road. And those who've gone before us line the way. Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary. Their lives a stirring testament To God's sustaining grace. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful."

February 6—Every Spiritual Blessing (Ephesians 1:3)

Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

<u>Verse 3</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Paul now moved from his general greeting to the saints at Ephesus to an expanded discussion of the reason God is to be praised—because of the spiritual blessings He has planned for believers in Christ."

In this verse, Paul begins a complicated sentence that runs through verse 14. Paul describes God's master plan in these verses. It is stated in one long sentence. He begins by bursting forth in a doxology of praise to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the "blessed" One who is blessing. He is blessing us "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

Dr. Pentecost points out: "The heavenlies is not a geographical term, it is that sphere which is associated with the present authority of Christ. We may live geographically on the earth, but in the sphere realm or kingdom of the heavenlies. The Christian has a new center of gravity, no longer the cosmos, but the heavenlies."

We are pilgrims looking for a city as we pass through this world.

Our blessings originate from God. We have been: (1) *selected* by God the Father, (2) *saved* through the death of God the Son, and (3) *sealed* by God the Holy Spirit.

In *The Spiritual Combat*, Lorenzo Scupoli says: "Lift up your heart to God, and, with your eyes closed, to accept all things from the compassionate Hand of His Divine Providence, as from a Hand full of manifold blessings, of which, though as yet you do not understand them, you are content to know nothing further."

How has God blessed us?

In this passage, we will see seven ways we have been blessed by God:

- 1. Election.
- 2. Adoption.
- 3. Redemption.
- 4. Forgiveness of sins.
- 5. His purpose.
- 6. The Spirit sealing.
- 7. Our inheritance in Christ.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 and the chorus of "Find Us Faithful": "Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses Let us run the race not only for the prize. But as those who've gone before us Let us leave to those behind us A heritage of faithfulness passed on through Godly light. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful."

February 7—Holy & Blameless Before Him (Ephesians 1:4)

Ephesians 1:4: "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him."

<u>Verse 4</u>: *The Message* beautifully paraphrases this verse: "Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love."

How has He blessed us? He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."

Whenever it came time to choose up teams to play in my childhood, I was the fat little kid chosen last. I was chosen last because I couldn't play very well. Those

doing the choosing weren't very enthusiastic in the choice. We all long to be chosen first.

<u>Three</u> things come from being chosen: (1) our security, (2) our self-image, and (3) our personal confidence. We need to remember we are important to Him.

God chose us to be on His team. The "us" individualizes the choice. He chose us to be part of His family. He chose us to be His children. This is His contribution to the blessing.

It is a glorious truth that He has chosen us, but have we chosen Him? He chose us "that we should be (1) holy and (2) blameless before Him."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Find Us Faithful": "After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone. And our children sift through all we've left behind. May the clues that they discover And the memories they uncover Become the light that leads them to the road we each must find. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful."

February 8—In Love For Adoption (Ephesians 1:5)

Ephesians 1:5: "In love having decided upon us beforehand for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

<u>Verse 5</u>: In these verses, the focus is on the Father and His blessing to us. In the previous verse, we learned "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." In this verse, Paul continues: "in love having decided upon us beforehand for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ for Himself."

Note the context in which God makes His choice: "in love." The truth of His love is born out in numerous other places in Scripture.

"Having decided upon us beforehand for adoption as sons." This literally means "son-placing."

A person becomes a child of God by experiencing the new birth. He is born into the family. One becomes a son by adoption. This comes from the Greek and Roman customs associated with the laws of inheritance. When a father had decided to declare his son a legal partner and heir, the son would be brought before judges. There they would have a ceremony in which the toga was placed upon the child. In this ceremony, the one who was previously a child and had no rights of inheritance, was placed into the family as a mature adult having rights and responsibilities of sonship.

Adoption does not take one outside of the family and put him in. It gives a son in the family privileges of adulthood.

We have an inheritance in heaven. 1 Peter 1:4: "Unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you."

Our relationship with God the Father is the same as that of Jesus Christ."

Catesby Paget wrote this poem:

Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he.
So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith he loves the Son—
Such is his love to me.

Our relationship to God the Father is made possible through Jesus Christ. We have become sons for Himself. In our relationship, we are sons of a heavenly Father who wants us and needs us. We are His children.

"According to the good pleasure of His will." He did not do this grudgingly or out of necessity. His love motivated Him to create this relationship for all of us.

Not only are we selected, but we are given an inheritance.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "How Great Thou Art": "O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy pow'r thru-out the universe displayed! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!"

February 9—In The Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)

Ephesians 1:6: "To the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved."

Verse 6: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son."

What is the consummation of this selection and son-placing? What does God receive out of our relationship with Him? He receives "praise of His glorious grace."

"Which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved." Grace is freely bestowed upon us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We experience God's grace because we are in Christ.

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus upon the earth, a voice was heard several times saying, "This is My beloved Son." "In the Beloved" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"To the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved" refers to the works of the Father.

In *Voices from the Past: Puritan Devotional Readings* edited by Richard Rushing, we read: "The great care of our souls is to find God, that he may direct, comfort, strengthen, sanctify, and teach us to sweetly enjoy his grace."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "How Great Thou Art"?: "When thru the woods and forest glades I wander And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze. Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!"

February 10—Redemption & Forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we are having our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace."

Ephesians 1:8: "Which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight."

<u>Verse 7</u>: In these verses, we will meditate on the work of God the Son. "In whom" refers to Jesus Christ, who is the "Beloved" in the previous verse.

"In whom we are having our redemption through His blood." The Father purposed and the Son purchased. The Father chose and the Son offered the sacrifice. Selection was the act of the Father and salvation the work of the Son.

The word "redemption" can be described as "being set free by the payment of a ransom." It involves passing from a previous ownership to a subsequent ownership. It can only be purchased by payment of a ransom. The ownership was God's until sin came into the Garden of Eden.

The ransom price was paid. We, who were God's by possession, are purchased back through redemption.

We are His twice. First, we were made by Him. Then, we were bought by Him. The "redemption" was accomplished "through His [Christ's] blood." The redeemed are those who have been purchased off the slave market of sin. We will never be for re-sale again. The ransomed price of the blood of Jesus Christ paid the sin price for us, who are human slaves to sin.

The shedding of blood was necessary for the holy and just requirements of God. His Word tells us the wages of sin is death. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

The authoritative standard for the "forgiveness of our trespasses" is "according to the riches of His grace." When grace runs out, so does forgiveness, but praise God that His grace will never be exhausted.

The idea of riches implies super-abundance. It goes beyond what we need.

"In whom," the beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ, we have:

- 1. Our redemption through His blood.
- 2. The forgiveness of our trespasses.
- 3. The riches of His grace.

<u>Verse 8</u>: We see the magnitude of God's grace in the word "lavished." This refers to "His grace" in the previous verse. "He lavished [His grace] upon us in all wisdom and insight." Wisdom indicates His plan, but insight references our need.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "How Great Thou Art": "And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent

Him to die, I scare can take it in - That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!"

February 11—The Mystery of God's Will (Ephesians 1:9)

Ephesians 1:9: "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him."

Verse 9: This is the third reference to His will in the passage:

- 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (verse 1).
- 2. According to the good pleasure of His will (verse 5).
- 3. Having made known to us the mystery of His will (verse 9).

Paul is referencing the divine master plan behind all of God's dealing with man. It encompasses (1) His selection before the foundation of the world, (2) His salvation through the death of Christ, (3) our appropriation of this salvation by faith, and (4) the ultimate glorification of the purchased possession. This is "the mystery of His will" which is made known to us.

Ruth Myers in 31 Days of Encouragement as We Grow Older says: "Give me the grace to press on to know You in every way You have in mind. 'Your will, Lord—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "How Great Thou Art": "When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!"

February 12—The Fullness of the Times (Ephesians 1:10)

Ephesians 1:10: "With reference to a plan for the fullness of the times, to bring everything together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him."

<u>Verse 10</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth."

The first phrase, "with reference to a plan for the fullness of the times," brings to mind Isaiah 14:26-27 (NLT): "I have a plan for the whole earth, a hand of judgment upon all the nations. The Lord of Heaven's Armies has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand is raised, who can stop him?"

In God's perfect timing, His master plan will "bring everything together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him." He is operating on a time schedule with the ultimate objective: "to bring everything together in Christ."

It is a glorious truth to realize God provided a plan in His infinite wisdom. As we look in the past, we can see selection by the Father. He has made salvation possible through the death of His son. He has a glorious plan for our individual lives in the present. Yet, His plan has future ramification. He will be coming again.

If you focus on Christ, you will never miss the Father's plan.

The culmination of God's master plan will take place in the future kingdom.

Isaiah 14:24 (NLT): "The Lord Almighty has sworn this oath: 'It will all happen as I have planned. It will come about according to my purposes."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "I Will Serve Thee": "I will serve Thee because I love Thee; You have given life to me. I was nothing before You found me; You have given life to me. Heartaches, broken pieces, Ruined lives are why You died on Calv'ry. Your touch was what I longed for; You have given life to me."

February 13—Our Lot Is Cast (Ephesians 1:11)

Ephesians 1:11: "In whom also our lot is cast, having been decided upon beforehand according to the design of the One who is working all things according to the purpose of His will."

<u>Verse 11</u>: "In whom" refers to Jesus Christ. "Our lot is cast" with Him. We have redemption and relationship to God through Christ's blood.

Paul reminds us this plan was "decided upon beforehand":

- 1. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.
- 2. In love, He decided upon us beforehand for adoption as sons.
- 3. Our lot is cast, having been decided upon beforehand according to the design of the One who is working all things according to the purpose of His will.

By divine design, we have been chosen and "decided upon" by Him. This is all part of a great master plan, the "design of the One who is working all things according to the purpose of His will."

God has a plan for each of our lives which relates to His master plan. Life finds meaning, purpose and fulfillment when it is lived according to that plan.

We give the Lord our life, but then we often find ourselves telling Him what to do with it.

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Rivers of Living Water*, said: "To master my will He had to melt my heart." She further says: "Surrender is a crisis that develops into a process."

Romans 8:28 (Phillips): "Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to His Plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "The Longer I Serve Him"?: "Since I started for the Kingdom, Since my life He controls, Since I gave my heart to Jesus, The longer I serve Him, The sweeter He grows.

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows, The more that I love Him, more love He bestows; Each day is like heaven; my heart overflows, The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows."

February 14—Our Hope In Christ (Ephesians 1:12)

Ephesians 1:12: "With a view to our being to the praise of His glory who had first placed our hope in the Christ."

<u>Verse 12</u>: In this verse, we return to the subject of "praise." This is seen <u>three</u> times in this passage:

- 1. Verse 6—at the conclusion of the work of God the Father: "to the praise of His glorious grace, which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved."
- 2. Verse 12—at the conclusion of the work of God the Son: "to the praise of His glory, who had first placed our hope in the Christ."
- 3. Verse 14—at the conclusion of the work of God the Spirit: "through which you become God's property to the praise of His glory."

In his book, *Every Body Matters*, Gary L. Thomas says of Lance Armstrong's ex-wife, Kristin:

Kristin says the divorce initially led her to feel "like a woman after a house fire, sifting through burned treasures in the ashes," but physical training helped her lift her eyes long enough to see that "sometimes it takes a pile of rubble to prepare the way for a major remodel."

After God began putting Kristin's life back together and as she grew stronger and godlier and more in love with her Creator, she began hearing comments like, "Something's different ..."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Christ has set the sinner free from his sin and has revealed His will that all things will be headed up in Christ at the end of the ages, including the Jewish believers who first trusted in Him."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "The Longer I Serve Him": "Ev'ry need He is supplying; Plenteous grace He bestows. Ev'ry day my way gets brighter, The longer I serve Him, The sweeter He grows. The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows, The more that I love Him, more love He bestows; Each day is like heaven; my heart overflows, The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows."

February 15—Sealed By The Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)

Ephesians 1:13: "In Him you also, having heard the Word of the truth, the good news of your salvation: in Him also having believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

<u>Verse 13</u>: In these <u>two</u> last verses outlining God's master plan, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity.

The single condition of salvation is "believed."

In this passage of Ephesians outlining the Master plan, we have been:

- 1. Selected by the Father before the foundation of the world.
- 2. Saved through the blood of the Son in whom we are having our redemption.
- 3. Sealed by the Spirit.

Please notice <u>three</u> key points in this verse: (1) *hearing* the Word of truth, (2) *believing*, and (3) being *sealed* with the promised Holy Spirit.

When we believed "the good news of [our] salvation" in Jesus Christ by faith, we "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

During Seminary days, it was my privilege to work for a freight company. One of the common practices followed in shipping is to seal the truck. This is done with a metal seal once the truck is full in order to guarantee safe delivery of the contents to its destination. The apostle uses this same illustration. You have been selected by the Father, paid for by the Son, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. This signifies ownership and safe delivery to the ultimate destination.

There is a complete absence of human works in the Lord's master plan.

"The promised Holy Spirit." In John 14:26 (TLB), Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room: "But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me—and by the Comforter I mean the Holy Spirit—He will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I Myself have told you."

In his book, *Every Body Matters*, Gary L. Thomas says of Lance Armstrong's ex-wife, Kristin: "Kristin testifies, 'There is no transformation more deep or mysterious than when the Holy Spirit takes up residence within and begins to shine through. You are softer and lovelier than ever, yet you have never been stronger or more certain and direct. You are becoming an amalgamation of all the facets of woman that God intended when he created Eve."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Near To The Heart of God": "There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God, A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God, Hold us who wait before Thee Near to the heart of God."

February 16—The First Installment (Ephesians 1:14)

Ephesians 1:14: "Who is the first installment of our inheritance for a redemption through which you become God's property, to the praise of His glory."

<u>Verse 14</u>: "Who" refers to the Holy Spirit. He is the first installment of our inheritance.

This passage describes God's perspective and authentication. Because the Holy Spirit has been placed within the believer, the completion and fulfillment of God's eternal purpose to glorify Himself is fulfilled.

Paul states the Spirit of God is "the first installment of our inheritance. "Inheritance" emphasizes the confirmation of sonship. Only a son would be made an heir and receive an inheritance.

"For a redemption through which you become God's property, to the praise of His glory." In this verse, the word "redemption" literally means "to draw a line around something." The person who drew a line around a piece of property marked it out for his own possession

This verse is the third occurrence of the phrase "to the praise of His glory":

- 1. Verse 6—at the conclusion of the work of God the Father: "to the praise of His glorious grace, which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved."
- 2. Verse 12—at the conclusion of the work of God the Son: "to the praise of His glory, who had first placed our hope in the Christ."
- 3. Verse 14—at the conclusion of the work of God the Spirit: "through which you become God's property to the praise of His glory."

These first <u>fourteen</u> verses of Ephesians have given us a panoramic view of God's master plan:

- 1. God the Father selected us.
- 2. God the Son provided the purchased price through His own blood.
- 3. God the Spirit completes the process or transaction by sealing us as God's property.

Are you living life in view of God's master plan? Do you belong to God the Father or to another?

Are you living your life as a Christian, knowing that God has a specific plan for your life that relates to His master plan and He is the One who is working all things according to the purposes of His will?

As the first installment of our inheritance, the Holy Spirit is the engagement ring. He guarantees there is much more to follow. It is a glorious anticipation of eternity.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "Near To The Heart of God": "There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God, A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God. O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God, Hold us who wait before Thee Near to the heart of God."

February 17—Evidence of a Divine Work (Ephesians 1:15)

Ephesians 1:15: "On account of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints."

<u>Verse 15</u>: Paul states that "having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints" is evidence of a divine work.

In this verse, the apostle gives the two-fold reason he was moved to pray:

- 1. Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus.
- 2. Your love toward all the saints.

"On account of this" references the spiritual blessings which are ours in the heavenlies in Christ that were recounted in the previous verses: (1) *selection* by the Father, (2) *salvation* by the Son, and (3) *sealed* by the Holy Spirit.

Genuine faith in Christ will produce the fruit of love toward other members of the Christian family. In John 13:34–35 (NASB), Jesus said: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

When others hear about us, what do they hear? Do they hear of our faith in the Lord Jesus and our love toward other members of the family?

Philippians 1:9: "And this I am praying, that your love yet more and more might overflow (grow) in knowledge and every experience."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "He Keeps Me Singing": "There's within my heart a melody, Jesus whispers sweet and low; 'Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still, In all of life's ebb and flow.' Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go."

February 18—Praying & Giving Thanks (Ephesians 1:16)

Ephesians 1:16: "I do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

<u>Verse 16</u>: Paul states he does <u>two</u> things because of his "love toward all the saints":

- 1. Gives thanks for them.
- 2. Prays for them.

His example teaches them that believers are responsible for one another.

If a person has faith in the Lord Jesus and love is demonstrated toward all the saints, he will:

- 1. Give thanks for other members of the family.
- 2. Pray that the Lord will have His way in their lives.

Giving thanks and offering prayers was not a spasmodic occurrence, but a continuous remembrance. We are reminded of Paul's challenge to the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing.

The apostle is able to give thanks by looking at their past performance. As he looks toward their future, he continues to pray for them. This is how Paul shows his love to them.

Charles H. Spurgeon in Morning and Evening says:

This hourly dependence our Lord is determined that we shall feel and recognize, for He only permits us to pray for "daily bread," and only promises that "as our days our strength shall be." Is it not best for us that it should be so, that we may often repair to

His throne, and constantly be reminded of His love? Oh! how rich the grace which supplies us so continually, and doth not refrain itself because of our ingratitude! The golden shower never ceases, the cloud of blessing tarries evermore above our habitation. O Lord Jesus, we would bow at Thy feet, conscious of our utter inability to do anything without Thee, and in every favour which we are privileged to receive, we would adore Thy blessed name and acknowledge Thine unexhausted love.

Oswald Chambers said: "We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but Jesus wants us to pray before we do anything at all."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "He Keeps Me Singing": "Feasting on the riches of His grace, Resting 'neath His sheltering wing, Always looking on His smiling face, That is why I shout and sing. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go."

February 19—A Spirit of Wisdom (Ephesians 1:17)

Ephesians 1:17: "In order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him."

<u>Verse 17</u>: The beginning clause of this verse tells us Paul's purpose in praying for them. In order that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit" of:

- 1. Wisdom.
- 2. Revelation in a knowledge of Him.

If you make the reference to "a spirit" the Holy Spirit, you have the Trinity in this verse. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of glory. A spirit [Holy Spirit] of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him [Jesus Christ]."

Paul's purpose for praying for the Ephesians in the previous verse is found in this verse: God "may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in a knowledge of Him."

James 1:15 (NASB): "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." It could be paraphrased: "... give them an enlarged capacity to understand your plan." However, you don't enlarge any capacity without stress. There is no gain without pain.

Therefore, the apostle is praying that their capacity to receive further revelation in a knowledge of Him would be enlarged.

The more you know Him, the more you will love Him.

Joni Eareckson Tada says: "For wisdom is more than just seeing our problems through God's eyes—it's also trusting Him even when the pieces don't seem to fit."

Catherine Marshall said: "God allows us to have disappointments, frustrations, or even worse because He wants us to see that our joy is not in such worldly pleasures ... our joy is in the fact that we have a relationship with God."

Joni Eareckson Tada also says: "Your life is no exception to God's delight in arranging coincidences."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "He Keeps Me Singing": "Though sometimes He leads through waters deep, Trials fall across the way, Though sometimes the path seems rough and steep, See His footprints all the way; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go."

February 20—The Eyes of Your Heart (Ephesians 1:18)

Ephesians 1:18: "The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

<u>Verse 18</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers."

Psalm 119:18 (NIV): "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

Psalm 119:37 (NIV): "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word."

Paul requests this knowledge by revelation or curriculum for knowing the Lord better to manifest itself in <u>three</u> areas:

- 1. The hope of His calling.
- 2. The wealth of the glory of His inheritance.
- 3. The surpassing greatness of His power.

We know so little. How limited is our understanding!

This verse of Paul's prayer: "the eyes of your heart having been enlightened" is the result of the process in verse 17: wisdom has been enlarged and a greater "revelation in a knowledge of Him [Christ]."

"The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened." The "heart" to the Greek mind referred to the total personality.

"What is the hope of His calling." This references verse 4: "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him."

He called us to conform to the image of Jesus Christ. It is called a *high* calling in Philippians 3:14. In 2 Timothy 1:9, it is called a *holy* calling. Then, it is called a *heavenly* calling in Hebrews 3:1. From these passages, we gather that the Father's role in calling us is so He might be ultimately glorified through us.

"What is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Paul desires for these Christians to know the riches God has as an "inheritance in the saints." As a result of the Father's selection, the Son's payment of salvation and the Spirit's sealing; we have become an "inheritance" of God the Father.

In the next verse, we see: "What is the surpassing greatness of His power." These <u>three</u> concepts compose His plan for getting to know Him. Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* said:

The grave danger of fixing one's eyes upon an experience, however exalted and blessed, instead of upon Him who bestowed it was expressed very tellingly by Spurgeon when he said,

"I looked at Christ
And the dove of peace flew into my heart;
I looked at the dove of peace—
And it flew away."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 5 of "He Keeps Me Singing": "Soon He's coming back to welcome me Far beyond the starry sky; I shall wing my flight to worlds unknown, I shall reign with Him on high. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know, Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go."

February 21—His Power (Ephesians 1:19)

Ephesians 1:19: "And what is the surpassing greatness of His power in us who are believing, according to the working of His great might."

<u>Verse 19</u>: The little word "and" indicates this verse is a continuation of the argument from the previous verse. The phrases of "what is" help tie these <u>two</u> verses together.

In the previous verse, Paul prayed: "the eyes of your hearts having been enlightened that you may know":

- 1. What is the hope of His calling.
- 2. What is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Then, in this verse:

3. What is the surpassing greatness of His power in us who are believing. In Jesus' last words before He ascended into heaven, we have the promise of

In Jesus' last words before He ascended into heaven, we have the promise of this power in Acts 1:8 (NASB): "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

In this verse, we have the single condition of salvation: "who are believing." Jesus said in John 15:5 (NASB): "... for apart from Me you can do nothing."

God is willing to do for us all that His grace and power will allow.

Philippians 4:13, Paul said: "I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong."

The source of power for the car is the engine. It would be powerless to go anywhere if not for the activity of the engine. Our source of power is the Spirit of God who energizes us from within.

2 Corinthians 12:9: "And He has said to me, 'My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "There Is Power in the Blood"?: "Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb; There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb."

February 22—Power Operative in Christ (Ephesians 1:20)

Ephesians 1:20: "Which was operative in the Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places."

<u>Verse 20</u>: The word "which" is referencing "His great might" in the previous verse. There are $\underline{\text{two}}$ ways in which His great might was operative in Christ:

- 1. He raised Him from the dead.
- 2. He seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places.

The power Paul spoke of in the previous verse not only raised Christ from the dead, but was also operative in seating Him at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places.

Philippians 3:10: "that I might come to know Him (experientially, personally), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

"Seating Him at His right hand" is a place of honor, authority and joy.

Charles R. Swindoll in *Embraced by the Spirit* says: "God is able to do what He pleases with whomever He chooses whenever He wishes. His Spirit, alive in us, is all-powerful. But He is also sovereign; He has the right to choose whom He will, for whatever purpose He would be delighted in, for His glory, at whatever time He may select."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "There Is Power In The Blood": "Would you be free from your passion and pride? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide; There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb; There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb."

February 23—Far Above (Ephesians 1:21)

Ephesians 1:21: "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is being named, not only in this age, but also in the one about to come."

<u>Verse 21</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "In charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever."

The apostle uses <u>five</u> words that describe total sovereignty as he begins the verse "far above all": (1) rule, (2) authority, (3) power, (4) dominion, and (5) every name that is being named.

Paul concludes the verse with a negative and a positive. Negatively, "not only in this age," but also positively, "in the one about to come."

This seating is above <u>five</u> different realms described in this verse. This all-encompassing exaltation is also described in Philippians 2:9-11: "Therefore also God exalted Him to the highest place, and graciously bestowed upon Him the name which is above every name, in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess (plainly and openly agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This is not a temporary exaltation which will come to an end, but will continue into the eternal state.

The following devotional is from Kristin Armstrong's *Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce.* She says:

A COMPLETE OVERHAUL

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"
REVELATION 21:5

All things. Not just some things. Everything.

Everything about your life can and will be renewed. God begins with the renovation of your heart and works outward, touching every aspect of your life.

He will make you brand-new. He will replenish all your relationships. He will cast your circumstances in a new light. He will renew your energy to ensure you have enough courage and endurance. He will reinvigorate your faith. He will give you clear eyes to see His majesty in everything and everyone. He will give you fresh understanding and an awakening of appreciation.

A small smile will spread into a full-blown grin as you watch Him work His magic on you. He fits it all together one puzzle piece at a time, giving you a whole new picture.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "There Is Power In The Blood": "Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Sin stains are lost in its life giving flow. There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb; There is pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb."

February 24—The Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Ephesians 1:22: "And all things He put in subjection under His feet, and Him, He gave as head over all things to the church."

Ephesians 1:23: "Which is His body, the fullness of the One who is filling all things with all things."

<u>Verse 22</u>: "All things" is mentioned <u>twice</u> in this passage. Paul uses this repetition to help us understand this is a (1) universal, (2) total, and (3) comprehensive rule by Jesus Christ, our Savior, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Psalm 103:19 (NIV): "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all." $^{\circ}$

"And all things He put in subjection under His feet." Christ has the supreme right to rule which is possible because of God's power.

"And Him, He gave as head over all things to the church." This is a display of His power. Christ alone is the "head over all things to the church."

Colossians 1:18: "And He Himself is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning (creator, originator), the first-born out from the dead, in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things."

<u>Verse 23</u>: The word "which" refers to the "church" in the previous verse. The church "is His body." Paul will discuss the church more indepthly later in this epistle.

Dear Lord,

It is my prayer that You might enlarge my capacity for wisdom, that I might experience a deeper understanding and knowledge of my Savior.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 4 of "There Is Power In The Blood": "Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Would you live daily His praises to sing? There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb; There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb."

February 25—He Made Us Alive (Ephesians 2:1)

Ephesians 2:1: "And you He made alive when you were dead through your trespasses and sins."

Radmacher, Allen & House say of Ephesians 2:1–10: "This is probably the clearest exposition of the gospel in all of Paul's epistles: We are saved by grace through faith totally apart from human merit or works. It is not that Christians do not do good works (we were created for this purpose), but that they are not a requirement or proof of acceptance with God. Luther summarized it succinctly: It is not against *works* that we contend, but against *trust* in works."

<u>Verse 1</u>: These first <u>three</u> verses of chapter 2 describe us before Christ came into our lives.

The Message paraphrases this verse: "It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin."

It is unfortunate that a chapter break comes at this point since this is a continuation of thought from the apostle. In the latter part of Ephesians chapter 1, we have a demonstration of God's power in raising Christ from the dead, seating Him at His right hand and putting everything in subjection under His feet. However, there is also a tremendous manifestation of His power in giving us life spiritually when we come to know Christ.

"When you were dead through your trespasses and sins." Romans 6:23 (KJV): "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

MacArthur says: "First, salvation is from sin, which characterizes life before Christ. In these three verses there is perhaps no clearer statement in Scripture on the sinfulness of man apart from Christ."

Henry Drummond said: "Sin is a ceaseless, undying power in our life. A ceaseless, undying power must come against it. And there is only one such power in the universe—only one, which has a chance against sin: the power of the living Christ."

Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* said: "In all parts of the world we see man out of adjustment with God, with his fellow men and with himself. Hatred, war, discontent, restlessness, crime, lawlessness, anarchy, prevail."

"And you" refers to Gentile believers. "And you He made alive when you were dead through your trespasses and sins."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "A New Name in Glory"?: "I was once a sinner, but I came Pardon to receive from my Lord: This was freely given, and I found That He always kept His word. There's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! And the white robed angels sing the story, 'A sinner has come home.' For there's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! With my sins forgiven I am bound for Heaven, Never more to roam."

February 26—Walking The Wrong Way (Ephesians 2:2)

Ephesians 2:2: "In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

<u>Verse 2</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience."

"In which" refers to the "sins" in the previous verse.

"You once walked" is a reference to the activities of life in which you were once involved.

The three enemies of the believer are listed in verses 2 and 3:

- 1. The world—verse 2.
- 2. The devil—verse 2.
- 3. The flesh—verse 3.

Note that before becoming a Christian, the walk of the unbeliever was "according to the course of this world."

"According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." This is a reference to Satan, the god of this world.

The glorious truth is announced in Colossians 1:13-14: "Who rescued us out of the domain of the darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we are having our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins."

The final phrase of this verse is: "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." There is a contrast of headships: (1) the church as His body with (2) Christ as the head, and (3) Satan as head of the world's system.

They are called "sons of disobedience" because no one can have two bosses. He will either hate the one and love the other, or he will listen to the one and work against the other. You cannot have both God and Satan as your boss at the same time.

J. Vernon McGee says: "The description of our past is not very pretty. We walked according to the spirit of the age. We conformed to the society and the civilization and the life-style of the world. We were walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that energizes the sons of disobedience. That is Satan and he takes folks and leads them around."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "A New Name in Glory": "I was humbly kneeling at the cross, Fearing naught by God's angry frown; When the heavens opened and I saw That my name was written down. There's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! And the white robed angels sing the story, 'A sinner has come home.' For there's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! With my sins forgiven I am bound for Heaven, Never more to roam."

February 27—Children of Wrath (Ephesians 2:3)

Ephesians 2:3: "Among these we all once lived in the desires of our flesh, practicing the desires of our flesh and of our thoughts, and were children of wrath by nature, as also the rest."

<u>Verse 3</u>: Notice Paul changes from "you" in verse 2, referring to the Gentiles, to "we" and "our" in verse 3, including Jews and Gentiles together.

"Among these we all." Romans 3:23 (NASB): "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who are holding down the truth by unrighteousness."

"Among these" refers to the sons of disobedience in the previous verse. Among these [sons of disobedience] we all once lived. We thought like they did. We socialized in the same activities. Most of us adopted the same philosophy of life—eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Paul emphasizes three points in this verse. We all once:

- 1. Lived in the desires of our flesh.
- 2. Practiced the desires of our flesh and our thoughts.
- 3. Were children of wrath by nature.

"Were children of wrath by nature, as also the rest." We didn't become "children of wrath" at some point in life. We began as children of wrath as did Adam because of the sin nature which dwells within us.

"Wrath" has always been God's attitude toward sin.

C.H. Spurgeon in Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers says:

The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all his commandments—some of them in act, some of them in world, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination.

Men by nature need something to be done for them before they can enter heaven, and something to be done in them, something to be done with them, for by nature they are enemies of God.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "A New Name in Glory": "In the Book 'tis written, 'Saved by Grace,' O the joy that came to my soul! Now I am forgiven, and I know By the blood I am made whole. There's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! And the white robed angels sing the story, 'A sinner has come home.' For there's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, O yes, it's mine! With my sins forgiven I am bound for Heaven, Never more to roam."

February 28—Wealthy in Mercy (Ephesians 2:4-5)

Ephesians 2:4: "But God, being wealthy in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us."

Ephesians 2:5: "Even when we were dead through our trespasses, He made us alive together with the Christ, by grace you have been saved."

<u>Verse 4</u>: The words "but God" give a glorious picture of hope regarding what God can do about our impossible situation. He is characterizes as being "wealthy in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us."

If it were not for these words "but God," we would still be living our lives "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air," and by "the desires of our flesh."

"But" forms a tremendous contrast in the passage.

"Being wealthy in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." This last phrase states the reason for His being wealthy in mercy toward us: "because of His great love."

John 15:13 (TLB): "And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends."

Barker & Kohlenberger say: "There is an inexhaustible treasury of such mercy in the loving heart of God."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Did my Lord forgive me all my sin? And after that will he ever be unkind to me? Did he lay down his life for me upon the accursed tree, and can I dream that he will desert me? Have I looked into the wounds of my dying Saviour, and shall I ever murmur if he should multiply pains and sufferings and losses and crosses to me? God forbid. Such love as his forbids all fear."

<u>Verse 5</u>: Our salvation involves identification with Christ in all that happened to Him.

This verse concludes: "by grace you have been saved." The perfect tense is used in the original language emphasizing completed action that has an ongoing continuing effect.

You have been (past), you now are (present) and you will continually be saved (future).

This is the <u>first</u> appearance of grace in this passage, but will occur in verses 7–8 as well.

Brennan Manning in *All Is Grace* says: "God loves you unconditionally, as you are and not as you should be, because nobody is as they should be. It is the message of grace, the life-shattering gift my heart experienced in February 1956. It is the life-sustaining gift I remain broken by now in February 2011."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "It's Just Like His Great Love": "A friend I have called Jesus, Whose love is strong and true And never fails, howe'er 'tis tried-no matter what I do. I've sinned against this love

of His; But when I knelt to pray, Confessing all my guilt to Him, the sin clouds rolled away. It's just like Jesus to roll the clouds away, It's just like Jesus to keep me day by day. It's just like Jesus all along the way, It's just like His great love."

February 29—Seated With Him (Ephesians 2:6-7)

Ephesians 2:6: "And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 2:7: "In order that He might demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of His grace in kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

<u>Verse 6</u>: Because the Christian has been raised up with Him and seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, the Christian no longer belongs to this world.

His life is our life. His authority is our authority. As God's great power was displayed in raising and seating Christ, His power was also displayed in "raising us up" and "seating us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The Scripture teaches that we have been:

- 1. Crucified with Christ.
- 2. Raised with Christ.
- 3. Seated with Christ in His place of authority at the Father's right hand.

<u>Verse 7</u>: In this verse, we have the statement of purpose behind all of God's actions toward us as hopeless sinners: "in order that He might demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of His grace in kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "It's Just Like His Great Love"?: "When sorrow's clouds o'er take me, And break upon my head, When life seems worse than useless And earthly hopes are dead; I take my grief to Jesus then; Nor do I go in vain, For heav'nly hope He gives that cheers Like sunshine after rain. It's just like Jesus to roll the clouds away, It's just like Jesus to keep me day by day. It's just like Jesus all along the way, It's just like His great love."

MARCH

March 1—By Grace Through Faith (Ephesians 2:8)

Ephesians 2:8: "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith; and this [salvation] is not of yourselves—it is the gift of God."

<u>Verse 8</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish!"

"For it is by grace." It is not something you can earn or deserve "that you have been saved." It is yours "through faith." This salvation is negatively, "not of yourselves," but positively, "it is the gift of God."

Paul wants to emphasize salvation is the gift of God and <u>not</u> something man can do.

As we noted in the first chapter, the selection, salvation, and sealing were all part

of God's plan. We had nothing to do with the plan. It is God's work totally apart from man.

God was not obligated to provide salvation. However, because He is wealthy in mercy and He loves us, He has made this gift possible by grace.

In God's plan for giving life:

- 1. Salvation is a gift.
- 2. Provided by grace.
- 3. Received through faith.

Am I willing to follow God's plan for giving life? Do I plan on drawing up one of my own?

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "It's Just Like His Great Love": "O, I could sing forever Of Jesus' love divine—Of all His care and tenderness For this poor life of mine. His love is in and over all, And wind and waves obey, When Jesus whispers, "Peace, be still!" And rolls the clouds away. It's just like Jesus to roll the clouds away, It's just like Jesus to keep me day by day. It's just like Jesus all along the way, It's just like His great love."

March 2—Not Because of Works (Ephesians 2:9)

Ephesians 2:9: "Not because of works, in order that no one might boast."

<u>Verse 9</u>: Our salvation is not because of works for the express purpose "that no one might boast." If our salvation was based upon human merit and achievement, then man would be able to glorify that he had helped to save himself.

If for a moment God had thought that we could do it on our own, He would not have needed to take the drastic measures of sending Jesus Christ to the cross.

At this point in our study, there is no other conclusion that could be reached. Salvation is the gift of God, not of works.

Our *selection* took place before the foundation of the world. Our *salvation* is provided through the death of Christ upon the cross. We are *sealed* by the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing the delivery of God's property to its ultimate destination. God has made us alive in our trespasses and sins. He has seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Joni Eareckson Tada in A Place of Healing says:

A few years ago I remember sitting on the stage at a large pastors' conference in the Philippines. I was so excited to be in such an exotic place, especially during the monsoon season. And sure enough, outside a heavy monsoon rain was falling while the crowd, inside the large hall, was being entertained by a small band of Filipino musicians. Their music was intricate and lively, and the audience was enthralled with their performance.

Suddenly a loud crash of thunder shook the hall, and in the next instant, the entire conference hall was plunged into darkness.

The powerful storm had caused the lights to go out. But nobody had bothered to explain that to the *blind* musical troupe! Unfazed in the pitch-blackness of the hall, the musicians played on without skipping a beat.

When their song was over, the audience burst into thunderous applause. The darkness gave us all a unique and amazing appreciation for the extraordinary talent God had given these blind musicians. But what really turned up the wattage on the praise that night was the fact that these artists *played through the dark*.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "**He Touched Me**": "Shackled by a heavy burden, 'Neath a load of guilt and shame—Then the hand of Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer the same. He touched me, O, He touched me, And O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, He touched me and made me whole."

March 3—We Are His Creation (Ephesians 2:10)

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, in order that we should walk in them."

<u>Verse 10</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This verse, beginning with For, tells why this salvation is not from man or by his works. The reason is that salvation is God's workmanship. The word "workmanship" ... used only here and in Romans 1:20 ... denotes a work of art or a masterpiece. It differs from human "works".... Believers are God's workmanship because they have been created ... in Christ Jesus.... The purpose of this creation is that believers will do good works. God's workmanship is not achieved by good works, but it is to result in good works.

"We are His creation." We are the work of His hands. He's the potter and we are the clay.

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."

"Created in Christ Jesus for good works." John 15:16 (KJV): "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

These "good works" are part of God's plan for us "which God prepared beforehand." Why did He do this? "In order that we should walk in them."

Westcott says: "For it is His workmanship—of His making—we are ... The position of the pronoun is emphatic."

In Authentic Faith, Gary L. Thomas says:

We come back to where we started: All of us are born selfish, arrogant, egocentric beings. Out of this beginning, we are asked to cooperate with God's Spirit to forge lives of selflessness, compassion, and love. This transformation is impossible apart from suffering. Don't be so quick to reject the very thing that will most help you become mature.

"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us" (Romans 5:3–5).

Many Christians don't fail; they just quit before they get ripe.

Ruth Myers in her book, *Christ / Life*, says: "As the Lord continually trains, teaches, refines, and disciplines us, we'll more and more fulfill our God-designed destiny as His masterpieces."

If your salvation rests on any other foundation than Jesus Christ, you won't make it.

John Hannah said: "No one who is ever in hell will be able to say to God, 'You put me here,' and no one who is in heaven will ever be able to say, 'I put myself here."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "He Touched Me": "Since I met this blessed Savior, Since He cleansed and made me whole; I will never cease to praise Him - I'll shout it while eternity rolls. He touched me, O, He touched me, And O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, He touched me and made me whole."

March 4—Remember Where We Started (Ephesians 2:11)

Ephesians 2:11: "Therefore remember, that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands."

Verse 11: "A Call to Remembrance" would be a good title for this passage of the epistle.

The first two words in this verse and passage are "therefore remember." Jesus gave this same directive in the Upper Room when He said: "... this do in remembrance of Me. As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup ..."

In this passage, Paul describes God's plan for peace. This involves a remembrance of <u>three</u> things:

- 1. The *past* before the change.
- 2. A *person* behind the change.
- 3. The results of the change.

Ruth Myers in her book, The Perfect Love, says:

The gospel is very old truth. But it can never be only old truth for us. Romans 1:16 says that the gospel is the power of God for salvation, and salvation has three tenses: I have been saved from the penalty of sin (past tense); in this life now I am being saved from the power of sin—through victory over sin and forgiveness when I fail (present); and in eternity, I will be saved from the presence of sin when I appear before Him in glory with my indwelling sin gone forever (future).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Paul commanded them to remember that formerly, before their conversions, they were Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by Jews."

"Therefore" references the previous passage and specifically verse 10: "we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

Paul urges us to "remember" or call to mind what he illuminates in the following verses, verses 11-22. The word "remember" is in the present active imperative. It should be a daily experience and ongoing.

"That at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands." The Jews enjoyed calling the Gentiles the "uncircumcision" and referring to themselves as "the circumcision." This is a reference to the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis. The sign or mark of the Covenant people was circumcision.

Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "At Calvary"?: "Years I spent in vanity and pride, Caring not my Lord was crucified, Knowing not it was for me He died On Calvary. Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary."

March 5—Without God in the World (Ephesians 2:12)

Ephesians 2:12: "Because you were at that time separated from Christ, having been excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, not having hope, and without God in the world."

Verse 12: The apostle describes the Ephesians' past in the following five ways:

1. "Separated from Christ."

All of the blessings and promises have their source in Christ. Since the Gentiles were outside of this realm, they were also separated from Christ.

2. "Having been excluded from the commonwealth of Israel."

God had chosen the nation of Israel as the instrument through whom He

would work. The Gentiles were outside of this nation.

3. "Strangers from the covenants of promise."

God established numerous covenants in His relationship to the nation of Israel. Some were conditional and others unconditional. Because the Gentiles were outside the nation of Israel, they were strangers to the covenants made to that nation.

4. "Not having hope."

The promise of God is the only hope for any individual. If they are a stranger to God's covenants of promise, then they would not have hope.

5. "Without God in the world."

This is a very sad picture. They were totally helpless and hopeless apart from God. As Gentiles, they were separated, excluded and strangers: "not having hope and without God in the world."

The following devotional is from Kristin Armstrong's *Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce.* She says:

STILL STANDING

Though it cost all you have, get understanding. PROVERBS 4:7

Funny how it works ... when everything you thought was most valuable is taken from you, the thing that truly is the most valuable is revealed. When you lose your marriage, your family, your money, your job, your status, your comfort zone, your health, your home, your friend, your reputation ... anything you thought you could never do without; you realize with amazement that you are still standing.

That is when you finally realize that Jesus is the Rock. Sometimes we have to chip away at the earth to get to the rock.

Take solace that this understanding will prevent you from ever being so hurt or empty ever again. You are now equipped to face whatever comes your way. This is your workshop for faithful living.

Though it seems to have cost all you had, you finally understand that wisdom is priceless. Now you are ready to rebuild, this time with wisdom at the core.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "At Calvary": "By God's Word at last my sin I learned, Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned, Till my guilty soul imploring turned To Calvary. Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary."

March 6—The Miracle of Salvation (Ephesians 2:13)

Ephesians 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near in the blood of Christ."

<u>Verse 13</u>: In verses 13–18, Paul directs attention to the Person responsible for the new plan. In the previous verse, the apostle told them who they were. In this verse, he tells them what they are "now in Christ Jesus."

"But now" forms a sharp contrast. The present stands in opposition to the past. "You who were once far away have been brought near in the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we are having our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace."

Through the shedding of His blood at Calvary, Jesus accomplished the possibility of a relationship with God for everyone.

The terms "far away" and "near" were often used to describe one's relationship to Israel. "Far away" were those not of Israel. "Near" were those of Israel.

Susanna Wesley said: "All my sufferings, by admirable management of omnipotent Goodness, have concurred to promote my spiritual and eternal good."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "At Calvary": "Now I've giv'n to Jesus ev'rything; Now I gladly own Him as my King; Now my raptured soul can only sing Of Calvary! Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary."

March 7—He Is Our Peace (Ephesians 2:14)

Ephesians 2:14: "For He is our peace, the One who made us both one, and has broken down the barrier formed by the dividing wall between us."

<u>Verse 14</u>: "For He [Christ] is our peace, the One who made us both one, and has broken down the barrier formed by the dividing wall between us."

It is God's plan through the death of Christ upon the cross to bring the Jew and the Gentile together in one body.

Ephesians 1:10: "With reference to a plan for the fullness of the times, to bring everything together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him."

In this verse, Paul gives the reason why those who are far away have been brought near: "He [Christ] is our peace."

The original text would emphasize "He" as Himself and no other. "He is our peace." God's plan for peace resides in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds us Christ has done two things:

- 1. He has made us both one in (1) privilege and (2) position toward God.
- 2. He has broken down the barrier (the Mosaic law) formed by the dividing wall between us. The Mosaic law was a hedge dividing Jew from Gentile.

MacArthur says: "He Himself. This emphatically indicates that Jesus alone is the believer's source of peace." Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 4 of "At Calvary": "O, the love that drew salvation's plan! O, the grace that brought it down to man! O, the mighty gulf that God did span At Calvary! Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary."

March 8—One New Man Making Peace (Ephesians 2:15)

Ephesians 2:15: "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the Law of the commandments in ordinances, in order that of the two He might create in Himself one new man, making peace."

<u>Verse 15</u>: The word translated "abolished" could be better translated "rendered inoperative."

The conflict between Jesus, the scribes and the Pharisees is seen graphically in John 8 with the one who is captured committing adultery. The Pharisees and Sadducees confronted Christ, stating she should be killed according to the Law of Moses. They asked, "What do you say?" Jesus said to her in John 8:11 (NASB): "Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more."

The Mosaic law served as a barrier until the cross of Christ. The entire Mosaic Law of commandments and ordinances was made void: "in order that of the two He might create in Himself one new man, making peace."

As part of God's plan for peace, the death of Christ sets aside that which divides so that through the Jew and Gentile "He might create in Himself one new man" which results in "making peace."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "There Is A Fountain"?: "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood Shall never lose its pow'r Till all the ransomed Church of God Be saved, to sin no more: Be saved, to sin no more, Be saved, to sin no more; Till all the ransomed Church of God Be saved, to sin no more."

March 9—One Body (Ephesians 2:16)

Ephesians 2:16: "And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, having put to death the enmity by it."

<u>Verse 16</u>: This reconciliation accomplished through the death of Christ upon the cross has <u>two</u> parts It is the reconciliation of the Jew and Gentile into (1) one new man and (2) one body. There is a *vertical* reconciliation between Jew, Gentile and God. Then, there is a *horizontal* reconciliation between Jew and Gentile. Both reconciliations take place through the cross.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "If the Saviour has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, He has nothing in you of a saving character."

Warren W. Wiersbe in The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2 quotes A.W. Tozer:

The believer's own cross is one he has assumed voluntarily. Therein lies the difference between his cross and the cross on which Roman convicts died. They went to the cross against their will; he, because he chooses to do so. No Roman officer ever pointed to a cross and said, "If any man will, let him." Only Christ said that, and by so saying He placed the whole matter in the hands of the Christian. He can refuse to take his cross, or he can stoop and take it up and start for the dark hill. The difference between great sainthood and spiritual mediocrity depends upon which choice he makes.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "There Is A Fountain": "E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die: And shall be till I die; Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die: "

March 10—Proclaiming Peace (Ephesians 2:17)

Ephesians 2:17: "And having come, He proclaimed peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near."

Verse 17: In the previous verses, He obtained peace. Now, He proclaims peace. He proclaims peace to those "who were far off" and "to those who were near." This proclamation of peace is for both Jew and Gentile through His servants.

2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making his appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

In Kristin Armstrong's Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce, she says:

Like in the famous poem "Footprints" which describes one set of footprints in the sand, the Lord carries us through life's rough patches.

Let Him pick you up, dust you off, and carry you. Allow for one set of prints in the sand. Realize that He can do it so much better than we can. He will carry you all the way to the other side, setting you down tenderly and safely on solid ground.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 5 of "There Is A Fountain": "When this poor lisping, stammering tongue Lies silent in the grave. Then in a nobler, sweeter song I'll sing Thy pow'r to save: I'll sing Thy pow'r to save, I'll sing Thy pow'r to save, Then in a nobler, sweeter song I'll sing Thy pow'r to save."

March 11—Access By One Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

Ephesians 2:18: "Because through Him we are both having access by one Spirit to the Father."

<u>Verse 18</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "As so often in this book the work of the Trinity is seen. Here believers have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ's death on the cross."

This verse provides proof that peace is possible.

Under the old legal system, it was necessary for the priest to represent the people on the day of atonement. He alone had access into the presence of God. Because of the death of Christ, we now have the privilege to come into the presence of the Father as a result of our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 10:21–22: "And since [we are having] a great priest over the house of God, let us keep on drawing near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having had our hearts sprinkled [clean] from an evil conscience and our body having been washed with pure water."

The word "access" means "to have the right and privilege of coming into." We now have "access" because of our relationship to Jesus Christ: "through Him."

1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus."

"Through Him [Christ] we are both having access by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] to the Father." Our introduction is to the Father, through the Son and by the Spirit.

Stedman says:

Our holy Father, we thank you for the access we have to you, our loving heavenly Father. We thank you that you accept us, enjoy us, glory in us, and are tenderly concerned about the most intimate details of our needs. Father, how foolish we have often been, to stand in self-righteous judgment against others. Father, forgive us for that. How like that unrighteous steward we have often been, when we have been forgiven so much, but have been unwilling to extend forgiveness to another. Awaken us, Lord, to the great debt we have before you. Help us to believe the message of peace which has been preached, to understand the announcement of the Holy Spirit to our hearts, and thus to enter into the joy of life with you. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verses 1 and 4 of "God Will Take Care of You": "Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take

care of you; Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you. No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you; Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev'ry day, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you."

March 12—Fellow-Citizens With The Saint (Ephesians 2:19)

Ephesians 2:19: "So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of God's household."

Verse 19: In this study, we have examined God's plan for peace. We have noted: (1) A call to remembrance of the past in verses 11–12 and (2) His plan for peace is in a Person, Jesus Christ, in verses 13–18. The past is referenced in verses 11–12 and the present in verses 13–18.

In this verse, we begin to see the result of His plan for peace.

"So then" is a favorite conclusion phrase of the apostle. He begins the conclusion of this passage and makes his applications. He states \underline{two} negatives and \underline{two} positives.

Negatively, (1) "you are no longer strangers," but because you are now members of His family and sons through a relationship, (2) "you are no longer ... foreigners." Because He has made us sons and also seated us at His right hand, we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but positively, (1) "you are fellow-citizens with the saints" and (2) "members of God's household."

What a dramatic change takes place when we respond to the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

Psalm 77:12 (NIV): "I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds."

Ruth Paxson in Life on the Highest Plane said:

The process of conformity is going on day by day in the spiritual man's life. It is a transformation from obedience to obedience, from dependence to dependence, from victory to victory, from holiness to holiness, from righteousness to righteousness and from love to love. As the spiritual man gets a larger vision of this perfect pattern through daily study of God's Word, he takes higher ground along the line of the God-given revelation, so that his life is a continuous growing up into Christ in all things.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of one of Fanny Crosby's great hymns, "To God Be The Glory"?: "To God be the glory, great things He hath done, So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the Life-gate that all may go in. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."

March 13—The Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)

Ephesians 2:20: "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone."

<u>Verse 20</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Paul described the church as a great building, a holy temple in which God dwells. This figure of God dwelling in a temple comes from the Old Testament. Paul wrote of the building's foundation (v. 20), formation (v. 21), and function (v. 22)."

In his epistle, Peter also speaks of the saints being part of a building in 1 Peter 2:5: "And you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

This building is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and [New Testament] prophets." The Lord Jesus has a unique place in this building. He is referenced as "being the chief cornerstone."

During Paul's time, the cornerstone was put at the juncture of two walls. This allowed the two walls to be tied together by the one stone which belonged to both walls. This beautifully illustrates God's plan for peace in the previous verses to make both Jew and Gentile one in the Person of Christ.

Ruth Myers in her book, 31 Days of Praise, said:

C. S. Lewis wrote that a car is made to run on gas, and it won't run properly on anything else. Likewise, God made us to run on Himself. He is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn and the food our spirits were designed to feed on. So it's no use trying to find inner release and power and fulfillment apart from God. There is no such thing. And God has given us His life and power through our inner union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "To God Be The Glory": "O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood! To ev'ry believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."

March 14—A Dwelling Place for God (Ephesians 2:21-22)

Ephesians 2:21: "In whom the whole building is joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."

Ephesians 2:22: "In whom also you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Verse 21: "In whom" refers to Christ, the chief cornerstone.

"The whole building is joined together." This is an architectural metaphor.

Joel C. Rosenberg in his book, *Implosion*, says:

As deeply grieved as I am by the spiritual blindness and the shocking moral brokenness of our nation, I am even more deeply grieved by the state of the church in America. Where are the Christians? Where is the church? What difference are we making? The answer is painful to hear, but we must say it anyway. Too many people who say they are Christians are asleep or distracted or intoxicated by the world. Like the old country song says, too many people who say they are Christians are "looking for love in all the wrong places." They have been seeking love and meaning and purpose outside of Christ and his love. As a result, the church is as weak as—or even weaker than—the culture itself.

<u>Verse 22</u>: "In whom" again refers back to Christ Jesus. God's plan for peace is accomplished in Him.

"You are being built together." "You" refers to both Jews and Gentiles who have come to know Christ.

We see the reason for this building in the last phrase: "for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

In Nearing Home, Billy Graham says:

I often wonder if God, in His sovereignty, allows the eyesight of the aged to cast a dim view of the here and now so that we may focus our spiritual eyes on the ever after.

IMMANUEL'S LAND

The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace;
Not on the crown he giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

—Samuel Rutherford

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "To God Be The Glory": "Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, And great our rejoicing thro' Jesus the Son; But purer and higher and greater will be Our wonder, our

transport, when Jesus we see. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."

March 15—Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-2)

Ephesians 3:1: "Because of this I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles."

Ephesians 3:2: "Assuming that you heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you."

<u>Verse 1</u>: "Because of this" references the truth in Ephesians 2:22: "In whom also you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Paul identifies himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles." At this time, the apostle was a Roman prison, a prisoner of the Roman government. However, everything that happened in his life was (1) permitted by God, (2) for God's purpose, and (3) for Paul's ultimate good. Therefore, Paul could speak of himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus."

Paul believed in the sovereignty of God. He believed in God's purpose and plan for his life. This gave him the confidence to state that whatever happened to him happened because of Christ Jesus.

I personally need to be reminded of this daily. On my desk, I have the words: "Don, trust Me. I have everything under control. Signed, Jesus"

<u>Verse 2</u>: "In whom also you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." We see the grace of God <u>three</u> times in this passage. This verse is the <u>first</u>:

- 1. The grace of God which was given to me for you—verse 2.
- 2. The grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power—verse 7.
- 3. This grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ—verse 8.

Every time you have "the grace of God," it is a gift which is given. You cannot earn or deserve this grace.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of another Fanny Crosby hymn, "He Hideth My Soul": "A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, A wonderful Savior to me; He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, Where rivers of pleasure I see. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

March 16—A Revelation of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:3)

Ephesians 3:3: "That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, even as I have written above in brief."

Verse 3: The Message paraphrases this verse: "I got the inside story on this from

God himself, as I just wrote you in brief."

In verses 3, 4 and 9, Paul references the "mystery." He explains where he received this "mystery" described in Ephesians 2:11–22, revealing that Jew and Gentile would be reconciled to God in one body through the cross.

The important words in this section are (1) revelation and (2) mystery. The "mystery" necessitates "revelation." The "revelation" was first unknown.

This mystery is not the mystery of a new age or specifically the mystery of the church, His body. This mystery regards the revelation to Paul that Gentiles were to be admitted equally with Jews as heirs of Christ in one body

Max Anders said: "For thousands of years God kept a secret in his heart, hidden from the world, from the angels, from the priests, from the patriarchs, and from the prophets until the time came for him to reveal it through his Son to his holy apostles."

The Navigators say: "There was nothing 'mysterious' or incomprehensible about God's secret. It was simply kept until God chose to reveal it, and now it is absolutely not to be kept private."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "He Hideth My Soul"?: "A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, He taketh my burden away; He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved, He giveth me strength as my day. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

March 17—The Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4)

Ephesians 3:4: "In order that, when you are reading, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ."

<u>Verse 4</u>: Paul states his purpose for writing this passage: "In order that, when you are reading, you are able to understand my insight [because of the revelation given to me] into the mystery of Christ."

Eadie says: "You can while reading perceive my insight in the mystery of Christ.' When this epistle reached them it was presumed that they would read it; and as they read it, they would feel their competence. The present participle expresses contemporaneous action—the reading being parallel in time to the perception."

Jesus says in John 16:13 (NASB): "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

Hendriksen says: "One can say that the mystery is, in a sense, Christ himself, that is Christ in all his glorious riches actually dwelling through his Spirit in the hearts and lives of both Jews and Gentiles, united in one body, the church."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "He Hideth My Soul": "With numberless blessings each moment He crowns, And

filled with His fullness divine, I sing in my rapture, O, glory to God For such a Redeemer as mine! He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

March 18—Made Known by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5)

Ephesians 3:5: "Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

<u>Verse 5</u>: In this verse, "which" refers to the "mystery of Christ." This "mystery of Christ" was "not made known [in other generations] to the sons of men."

Lovett says:

The truth of the body of Christ, in which God would live, was reserved for N.T. preaching where it was to become a startling dimension of Christ's glory.... Indeed it was hidden. Who expected the Messiah to show up as a Carpenter and be crucified by His own people? Once that happened, a whole new program went into effect. The church, the new program, had to remain a mystery until Jesus was disowned by Israel. God's nation could have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit to become God's spiritual house, but she forfeited the privilege.

Colossians 1:26–27: "The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations; but now made known to His saints, to whom God desired to make known what is the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Negatively, it "was not made known to the sons of men," but positively, "it has been revealed."

"It has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Ephesians 2:20: "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone."

MacArthur says: "In verse 5 Paul defines the general meaning of mystery as it is used in the New Testament, and in verse 6 he identifies the particular mystery he is explaining to the Ephesians."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "He Hideth My Soul": "When clothed in His brightness, transported I rise To meet Him in clouds of the sky, His perfect salvation, His wonderful love, I'll shout with the millions on high. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."

March 19—Partakers of the Promise (Ephesians 3:6)

Ephesians 3:6: "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

<u>Verse 6</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Paul now defined the mystery. In three compound nouns he stated that the Gentile believers with the Jewish believers are (a) heirs together (i.e., "fellow heirs," ...) of God's riches (1:3–14), (b) are of the same body ..., and (c) are sharers together in the promise (the messianic promise ...) in Christ Jesus."

This specific plan for the body of Christ was a mystery to be revealed during New Testament times. It was made possible with the death of Christ upon the cross.

In this verse, Paul makes three statements about the Gentiles position:

1. They are fellow-heirs.

In this new relationship, Jew and Gentile alike have the same inheritance. They are heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

2. They belong to the same body.

There are not two separate inheritances and two separate bodies, but one inheritance and one body. Both belong to this body of Christ.

3. They are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.

It is the promise of His coming again to take the church, His body, to be with Himself.

Each of these glorious provisions are "in Christ Jesus through the gospel." The key in this verse is recognizing the truth of (1) one inheritance, (2) one body, and (3) one coming, when Jesus Christ comes to take His bride home.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "This World Is Not My Home": "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through, My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue; The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore. O Lord, I know, I have no friend like you, If heaven's not my home O Lord, what can I do? The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

March 20—The Gift of the Grace of God (Ephesians 3:7)

Ephesians 3:7: "Of which I became a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power."

<u>Verse 7</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The Greek more clearly implies that Paul's service was initiated by 'the gift of God's grace' and continues by 'the working ... of His power."

"Of which" makes reference to the "gospel" in verse 6. Paul "became a minis-

ter" of this gospel. His ministry was (1) "according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to [him]" and (2) "according to the manifestation of His power."

These verses teach that the "mystery" Paul makes known came to him by a "revelation" from God and not from Paul himself. His ministry is not his own, but because of "the gift of the grace of God." It is a "manifestation of His power" working through the apostle.

The mystery and the ministry are all God's work. Paul is just an instrument through whom God is working.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Paul assumed no place of superiority in the knowledge of the mystery by virtue of the fact that he was the Apostle to the Gentiles. He takes only the title of *diakonos* which is translated "minister" and means a worker or helper or deacon.

It was the gift of God's grace which had transformed him from Saul, the proud Pharisee who persecuted the church, to Paul, the apostle who was now a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He had been taken out of one group and put into another. He is now a member of the body of Christ.

This verse is the <u>second</u> mention of the grace of God in this passage:

- 1. The grace of God which was given to me for you—the administration in verse 2.
- 2. The grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power—referring to his reaction in verse 7.

Gary L. Thomas in his book, *Authentic Faith*, says: "God is not impressed by our gifts, nor is he frightened by our inadequacies."

In *The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes* translated by F.E. Brightman, we read:

Let the preacher labour to be heard gladly, intelligently, obediently. And let him not question that he can do this better by the piety of his prayers than by the fluency of his speech. By praying for himself and for them he is going to address, let him be the bedesman or ever he be a teacher and approaching devoutly, before he put forth a speaking tongue, let him lift up to God a thirsty soul, that so he may give out what from Him he hath drunk in, and empty out what he hath first replenished.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "This World Is Not My Home"?: "The saints in gloryland are shouting victory, I want to join their band and live eternally; I hear the sweetest praise from heaven's open

door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore. O Lord, I know, I have no friend like you, If heaven's not my home O Lord, what can I do? The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

March 21—The Fathomless Riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8)

Ephesians 3:8: "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ."

Verse 8: The Message paraphrases this verse well: "When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ."

This verse is the <u>third</u> mention of the grace of God in this passage:

3. This grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ—verse 8.

"Grace" and "given" are seen in each of these statements of the grace of God.

"I am the very least of all the saints." Although the apostle had the double privilege of being an heir of the "mystery of Christ" and a "minister" of the gospel, he did not become proud.

John the Baptist said in John 3:30: "He must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing."

2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels, in order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves."

MacArthur says: "In light of God's perfect righteousness, Paul's assessment of himself was not false humility but simple honesty. He knew his unworthiness."

Gary L. Thomas in Thirsting for God says:

Humility leads us to a place of restful reliance on God, in whose authority alone we live and minister. Rather than consistently (and arrogantly) promising God that we'll never, ever fall again, we can adopt the prayerful approach of Jeanne Guyon:

As you come to Him, come as a weak child, one who is all soiled and badly bruised—a child that has been hurt from falling again and again. Come to the Lord as one who has no strength of his own; come to Him as one who has no power to cleanse himself. Humbly lay your pitiful condition before your Father's gaze.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 and 2 of that great hymn, "I Surrender All": "All to Jesus, I surrender, All to Him I freely give I will ever love & serve Him In His presence, daily live. All to Jesus, I surrender Humbly at his feet I bow, Worldly pleasures all forsaken Take me Jesus, take me now. I surrender all, I surrender all, All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all."

March 22—Hidden for Ages in God (Ephesians 3:9)

Ephesians 3:9: "And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things."

<u>Verse 9</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along."

In these verses, Paul provides a concise statement of his purpose in life:

- 1. Preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ the gospel.
- 2. Bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things—revealing the mystery.

It is impossible to plumb the depths or to define the riches of Christ. Our vocabulary fails when we endeavor to describe all the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus.

"The mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things." John 1:3 (TLB): "He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make."

Kristin Armstrong in Work in Progress says:

As I emerged from the pit, I began to read the Bible with a voracious appetite unlike any hunger I have ever known. And that's saying a lot. Remember, I was once pregnant with twins! Every ounce of striving that I had ever applied to getting ahead in the world, I applied to my pursuit of God and His desire for my life. I had three child-sized sets of eyes on me, watching how I handled everything, so I was motivated far beyond myself to get healthy and make things right.

Erwin W. Lutzer in his book, 10 Lies About God, says: "When the earth shakes under your feet, or when a tornado crosses your street, you take cover, but ultimately we must flee into the arms of the only One who is able to shelter us. No matter how many things move in this world, we can always find terra firma, solid ground, in the consolations of the Almighty. We are reminded that all things pass away and only what is eternal abides."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "I Surrender All": "All to Jesus I surrender, Make my Savior wholly Thine; Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art mine. I surrender all, I surrender all, All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all."

March 23—The Manifold Wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10)

Ephesians 3:10: "In order that now, through the church, might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God."

<u>Verse 10</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "In classical Greek the adjective 'manifold' ... referred to the beauty of an embroidered pattern or the variety of colors in flowers.... The 'manifold wisdom of God' does not refer to redemption as such but rather to the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles in one body.... As the angelic hosts witness the church, they must admit that having Jews and Gentiles in one body is evidence of God's wisdom."

In this verse, Paul states why "the mystery which has been hidden" has now been revealed: "In order that now, through the church [His body, made of Jews and Gentiles who know Jesus Christ], might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God."

Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote these lyrics to the hymn, "Holy, Holy Is What The Angels Sing":

Holy, holy, is what the angels sing, And I expect to help them, make the courts of heaven ring. And when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings, For angels never felt the joy, that our salvation brings.

Gary L. Thomas in his book, *Thirsting for God*, says: "Have you ever been hit exactly where you're weakest, when you're weakest, and felt as if you were set up? Ever think that maybe you *were*? This is not to excuse sin, but to help us understand that spiritual beings are actively tempting us, our family members, and our coworkers to sin. We must vigorously embrace grace, understanding, and forgiveness, or these spiritual foes will tear apart our homes, our churches, and our workplaces."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 4 of "I Surrender All": "All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee; Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me. I surrender all, I surrender all, All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all."

March 24—The Eternal Purpose (Ephesians 3:11)

Ephesians 3:11: "According to the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

<u>Verse 11</u>: Paul previously spoke of this "eternal purpose" in Ephesians 1:10: "With reference to a plan for the fullness of the times, to bring everything together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him."

In Ephesians chapter 1, we studied God's master plan. This mystery and ministry given to the apostle are in accordance with that plan.

MacArthur says: "The eternal purpose. The supreme purpose of the church

is to glorify God, which includes the displaying of His wisdom (v. 10) before the angels, who then honor Him with even greater praise."

Ruth Paxson in *Life on the Highest Plane* said: "In the two wondrous gifts of His Son and His Spirit, God has made perfect provision for a life of true spirituality. God's twofold gift to us was not a partial gift. When He gave Christ He gave all of Christ; when He gave the Holy Spirit He gave all of the Holy Spirit. He withheld nothing from us. Love not only gave its best but its all."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, Thirsting for God, says:

The Christian life will not be easy, but glory awaits us. When the love of Christ grips our hearts, we will suffer anything for His sake, endure any difficulty, or persevere through any trial. We will begin to understand these words from William Law: "How many saints has adversity sent to Heaven? And how many poor sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery?" And perhaps we will even embrace the final wisdom of John of the Cross: "I would not consider any spirituality worthwhile that wants to walk in sweetness and ease and run from the imitation of Christ."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Take My Hand, Precious Lord"?: "Precious Lord, take my hand. Lead me on, let me stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; Thru the storm, thru the night, Lead me on to the light; Take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home."

March 25—Faith In Him (Ephesians 3:12)

Ephesians 3:12: "In whom we are having our boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him."

<u>Verse 12</u>: "In whom" references "Christ Jesus our Lord" in the previous verse. In Christ, we have <u>two</u> things:

- 1. Our boldness to come to a holy God.
- 2. Access in confidence.

Ephesians 2:18: "Because through Him we are both [referring to Jew and Gentile] having access by one Spirit to the Father."

"Access in confidence through faith in Him." 1 John 5:14–15: "And this is the boldness (confidence) which we are having toward Him, that if we are asking anything according to His will, He is hearing us. And if we are knowing that He is hearing us, whatever we are asking, we are knowing that we are having the requests which we have asked from Him."

Hebrews 4:14–16: "Since then we are having a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us be holding fast our confession. For we are not having a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us

therefore be drawing near with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

Ruth Myers in 31 Days of Encouragement as We Grow Older says: "In the final pages of *The Perfect Love*, in a section on our need for continual submission to the Lord, she had quoted in Jim Elliot: 'That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime.' She believed life's later years are meant to be just as spiritually vibrant and rewarding as earlier seasons."

Dan Green in his book, Finish Strong, says:

"Believe and act as if it were impossible to fail."
—Charles F. Kettering

Regardless of what came before or of what has yet to come, what matters most right now is how I choose to respond to the challenge before me. Will I lie down or will I fight? The choice is mine and I choose to finish strong.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "Take My Hand, Precious Lord": "When my way grows drear, Precious Lord, linger near; When my life is almost gone; Hear my cry, hear my call, Hold my hand lest I fall; Take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home."

March 26—Not To Lose Heart (Ephesians 3:13)

Ephesians 3:13: "Wherefore I am asking you not to lose heart over my tribulations on your behalf, which is your glory."

<u>Verse 13</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "If Paul had not dispensed to the Gentiles the stewardship of God's grace, then Jews would not have been hostile to him and he would not have been imprisoned. His preaching brought salvation to the Gentiles, but it incurred the wrath of many Jews on him. However, many others became members of the church, Christ's body, and this was their glory."

Larry King interviewed Billy Graham after it was announced that the evangelist suffered from Parkinson's disease. This is an excerpt from the transcript:

KING: So you'll ask God to see that you don't have pain, right, physical pain?

REV. BILLY GRAHAM: No, I'll say, Lord, your will be done. If you want me to have physical pain, you're going to teach me a lesson, I'm ready, and it doesn't bother me at all. I'm looking forward to that.

KING: Do you realize how hard that is to understand for most people?

REV. BILLY GRAHAM: Yes I do, I do. It's hard for me to understand when it happens, but that is what the Bible teaches.

Even in his 80s and 90s, Billy Graham has led more people to the Lord than perhaps anyone in history. He has lived a long and fruitful life. Yet, he still wants to learn even if it requires more pain. Shouldn't we all have this attitude?

Rebecca Manley Pippert said: "We need someone to show us that our pain can be redeemed and there is light ahead of us. And the ones who show this best are those who have lived deeply and have not sidestepped suffering."

Joni Eareckson Tada says: "From heaven's perspective, trials looked extraordinarily different. When viewed from its own level, my paralysis seemed like a huge, impassable wall; but when viewed from above, the wall appeared as a thin line, something that could be overcome."

Habakkuk 1:5: "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of Andre Crouch's great song, "Through It All": "I've had many tears and sorrows, I've had questions for tomorrow, There've been times I didn't know right from wrong. But in every situation, God gave me blessed consolation, That my trials come to only make me strong. Through it all, through it all, Oh, I've learned to trust in Jesus, Oh, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word."

March 27—Take Time To Pray (Ephesians 3:14–15)

Ephesians 3:14: "For this reason I am bowing my knees before the Father." Ephesians 3:15: "From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

<u>Verse 14</u>: "For this reason" references the "truth" taught to us in this previous passage. Because of this truth, Paul is "bowing [his] knees before the Father." Through his relationship with Jesus Christ, God has become his heavenly Father and the apostle has become God's child.

Anders says: "Spiritually mature believers strengthened by the Holy Spirit comprehend God's love and are filled with the fullness of God."

Calvin says: "His prayers for them are mentioned, not only to testify his regard for them, but likewise to excite them to pray in the same manner; for the seed of the word is scattered in vain, unless the Lord render it fruitful by his blessing."

<u>Verse 15</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The expression from whom His whole family means that all Creation including angels and humans are one family under the fatherhood of God."

MacArthur says: "From whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name does not teach that God is the spiritual Father of every being in the universe. It does not, as claimed by modern liberalism, teach the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Scripture clearly teaches two spiritual fatherhoods, God's and Satan's. God is the heavenly Father of those who trust in Him and Satan is the spiritual father of those who do not."

MacArthur says further: "Every family in heaven and on earth refers to the saints of every age—those now in heaven and those still remaining on earth.... Every family of believers is a part of the one spiritual family of God, in which there are many members but only one Father and one brotherhood."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Through It All": "I've been to lots of places, I've seen a lot of faces, There've been times I felt so all alone. But in my lonely hours, Yes, those precious lonely hours, Jesus lets me know that I was His own. Through it all, through it all, Oh, I've learned to trust in Jesus, Oh, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word."

March 28—Mightily Strengthened in the Inner Man (Ephesians 3:16)

Ephesians 3:16: "That He would grant to you, according to the riches of His glory, to be mightily strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man."

<u>Verse 16</u>: In this verse, Paul begins his formal prayer. This is the key verse for God's plan for power.

The apostle uses the little word "that" to help us follow the <u>four</u> petitions he makes to the Father in verses 16-19. The first "that" is in this verse:

- 1. That He would grant [give] to you, according to the riches of His glory. Paul asks: "to be mightily strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man."
- 2 Corinthians 4:16–18: "Therefore we are not losing heart, but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, slight affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. While we are not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

God's plan for power is prayer. There is no energy shortage with the Father. Martha Snell Nicholson wrote:

He who has charge of planets is mindful still of me Though I'm weak and sinful, He heeds my faintest plea.

From scenes of radiant splendor, He notes one crimson drop OF MY HEART'S LONELY BLEEDING, THE CHOIRING ANGELS STOP.

AND GAZE ALL LOST AND WONDER,
AS HE THE UNDEFILED,
STOOPS LOW IN LOVE TO CARE FOR,
HIS SINFUL, SUFFERING CHILD.

"To be mightily strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man." This can be summarized in the words discernment, desires, discipline and determination.

Philippians 4:13: "I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong."

Barclay says:

By the inner man the Greeks understood three things. (a) There was a man's reason. It is Paul's prayer that Jesus Christ should strengthen the reason of his friends. He wanted them to be better able to discern between that which was right and that which was wrong. He wanted them to be less at the mercy of their passions and their instincts and their desires. He wanted Christ to give them the wisdom which would keep life purer and safe. (b) There was the conscience. It was Paul's prayer that the conscience of his people should ever become more and more sensitive. It is possible to disregard conscience so long and often that in the end conscience becomes dulled and insensitive. It was the prayer of Paul that Jesus should keep our consciences tender and on the alert. (c) There was the will. It is the essential weakness of life that so often we know what is right, and we mean to do it, but our will is not strong enough to back our knowledge and to carry out our intentions.

MacArthur says:

Spiritual power is a mark of every Christian who submits to God's Word and Spirit. It is not reserved for some special class of Christian, but for all those who discipline their minds and spirits to study the Word, understand it, and live by it. Although the outer, physical person becomes weaker with age (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16), the inner, spiritual person should grow stronger through the Holy Spirit, who will energize, revitalize, and empower the obedient, committed Christian.

Warren W. Wiersbe in Pause for Power says: "It has well been said that the pur-

pose of prayer is not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth."

Lorenzo Scupoli in his book, *The Spiritual Combat*, says: "Therefore we ought to bear this in mind throughout our whole life—every day, every hour, every moment; and never allow the thought that there are any grounds for confidence in ourselves."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Through It All"?: "I thank God for the mountains, And I thank Him for the valleys, I thank Him for the storms He brought me through. For if I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know God could solve them, I'd never know what faith in God could do. Through it all, through it all, Oh, I've learned to trust in Jesus, Oh, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word."

March 29—Christ Might Settle Down in Your Hearts (Ephesians 3:17)

Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ might settle down in your hearts through faith in love, having been rooted and grounded."

<u>Verse 17</u>: The previous verse was the <u>first</u> of four petitions. This verse is the <u>second</u> petition:

2. That Christ might settle down in your hearts through faith in love, having been rooted and grounded.

Colossians 2:7: "Having been rooted and continually being built up in Him, and being established in the faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

The apostle prays that as a result of the strengthening through the Spirit in the inner man, the indwelling Christ might settle down in their hearts and take full possession.

Sometimes we crowd Christ into the corner of our lives like the church at Laodicea. In Revelation 3:20 (TLB), we read: "Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me."

Paul was concerned that Christ was just an invited guest in their lives, but he desired that Christ would have full run of the house. When we are "mightily strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man," Christ is able to take full possession of the personality. It allows Him complete access so no areas of our life are shut off to Him.

The apostle mentions faith and love again. Christ settles down in our hearts "through faith" and "in love."

"In love, having been rooted and grounded."

J. Vernon McGee says: "Christ has not come as a temporary visitor. He has come as a permanent tenant by means of the Spirit to live in our lives. 'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5)."

Wuest says:

The words, "being rooted" and "grounded," are perfect tense participles in the Greek text. They are the result of the strengthening by the Spirit and the consequent at-home-ness of the Lord Jesus in the believer's heart and His fellowship with him. The word "rooted" has the idea of securely settled, and "grounded," that of deeply founded. Love here is that love which the Holy Spirit produces and with which He floods the heart of the yielded saint.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "Sweet Hour of Prayer": "Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, That calls me from a world of care, And bids me at my Father's throne Make all my wants and wishes known; In seasons of distress and grief, My soul has often found relief, And oft escaped the tempter's snare, By thy return, sweet hour of prayer."

March 30—Power To Comprehend His Love (Ephesians 3:18)

Ephesians 3:18: "In order that you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth."

<u>Verse 18</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "You'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights!"

In this verse, we have Paul's third petition:

3. That you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These measurements most likely describe not the thoroughness of comprehension but the immensity of the thing to be comprehended.

The content of this comprehension is to know experientially the love of Christ that supersedes all knowledge (cf. Phil. 4:7). The more a Christian knows about Christ, the more amazed he is at Christ's love for him.

Pentecost points out:

He has referred to the foundation, verse 17, with "rooted" and "grounded." Now in verse 18, he is praying that they may be able to comprehend the superstructure or to understand the mystery that he has revealed. The length perhaps has reference to the inclusion of Jew and Gentile into one body. The breadth, God's eternal purpose;

the height would refer to the place that the individual has in the building by grace and the depth would be the depth from which the individual was taken.

Anders says: "The strengthening of our inner man by the Spirit allows us to let Christ be at home in all the rooms of our heart. Letting Christ be at home in all the rooms of our heart enables us to know the vast dimensions of the love of Christ."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "Sweet Hour of Prayer": "Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, Thy wings shall my petition bear, To Him whose truth and faithfulness Engage the waiting soul to bless; And since He bids me seek His face, Believe His Word and trust His grace, I'll cast on Him my ev'ry care, And wait for the, sweet hour of prayer."

March 31—Filled With All the Fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19)

Ephesians 3:19: "And to know the love of Christ, which is surpassing knowledge, in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Verse 19: The little word "and" indicates a continuation of the previous verse: "In order that you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ, which is surpassing knowledge, in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

This is the **fourth** petition in this passage:

4. [That you may] know the love of Christ, which is surpassing knowledge, in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Colossians 2:9–10: "Because in Him there is dwelling all the fullness of the divine nature bodily and you are in Him, having been filled full [in Him] who is the head of every ruler and authority."

How is it possible to know the unknowable? The answer is found in Ephesians 1:18: "The eyes of your hearts having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

An enlarged capacity by His Spirit causes us to have a greater comprehension of God's love for us and through us. Only as the Holy Spirit takes the things of God and reveals them to us are we able to know these wonderful truths. The love of Christ is one of those truths we cannot comprehend with our own natural abilities.

Wuest says:

One is reminded of the words of that saint of old who penned the following lines on the walls of his cell regarding the love of God; "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky."

"In order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Paul already spoke of this "fullness" in Ephesians 1:23: "Which is His body, the fullness of the One who is filling all things with all things." Additionally, he said in Ephesians 4:10: "The One who went down Himself is also the One who went up, above all the heavens, in order that He might fill all things."

In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle gives us a command: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

Paul prays this will be realized in them and they will "be filled with all the fullness of God."

Eadie says: "All the fulness of God" is all the fulness which God possesses, or by which He is characterized."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "Sweet Hour of Prayer": "Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, May I thy consolation share, Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height, I view my home and take my flight: This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing through the air, 'Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!'"

APRIL

April 1—Able To Do Infinitely More (Ephesians 3:20)

Ephesians 3:20: "Now to the One who is able to do infinitely more than we are asking for ourselves, or imagining, according to the power which is working in us."

<u>Verse 20</u>: In this verse, we have the recurrence of the word "power" in this passage as Paul presents God's plan for power:

- 1. Mightily strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man (verse 16).
- 2. In order that you may have power to comprehend with all the saints (verse 18).
- 3. To the One who is able to do infinitely more than we are asking for ourselves, or imagining, according to the power which is working in us (verse 20).

Paul provides the measure of the power in this verse.

When we live life according to God's plan, we recognize His plan for power comes through times of prayer. God is able to do infinitely more than: (1) we are asking for ourselves or (2) even imagining. This is accomplished "according to the power which is working in us."

Being filled with the fullness of God puts the power within us.

MacArthur says: "When the conditions of verses 16-19 are met, God's power working in and through believers is unlimited and far beyond their comprehension."

Simpson & Bruce say:

THOU ART COMING TO A KING; LARGE PETITIONS WITH THEE BRING; FOR HIS GRACE AND POWER ARE SUCH, NONE CAN EVER ASK TOO MUCH.

In *Let's Roll*, Lisa Beamer tells the story of Todd's plane crash in Pennsylvania in 2001:

But in the car on the way home, the reality of what this day could have been hit me again. Tears streamed down my face. David noticed and asked, "Why are you so sad, Mommy?" I attempted to explain. "Mommy is sad because Daddy isn't with us on his birthday," I said, wiping the tears from my eyes.

In his inimitable innocence, David looked up at me and asked, "But, Mom, we can still have cake, can't we?"

For a moment I wasn't sure whether I was going to burst out laughing ... or bawling. Finally I gulped hard and choked back the tears. Then I said with a smile, "Yes, David. I guess we can." How grateful I was, again, for a little child's perspective!

Hannah Whitall Smith said: "Among all the names that reveal God, this, the "God of all comfort," seems to me one of the loveliest and the most absolutely comforting. The words all comfort admit of no limitations and no deductions."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of Ralph Carmichael's song, "Reach Out To Jesus"?: "Is your burden heavy as you bear it all alone? Does the road you travel harbor danger yet unknown? Are you growing weary in the struggle of it all? Jesus will help you when on His name you call. He is always there hearing ev'ry prayer, faithful and true. Walking by our side, In His love we hide all the day through. When you get discouraged just remember what to do, Reach out to Jesus, He's reaching out to you."

April 2—The Doxology (Ephesians 3:21)

Ephesians 3:21: "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

<u>Verse 21</u>: Hughes says: "What a prayer! Within this amazing torrent of devotion Paul has prayed for our strength, our love, and our fullness. This is high theology. And this is typical of Paul's thoughts and prayers. But there is one more thing which is also characteristic—and that is that his high theology always becomes doxology, high praise."

Paul concludes this prayer with thanksgiving for this power. The glory belongs

to God. We are part of His church body through our salvation. He receives glory through our salvation and our transformed lives through the Holy Spirit. This glory and praise can only be brought to God through Christ Jesus.

It is good to be reminded of God's incredible power. Nothing is impossible for Him.

As we look at the Middle East and the prophetic picture, we are reminded our sovereign God is orchestrating all of the events that will wrap up our time on earth.

Lorenzo Scupoli in *The Spiritual Combat* says: "It is a sign of advancement in the spiritual life, if notwithstanding dryness of spirit, darkness, anguish of soul, and desolation, we yet firmly persevere in our exercises of virtue."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "Reach Out To Jesus": "Is the life you're living filled with sorrow and despair? Does the future press you with it's worry and it's care? Are you tired and friendless, have you almost lost your way? Jesus will help you, just come to Him today. He is always there hearing ev'ry prayer, faithful and true. Walking by our side, In His love we hide all the day through. When you get discouraged just remember what to do, Reach out to Jesus, He's reaching out to you."

April 3—Walk Worthy (Ephesians 4:1)

Ephesians 4:1: "I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, am begging you to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

<u>Verse 1</u>: The Message paraphrases this verse: "In light of all this, here is what I want you to do. While I am locked up here, a prisoner for the master, I want you to get out there and walk, better yet, run on the road God called you to travel."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The word "worthy", "axios", means equal weight. One's calling and conduct should be in balance."

How do we walk worthy? Paul provides instruction in the next two verses.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: "He urges the Ephesians to lead the sort of life that matches their Christian vocation. 'Worthy' (GK 547; lit., 'bringing up the other beam of the scales') suggests that there must be a balance between one's profession and one's practice."

Bickel & Jantz say:

There's an old story about the world conqueror Alexander the Great. The mythic Macedonian was inspecting his troops when he came upon a shabbily dressed soldier. "What's your name?" the great military genius asked. "Alexander", the soldier replied. Without missing a beat, Alexander the commander took a step forward and said to the now trembling infantryman, "Either change your ways or change your name."

There's a lesson in that story for those of us who call ourselves "Christian." Are we shabby spiritual soldiers who are an embarrass-

ment to our Commander in Chief? Or do we possess the characteristics that tell the world we belong to Christ?

As the second half of Ephesians begins, Paul begs us to live up to the great name we have been given. "Lead a life worthy of the calling, for you have been called by God."

J. Vernon McGee says:

"Therefore" is a connective, a transitional word. It is in view of all that God has done for the believer, which we have seen in the first three chapters of this epistle.

Paul is a "prisoner of the Lord". He is a prisoner because of his position in Christ. Isn't it interesting that Paul can be seated in the heavenlies in Christ and can also be seated in a prison because he was a witness for Christ to the Gentiles?

Wuest says: "In other words, they are to see to it that they practice what they preach, that their experience measures up to their standing in grace. The words, 'the vocation wherewith ye are called,' are literally, 'the calling with which you were called."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more."

John Wesley said:

Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.

Oswald Chambers said: "If God can accomplish His purposes in this world through a broken heart, then why not thank Him for breaking yours?"

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Jesus Is All The World To Me": "Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all; He is my strength from day to day, without Him I would fall. When I am sad, to Him I go, no other one can cheer me so; When I am sad, He makes me glad, He's my Friend."

April 4—Bearing With One Another (Ephesians 4:2)

Ephesians 4:2: "With all lowliness and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love."

Verse 2: There are <u>five</u> wonderful virtues in this verse and the next verse. These should be true of our lives if we are walking worthy of the calling of Christ:

1. Lowliness or humility.

This virtue is developed in the presence of God.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux said: "Humility is the virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness and consequence of the truest knowledge of himself."

2. Meekness.

Barclay says: "He is the man who is so God-controlled that he is always angry at the right time, but never angry at the wrong time. He is a man in whom self has died and whose whole life is directed and controlled by God. He is God's gentlemen."

3. Patience.

Barclay says: "It describes the spirit which will never give in and which because it endures to the end, will reap the promise and the reward. It is the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint. It is the spirit which bears the sheer foolishness of men without irritation. It is the spirit which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without complaint."

4. Bearing with one another in love.

Barclays says: "The real meaning of agape is unconquerable benevolence. If we regard a person with agape, it means that nothing that that person can or will ever do will make us seek anything but his highest good. Though he injure us and hurt us and insult us, we will never feel anything but kindness toward him."

The virtues in this verse are a picture of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. A person with these virtues governing his life is not controlled by self, but by the Spirit.

Gary L. Thomas in *Sacred Marriage* said: "Can you maintain a soft heart over past hurts, patiently praying for long-term change? Or will you freeze him in his incapacities with judgment, resentment, condemnation, and criticism? Can you maintain a nurturing attitude instead of a judgmental one?"

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Jesus Is All The World To Me"?: "Jesus is all the world to me, my Friend in trials sore; I go to Him for blessings, and He gives them over and o'er. He sends the sunshine and the rain, He sends the harvest's golden grain; Sunshine and rain, harvest of grain, He's my Friend."

April 5—The Bond of Peace (Ephesians 4:3)

Ephesians 4:3: "Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

<u>Verse 3</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Not in fits and starts, but steadily pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences."

In this verse, we have the <u>fifth</u> virtue of one who is walking worthy to the calling of Christ:

5. Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The <u>four</u> virtues in the previous verse make it possible for unity to be a reality. Wherever you have strife and division, self is controlling the individuals involved.

"Making every effort" indicates this will not happen naturally, but involves sweat and effort on our part. We are called to maintain the unity which was established and described in chapter 2.

In the flesh, we can become so militant, picky, critical and divisive that it requires every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

John Ortberg in his book, Love Beyond Reason, says:

One afternoon my family waited in a sitting room for my sister to come up from her dorm to join us for Family Day. In the same room was a mother of a classmate of my sister, who was waiting with her eight-year-old son. For an hour and fifteen minutes we waited, and I don't suppose that woman stopped talking longer than it took to inhale. She talked—as the saying went before the day of compact discs—as if she'd been vaccinated with a phonograph needle. She talked as if words were the rope that kept her tethered to the earth. She talked until I knew more about her family than I did about some of my closest relatives.

Finally her daughter stepped into the room. "Well, we must be going," said the mom, keeping the torrent flowing. "I have to get reservations for dinner. We have to meet my husband at the restaurant, you know, and oh, yes, I need to stop by the store and get some buttons."

Then her son spoke. The only words, as best I can recollect it, that he uttered during the whole hour and fifteen minutes. He turned to his mother and said as only an eight-year-old could: "Mother, you need a button for your mouth."

Out of the mouths of babes.

Elisabeth Elliot said: "If God is in charge and loves us, then whatever is given is subject to His control and is meant ultimately for our joy."

Charles W. Colson said: "It is absurd for Christians to constantly seek new demonstrations of God's power, to expect a miraculous answer to every need, from curing ingrown toenails to finding parking places; this only leads to faith in miracles instead of faith in God."

Carrie Fisher says: "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."

Please take time to meditate and pray over these five virtues of a worthy walk:

- 1. Lowliness or humility.
- 2. Meekness.
- 3. Patience.
- 4. Bearing with one another in love.
- 5. Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

God is waiting to pour out His blessing upon each one of us in response to our obedience of these virtues.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Jesus Is All The World To Me": "Jesus is all the world to me, and true to Him I'll be; O how could I this Friend deny, when He's so true to me? Following Him I know I'm right, He watches o'er me day and night; Following Him by day and night, He's my Friend."

April 6—Oneness (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Ephesians 4:4: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling."

Ephesians 4:5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Ephesians 4:6: "One God and Father of all, the One who is above all, and through all, and in all."

<u>Verse 4</u>: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles these verses "Elements of Unity." In these verses, Paul gives us a <u>seven</u>-fold basis for unity:

- 1. One body.
- 2. One Spirit (the Holy Spirit).
- 3. One hope of your calling.

The Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ have one hope for the future, their future with God in heaven.

Gaebelein points out: "The three persons of the Godhead are seen only in reverse order, the Holy Spirit first, the Son of God the second, and the God and Father third."

<u>Verse 5</u>:

4. One Lord.

This refers to Jesus Christ our Savior who is the Head of His body, the church.

5. One faith.

This references Ephesians 2:8: "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith and that salvation is not of yourselves, it is a gift of God."

6. One baptism.

In this <u>sixth</u> basis of unity, you have <u>one</u> of <u>two</u> choices: (1) the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the church, the body of Christ or (2) the ordinance of water baptism.

Verse 6:

7. One God and Father of all.

We have become sons of God because of our faith in the Lord Jesus. God has become our Father. This same parental relationship serves as a basis for unity. He is the One "who is above all and through all and in all."

Barclay says: "It is the Christian belief that we live in a God-created, God-controlled, God-sustained, God-filled world."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Jesus Is All The World To Me": "Jesus is all the world to me, I want no better Friend; I trust Him now, I'll trust Him when life's fleeting days shall end. Beautiful life with such a Friend, beautiful life that has no end; Eternal life, eternal joy, He's my Friend."

April 7—The Gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7)

Ephesians 4:7: "But to each one of us there was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

<u>Verse 7</u>: In this verse, we learn that each of us were given a spiritual gift when we came to know Christ. Therefore, it is our responsibility before the Lord to exercise this gift in the body of Christ, bringing glory to God and edifying the body.

There are two important points to notice in this verse:

1. Each one of us.

As believers, no one is left out when it comes to the giving of gifts.

2. Given grace.

Whenever you have grace, it is a gift or it is seen as "given." It is not something we can attain, but we are given. Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith; and this [salvation] is not of yourselves—it is the gift of God, not because of works, in order that no one might boast."

It is important to note three things about these gifts:

- 1. These gifts are given to edify the body of Christ, not to edify ourselves.
- 2. In the business of giving gifts, it is God's sovereign plan and program being carried out.
- 3. Every spiritual gift points outward and never inward.

Corrie ten Boom said: "The measure of a life is not its duration but its donation."

In Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Ulysses", he wrote:

Though much is taken, much abides; and though We are not now that strength which in the old days Moved Earth and Heaven; that which we are, we are, One equal-temper of Heroic Hearts, Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

John Ortberg in his book, If You Want To Walk On Water, You've Got To Get Out Of The Boat, says: "Max DePree writes that unrealized potential is a sin—a very serious sin. This is a story about the sin of unrealized potential—the tragedy of the unopened gift. This is why one of the great temptations most of us face that could block us from getting out of the boat is comfort. Comfort will often keep us from growth."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow": "I don't know about tomorrow I just live from day to day I don't borrow from its sunshine For its skies may turn to gray I don't worry o'er the future For I know what Jesus said And today I'll walk beside Him For He knows what is ahead. Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand But I know who holds tomorrow And I know who holds my hand."

April 8—Freedom For the Captives (Ephesians 4:8)

Ephesians 4:8: "Therefore, it is said when He went up on high, He led away captive those taken captive, and gave gifts to men."

<u>Verse 8</u>: In this verse, Paul backs up his previous statement with a paraphrase of Psalm 68:18: "When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious-- that you, O Lord God, might dwell there."

The apostle cites three things Christ did:

1. He went up on high.

Acts 1:9: "It was not long afterwards that He rose into the sky and disappeared into a cloud, leaving them staring after Him."

2. He led away captive those taken captive.

Pentecost says:

Christ had to triumph over His enemies before he could claim that promise. After He could claim it and received it, he could then dispense that which he received to the body. That seems to be the purpose of this quotation. These gifts are a result of Christ's victory He claimed from the Father, and then gave them to the church, which is His body. Satan equals the captivity.

Colossians 2:15: "Having disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it."

3. He gave gifts to men.

It was only after He had ascended into heaven and was victorious over Satan that He had the right to give the gifts of the Spirit to men.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow": "Ev'ry step is getting brighter, As the golden stairs I climb; Ev'ry burden's getting lighter; Ev'ry cloud is silver lined. There the sun is always

shining, There no tear will dim the eyes, At the ending of the rainbow, Where the mountains touch the sky. Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand But I know who holds tomorrow And I know who holds my hand."

April 9—Mission Accomplished (Ephesians 4:9-10)

Ephesians 4:9: "Now the fact that He went up, what is it except that also He went down into the lower regions of the earth."

Ephesians 4:10: "The One who went down Himself is also the One who went up, above all the heavens, in order that He might fill all things."

<u>Verse 9</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

What is meant by the lower earthly regions, literally into the lower parts of the earth? The genitive "of" can be taken in three ways.

- 1. Into the lower parts, namely the earth, a genitive apposition. This would refer to Christ's incarnation, his descent to the earth.
- 2. Into the parts lower than the earth, a genitive of comparison. This would mean that Christ descended into Hades between His death and resurrection.
- 3. Into the lower parts which belong to the earth, a genitive of possession. This would refer to Christ's death and His burial in the grave.

The third view best fits the context because in His death, Christ had victory over sin and redeemed those who would be given as gifts to the church.

According to Philippians 2:5–8, this would be a picture of the incarnation of Christ: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, looked not upon this being equal with God a prize to be grasped eagerly, but emptied Himself, having taken the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient to the point of death, even death of a cross."

<u>Verse 10</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Christ's ascent above the heavens in order to fill the whole universe probably refers to his regal relationship with the whole world."

Our God reigns. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 1 and 2 of "Oh How I Love Jesus"?: "There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth, It sounds like music in the ear, The sweetest name on earth. It tells me of a Savior's love, Who died to set me free; It tell me of His precious blood, The sinner's perfect plea. It tells me what my Father hath, In store for ev'ry day, And tho' I tread a

darksome path, Yields sunshine all the way. It tells of One whose loving heart, Can feel my deepest woe, Who in each sorrow bears a part, That none can bear below. Oh, how I love Jesus, Oh, how I love Jesus, Because He first loved me!"

April 10—The Gifts That Were Given (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."

Ephesians 4:12: "For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

<u>Verse 11</u>: In this verse, Paul speaks of <u>five</u> different gifted individuals given to the body of Christ.

MacArthur says of the phrase "pastors and teachers": "This phrase is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. The Greek word translated 'and' can mean 'in particular' (see 1 Tim. 5:17). The normal meaning of pastor is 'shepherd,' so the two functions together define the teaching shepherd."

J. Vernon McGee points out: "I translate it this way: 'He Himself gave some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers.' This verse does not refer to the gifts He has given to men, although it is true that it is He who has given the gifts. What Paul is saying here is that Christ takes certain men who have been given certain gifts and He gives *them* to the church."

<u>Verse 12</u>: This verse begins with the word "for" and provides the reason for the <u>five</u> different gifted individuals given to the body of Christ: "for equipping the saints." The saints are then equipped for this <u>two</u>-fold purpose:

- 1. The work of the ministry.
- 2. Building up the body of Christ.

The saints should be equipped in order to do the work of the ministry and build up the body of Christ. The ministry of these gifted individuals has been given to the body of Christ for equipping and edifying.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss says: "Come to Him and drink. Drink deeply; keep on drinking; let Him quench your thirst; and then, watch as rivers of living water flow out through you to quench the thirst of those around you."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "O To Be Like Thee": "O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer; Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures, Jesus Thy perfect likeness to wear. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

April 11—Mature Manhood (Ephesians 4:13)

Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Verse 13: In the Greek, these instructions are literally induced by the Greek

preposition "unto." Gifted people are charged with ministering until these <u>three</u> goals are attained or reached:

- 1. Unto the unity of the faith of the Son of God.
- 2. Unto mature manhood.
- 3. Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

As each believer functions in accord with the gifts Christ has given him (verse 7), the church body as a whole enjoys unity (verses 3–6) and becomes more spiritually mature (verse 15.) With this spiritual growth, the body becomes more like Jesus Christ in all of His fullness.

Satan wants to keep you out of God's family. If he cannot keep you out of the family, he will try to keep you childish or carnal.

"Until we all attain ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

1 John 3:2: "We are knowing that, whenever He is made visible, like ones to Him we shall be, because we shall see Him just as He is." It is the ultimate goal of spiritual maturity to conform His children to the image of Christ. Paul says in Philippians 1:6: "Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

This work will not be complete until we are in His presence. However, it is the Spirit's goal and object to transform us into the image of Christ.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "O To Be Like Thee": "O to be like Thee! Full of compassion, Loving, forgiving, tender and kind; Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, Seeking the wand'ring sinner to find. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

April 12—Tossed To & Fro (Ephesians 4:14)

Ephesians 4:14: "In order that we no longer may be immature, being tossed here and there by the waves, and being carried here and there by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming."

<u>Verse 14</u>: In this verse, Paul gives the purpose behind a functioning body accomplishing God's goals and objectives in verses 12–13: "in order that we no longer may be immature."

The Message paraphrases this verse: "No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors."

The apostle describes immature believers in two ways:

- 1. Being tossed here and there by the waves.
- 2. Being carried here and there by every wind of doctrine.

John Calvin said: "By a beautiful metaphor, all the doctrines of men by which we are drawn away from the simplicity of the gospel are called winds. God gave us His Word by which we might have placed ourselves beyond the possibility of being moved, but giving way to the contrivances of men, we are carried about in all directions."

These are accomplished by (1) the trickery of men and (2) by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

Psalm 25:4–5: "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me for you are God, my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."

Oswald Chambers said:

What shines forth and reveals God in your life is not your relative consistency to an idea of what a saint should be, but your genuine, living relationship with Jesus Christ, and your unrestrained devotion to Him whether you are well or sick.

Thoughts about myself hinder my usefulness to God. God's purpose is not to perfect me to make me a trophy in His showcase. He is getting me to the place where He can use me. Let Him do what He wants.

Sarah Young in her book, Take My Heart, O God, says:

Whatever loss you have experienced—betrayal, financial crisis, suffering—you need God's power to move on. To start over, to forgive what may need forgiven, takes God's strength. Forgiveness does not mean you don't hurt or don't care; it simply means you want to move forward and rebuild. To refuse to forgive leaves you stuck in you bitterness.

God has better plans for you.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "O To Be Like Thee": "O to be like Thee! Lowly in spirit, Holy and harmless, patient and brave; Meekly enduring cruel reproaches, Willing to suffer others to save. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

April 13—Speaking the Truth In Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, Christ."

<u>Verse 15</u>: *The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition* translates this verse: "Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)."

In 1 Peter 3:1–2, Peter speaks of this same concept when he writes to the wives: "In like manner, wives, be putting yourselves in subjection to your own husbands in order that even though certain ones are disbelieving the word, they may be won

without a word by the behavior of their wives having observed your pure manner of life with a reverential fear."

In a functioning body, people will speak the truth to one another by word and walk. They will speak in the sphere and context of love.

"May grow up into Him in all things." This is the object for speaking truth in the context of love in our walk and words. We will grow up into Christ in all things. Sarah Young in *Take My Heart, O God* says:

We long for truth. We appreciate the people in our lives who tell us the truth. Truth means we can count on it. Even if it's a difficult observation or statement, we at least have a foundation to work from to make changes.

As believers, we count on God's Word as truth. We stand on it, we believe it, we embrace it. But we must do one more thing—we must walk in it. What we do, what we say, how we love, the example we set, the attitudes we show—all of these must line up with the truth to which we have committed our lives.

It isn't always easy, but it's vital. We have found the truth that changes the world, changes lives, changes hearts. Let that truth affect every step you take today and every day.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "O To Be Like Thee"?: "O to be like Thee! Lord, I am coming Now to receive th'anointing divine; All that I am and have I am bringing, Lord, from this moment all shall be Thine. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

April 14—Growth of The Body (Ephesians 4:16)

Ephesians 4:16: "From whom all the body, being joined and knit together through every joint with which it is supplied, according to the power that corresponds to the measure of each individual part, is making for growth of the body, resulting in the building up of itself in love."

<u>Verse 16</u>: Let's concentrate on the words "growth" and "building up" in this verse: "growth of the body, resulting in the building up of itself in love."

Acts 20:32: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Barclay points out: "He says that a body is only healthy and fit and efficient when every part in it is thoroughly integrated and coordinated. When every joint is doing its connecting work, when every part of the body is playing the part in the work of the body, it is allotted to it."

The New Life New Testament paraphrases this verse in the following way: "Christ has put each part of the church in its right place. Each part helps other parts. This is what is needed to keep the whole body together. In this way, the whole body grows strong in love."

In Ken Blanchard's business book, High Five!, he writes:

He saw the word "perform" as an acronym that covered it all. A high-performing team, a high-five team, would have the following characteristics:

P urpose and values
E mpowerment
R elationships and Communications
F lexibility
O ptimal Performance
R ecognition and Appreciation
M orale

These could be applied to a church body that is functioning properly.

Have you discovered the Lord's place for you in His body and how He has gifted you to minister to that body? Will you join Isaiah saying, "Here am I, send me"?

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 5 of "O To Be Like Thee": "O to be like Thee! While I am pleading, Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love; Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling, Fit me for life and heaven above. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart."

April 15—Life On A New Level (Ephesians 4:17)

Ephesians 4:17: "This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord, that no longer are you to be walking as the Gentiles, walking with their minds fixed on futile things."

<u>Verse 17</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And so I insist—and God backs me up on this—that there be no going along with the crowd, the empty-headed, mindless crowd."

First, Paul notes the Gentiles are "walking with their minds fixed on futile things."

Anders observes: "Christians need to be spiritually enlightened so they may understand the hope of God's calling, the riches of their inheritance in Christ, and the greatness of God's power."

MacArthur says:

Salvation is not a matter of improvement or perfection of what has previously existed. It is total transformation. The New Testament speaks of believers having a new mind, a new will, a new heart, a new inheritance, a new relationship, new power, new knowledge, new wisdom, new perception, new understanding, new righteousness, new love, new desire, new citizenship, and many other new things—all of which are summed up in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

The apostle begins this verse: "This, therefore I am (1) saying and (2) affirming in the Lord." He then advises them to no longer:

- 1. Walk as the Gentiles.
- 2. Walk with your minds fixed on futile things.

Hughes says: "What a withering description! That kind of life, life apart from God, is a downward spiral which begins, as John Stott has outlined it, with 1) hardness of heart and then moves to 2) darkness of heart, and then 3) deadness, and finally 4) recklessness—unrestrained abandonment to sin."

Henry says: "That you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.' Converted Gentiles must not live as unconverted Gentiles do. Though they live among them, they must not live like them."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of one of Fanny Crosby's great hymns, "Draw Me Nearer": "I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me; But I long to rise in the arms of faith, And be closer drawn to Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

April 16—Estranged From The Life of God (Ephesians 4:18)

Ephesians 4:18: "Being those who have their understanding darkened, who have been estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, through the dullness of their hearts."

<u>Verse 18</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Their alienation is because of their ignorance of God; and this is because of the hardening of their hearts, their being insensitive to God and His ways."

"Their understanding darkened." 2 Corinthians 4:4: "In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Those "who have been estranged from the life of God." Ephesians 2:12: "Because you were at that time, separated from Christ, having been excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, not having hope and without God in the world."

This estrangement from the life of God takes place in two ways:

1. Through the ignorance that is in them.

They are totally ignorant of the abundant life they can have through Jesus Christ.

2. Through the dullness of their hearts.

The dullness of their hearts causes an estrangement. The word for "dullness" is the word used for "covering with a callus." A callus is built up on the heart when a person continuously rejects Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was dealing with the man who had the paralyzed limb, we read in Mark chapter 3: "He was grieved with their callousness of heart, referring to the scribes and Pharisees, who were there."

Barclay says: "It is a life which has become so hardened that it has lost the power of feeling."

According to Paul's letter to Timothy, the conscience has been seared. It is killed of all sense of feeling.

Eadie says: "There could be no light in their mind, because there was no life in their hearts, for the life in the Logos is the light of men."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "The fact is, that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved, that no description which can be given of him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is."

Kristin Armstrong in her book, Happily Ever After, says:

The greatest upset, the greatest potential danger of this season, is not a legal concern, not a financial concern, not even ultimately the burden we carry for our children ... but a serious matter of the heart. The only thing more painful, and with longer and more serious ramifications than a broken heart, is a frozen one.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul warns us of the eternal consequences of allowing our hearts to harden. He doesn't paint a pretty picture ... ignorance, darkness, and separation from God.

A soft heart is not weak or naïve. To the contrary, wisdom, experience, and faith make for a strong heart, weathered by compassion and seasoned with mercy. A hardened heart is not protected, it is merely encased in injury, and it is painfully obvious to everyone but you. You may as well go around with a T-shirt that reads "Kick me."

Ask the Lord today to give you and to guard in you a soft heart and a gentle spirit.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Draw Me Nearer": "Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, By the pow'r of grace divine; Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, And my will be lost in Thine. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

April 17—Who Being Calloused (Ephesians 4:19)

Ephesians 4:19: "Who being calloused, they gave themselves over to debauchery, for the practice of all kinds of sinful things and greediness."

<u>Verse 19</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Feeling no pain, they let themselves go in sexual obsession, addicted to every sort of perversion."

Romans 1:24: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to viciousness (impurity), that their bodies might be degraded among them." Because their hearts are hardened, they are no longer sensitive to sin. They have lost all sense of decency. Therefore, they go to extremes in satisfying their desires.

These sinful things are practiced in greediness. The word "greediness" involves being unable to be satisfied. This can be a commentary on sin. No matter how much it is indulged, there is no satisfaction—just the unquenchable desire for more.

Barclay says: "It is the irresistible desire to have what we have no right to have. It is the spirit of the man who does not care who he hurts and what method he uses so long as he gets what he desires."

Barclay summarizes what Paul says about the Gentiles in the following:

Paul saw three terrible things. (1) He saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning. (2) He saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and decency forgotten. 3) He saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as these desires were satisfied.

Lenski describes this well: "No restraint held them back, nor could their greediness get enough of tainted doings."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "God has said he will never leave us, and if we have him we possess all things. Who has need to be covetous when all things are his, and God is his?"

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Draw Me Nearer"?: "O, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend! Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

April 18—Truth Is In Jesus (Ephesians 4:20–21)

Ephesians 4:20: "But you did not so learn Christ."

Ephesians 4:21: "Since indeed you heard about Him and were taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus."

Verse 20: The word "but" forms the contrast with the previous verses.

"You did not so learn Christ." The centrality of Christ was the message they heard. He is the Christ who was all and in all. He is the Christ who was totally adequate to meet their needs. He is the Christ whom they must receive by faith to be born into the family. He is the Christ they needed to know in order to grow towards spiritual maturity.

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."

Westcott says: "Christ is Himself the sum of the Gospel. He is preached, received, known."

Verse 21: In this verse, Paul makes two points:

- 1. They heard about Him.
- 2. They were taught in Him.

Jesus says in John 14:6 (KJV): "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me" and in John 8:32 (KJV): "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

First, we hear about Him and by faith receive Him. Then, we are taught in Him as we learn to walk with Him in daily Christian experience.

"Just as the truth is in Jesus."

MacArthur says: "The truth about salvation leads to the fullness of truth about God, man, creation, history, life, purpose, relationships, heaven, hell, judgment, and everything else that is truly important."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Draw Me Nearer": "There are depths of love that I cannot know Till I cross the narrow sea; There are heights of joy that I may not reach Till I rest in peace with Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

April 19—Laying Aside The Old Life (Ephesians 4:22)

Ephesians 4:22: "That you laid aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires."

<u>Verse 22</u>: Verses 22–24 in this passage are key verses describing God's plan for life on a new level. There are <u>three</u> main points in these verses. The <u>first</u> key point is in this verse:

1. Laying aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires.

The old man is the life the apostle has described in the previous verse. You take off the old life, the old man, like old worn out clothes. This refers to the sin-loving

nature still within us. As far as God is concerned, this former way of life has been crucified. However, it still manifests itself in our lives as long as we live here on earth.

The "old man" is corrupted according to the deceptive desires. Romans 7:21–25:

I am finding then the law, that evil is present in me, the one who is desiring to do good. For I joyfully agree with the law of God concerning the inner man. But I am seeing a different kind of law in my members warring against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner of war to the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who shall set me free out of the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "Paul compared the Christian life to stripping off the dirty clothes of a sinful past and putting on the snowy white robes of Christ's righteousness."

Ruth Paxson in Life on the Highest Plane says:

God and sin cannot dwell together; they cannot stay in the same place at the same time for they are mutually exclusive. They are exact opposites. Perhaps you are now sitting in a room full of light; a few hours will pass by and it will be filled with darkness. Where has the light gone? It has been displaced by darkness. Again a few hours pass by and the room is filled with light. Where has the darkness gone? It has been displaced by light. Light and darkness cannot dwell together; they are exact opposites; they are mutually exclusive.

In *The Sower*, Franklin Graham and Donna Lee Toney say: "Many churchgoers today are in this category. They have heard the Word of God, yet they mix the Word with error, feeding on worldly pleasures that choke the truth and drain the life out of the seed. This group often goes unnoticed by God's people, who assume they are obedient followers of Christ."

Kristin Armstrong in her book, Happily Ever After, says:

The unconfessed sin in your life is a barrier between you and the healing and blessing power of God. Can you feel the pressure behind the barrier, like a dam threatening to burst?

Sin is like that explosion of water-make no mistake about

it. If left unmonitored it will break, sweep you into an impossible current, and drown you in its depths.

Rid yourself of the mess; bring your sins to the Lord, and be released into His healing arms.

He is waiting.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "The old nature never does improve, it is as earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when he first came to Christ; it is unimproved and unimprovable; towards God it is enmity itself: every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually."

Bishop Andrewes in *Private Devotions* prayed:

Bring Thou out of troubles, o Lord:

CLEANSE THOU ME FROM SECRET FAULTS,

KEEP THY SERVANT ALSO FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS:

MY WANDERINGS OF MIND

AND MINE IDLE SPEAKING

LAY NOT TO MY CHARGE.

CLEAR AWAY THE MURK AND NOISOME TORRENT

OF FOUL AND LAWLESS THOUGHTS.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Cleanse Me": "Search me, O God, and know my heart today. Try me, O Savior; know my thoughts, I pray. See if there be some wicked way in me; Cleanse me from ev'ry sin, and set me free."

April 20—Putting On The New Man (Ephesians 4:23-24)

Ephesians 4:23: "But get yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds." Ephesians 4:24: "And put on the new man, who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness."

<u>Verse 23</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And then take on an entirely new way of life."

This is the second point of God's plan for life on a new level:

2. Getting yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.

Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Romans 12:2: "And stop being fashioned to this age, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect."

Mark 7:20–23 (NASB): "And He [Jesus] was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of

coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and fool-ishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Satan is aware of the citadel of the mind. Proverbs 23:7 (AMP): "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

The renewing of the mind is a work of the Holy Spirit as we move toward maturity in Christ.

Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect (honorable), whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is appealing (attractive), if there is any virtue and if there is anything worthy of praise, let your mind be dwelling on these things."

To be renewed in our minds, we must be focused on God's sovereign purpose and plan, not our own.

<u>Verse 24</u>: This verse has the <u>third</u> key point of God's plan for life on a new level:

3. Putting on the new man who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand in order that we should walk in them."

Paul spoke of this also in Galatians 4:19: "My little children, of whom again I am experiencing the pains of birth until which time Christ should be formed in you."

These <u>three</u> verses show Paul's key points in God's plan for living life on a new level:

- 1. Laying aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires.
- 2. Getting yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.
- 3. Putting on the new man who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.

Professor Howard G. Hendricks said: "You cannot impart that which you do not possess."

Oswald Chambers in My Utmost For His Highest said: "This total surrender to 'the love of Christ' is the only thing that will bear fruit in your life. And it will always leave the mark of God's holiness and His power, never drawing attention to your personal holiness."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Resting on an arm of flesh seems to be the hereditary disease of God's people."

In his book, Kingdom Man, Tony Evans says:

A kingdom man is the kind of man that when his feet hit the floor each morning the devil says, "Oh crap, he's up!"

A kingdom man, therefore, is one who visibly demonstrates the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of his life.

Franklin Graham and Donna Lee Toney in *The Sower* ask: "Is your heart plowed, prepared, and planted with the good seed of God's Word?"

Warren W. Wiersbe in his book, *Pause for Power*, says: "To have a right relationship with God, we must start the day by yielding to Him our bodies, minds, and wills."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Cleanse Me": "I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin. Fulfill Thy Word, and make me pure within. Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame. Grant my desire to magnify Thy Name."

April 21—Put Away Falsehood (Ephesians 4:25)

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let everyone be speaking the truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another."

<u>Verse 25</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself."

There are three occurrences of the word "therefore" in our passage:

- 1. Verse 17: "This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord."
- 2. Verse 25: "Therefore, having laid aside falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."
- 3. Chapter 5, verse 1: "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

"WHAT BECAME OF A LIE"

First, somebody told it,
Then the room wouldn't hold it,
So the busy tongues rolled it
Till they got it outside.

When the crowd came across it, And never once lost it, But tossed it, and tossed it Till it grew long and wide.

From a very small lie, Sir,
It grew deep and high, Sir,
Till it reached to the sky, Sir,
And frightened the moon;
For she hid her sweet face, Sir,
In a veil of cloud-lace, Sir,

AT THE DREADFUL DISGRACE, SIR, THAT HAPPENED AT NOON.

This lie brought forth others,
Dark sisters and brothers,
And fathers and mothersA terrible crew;
And while headlong they hurried,
The people they flurried,
And troubled and worried,
As lies always do.

And so, evil-boded,
This monstrous lie goaded,
Till at last it exploded
In smoke and in shame;
When from mud and from mire
The pieces flew higher,
And hit the sad liar,
And killed his good name.

—Mrs. M. A. Kidder

In Proverbs 6:16–19, Solomon wrote: "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, <u>a lying tongue</u>, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers."

In John Eldredge's book about the Lord Jesus, Beautiful Outlaw, he says:

Nobody likes being lied to. Notice your outrage when some trusted leader is exposed as a fake. Think of how strong your reaction is when a close friend lies to you. Some relationships never recover. No—it is one thing to tell a lie; it is something else entirely to be a lie. The man who has two families, carries on two separate lives—he's not just lying about what he does, he's lying about what he is.

The most essential gift you have to give is yourself. When you aren't entirely true about that, you aren't true. But we've all grown accustomed to committing dozens of little white lies about ourselves every day.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Cleanse Me"?: "Lord, take my life and make it wholly Thine; Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine. Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride. I now surrender; Lord, in me abide."

April 22—Be Angry & Do Not Sin (Ephesians 4:26)

Ephesians 4:26: "Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood."

<u>Verse 26</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Go ahead and be angry. You do well to be angry—but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "While believers may at times be legitimately angry (with righteous anger against sin), they are not to sin. The way to prevent such sin is to 'keep short accounts,' dealing with the anger before the sun goes down."

Righteous indignation is justifiable. It was manifest in the life of Christ at the cleansing of the temple. Anger which arises from selfish desires is sin. We must deal with that anger. Do not let the sun go down on your angry moods.

Hughes says:

As Frederick Buechner so perfectly expressed it:

Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontation still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back; in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.

How many of us are gnawing on our own souls?

If this describes us, we must heed Paul's time-honored advice: "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." The day of our anger should be the day we deal with it.

A life filled with anger—a church full of angry people—is a pain to the Spirit. He will not work, indeed cannot, for He abides by His own laws.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Cleanse Me": "O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee. Send a revival - start the work in me. Thy Word declares Thou wilt supply our need. For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead."

April 23—Do Not Give The Devil A Chance (Ephesians 4:27)

Ephesians 4:27: "And do not give the devil a chance."

<u>Verse 27</u>: The NET Bible translates this verse: "Do not give the devil an opportunity." The Message paraphrases this verse: "Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life."

This is a present negative imperative. We continually face this challenge each day.

The apostle gives <u>four</u> important statements in verses 26 and 27:

- 1. Do not be angry—verse 26.
- 2. Do not sin—verse 26.
- 3. Do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood—verse 26.
- 4. Do not give the devil a chance—verse 27.

1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be self-possessed, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion (in fierce hunger) is walking about, seeking someone to devour (swallow up). Withstand (resist) him, firm (steadfast) in your faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being laid upon your brotherhood who are in the world."

James 4:7–10 (NASB): "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Ruth Myers in 31 Days of Praise said: "As someone has put it, 'It's a serious mistake to underestimate the power of Satan; it's a tragedy to overestimate it'—or to be overly occupied with it."

In Our Daily Bread, David McCasland penned this beautiful prayer:

Lord, I get discouraged when I've given in again to one of Satan's schemes. I'm thankful, though, that Christ paid for that sin on the cross. Help me to confess it and then to keep on relying on You for my spiritual growth.

Make no mistake—Satan is a wily foe. He is constantly studying our game films. He knows our tendencies and weaknesses. He also has the home-field advantage.

In Luke 4:13 (NASB), he records of the Lord's temptation: "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God": "And tho this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The Prince of Darkness grim, We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure; One little word shall fell him."

April 24—Work Hard (Ephesians 4:28)

Ephesians 4:28: "The one who is stealing, let him no longer be stealing; but rather let him work hard, working with his own hands that which is good, in order that he may be having to share with the one who is having need."

<u>Verse 28</u>: Paul has addressed lying and anger. Now, he addresses stealing: "the one who is stealing, let him no longer be stealing." He encourages a positive solution to the problem: "work hard, working with his own hands that which is good."

2 Thessalonians 3:6–10:

Now we are commanding you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who is walking around undisciplined and not according to the tradition which they received from us. For you yourselves are knowing how you ought to be imitating us; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat bread from anyone without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we are not having the right to this, but in order that we might offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you might be imitating us. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not desiring to be working, neither let him be eating.

The apostle ends this verse with the purpose of his admonition: "in order that he may be having to share with the one who is having need."

Acts 4:32 (TLB): "All the believers were of one heart and mind and no-one felt that what he owned was his own; Everyone was sharing."

Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you are doing, be working from the heart, as to the Lord and not to men."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "Give Of Your Best To The Master": "Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor Into the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example; Dauntless was He, young and brave; Give Him your loyal devotion, Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in the battle for truth."

April 25—Speak Words That Edify & Encourage (Ephesians 4:29)

Ephesians 4:29: "Let every rotten word not be coming out of your mouth, but whatever is good, such as will build up where it is necessary, in order that it might impart grace to those who are hearing."

Verse 29: Paul now addresses the sins of the tongue.

James 3:5–6: "So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness, and poisons every part of the body. And the tongue is set on fire by hell itself. It can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster."

"On Guard"

You have a little prisoner, He's nimble, sharp and clever. He's sure to get away from you, Unless you watch him ever.

AND WHEN HE ONCE GETS OUT HE MAKES MORE TROUBLE IN AN HOUR THAN YOU CAN STOP IN MANY A DAY, WORKING WITH ALL YOUR POWER.

He sets your playmates by the ears, He says what isn't so, And uses many ugly words Not good for you to know.

QUICK, FASTEN TIGHT THE IVORY GATES, AND CHAIN HIM WHILE HE'S YOUNG! FOR THIS SAME DANGEROUS PRISONER, IS JUST—YOUR LITTLE TONGUE!

—Priscilla Leonard

The apostle gives us a negative then a positive statement in this verse. Negatively, "Let every rotten word not be coming out of your mouth," but positively, "whatever is good, such as will build up where it is necessary," for the purpose: "that it might impart grace to those who are hearing."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "One said to me the other day, 'I should like to tell you some of my sins!' I answered quickly, 'I would like you would not; I have enough of my own without being infected with yours."

Gary L. Thomas in Every Body Matters says:

Over thirty years ago, one critical comment by a concert reviewer set the singer Karen Carpenter on a course that led to a

fatal bout with anorexia. She was so young and talented, with a near-hypnotic voice, that her early demise was all the more tragic. Given this reality, we must be careful to avoid speaking out indiscriminately and critically about weight, knowing that in the wrong context, we may launch a young person on a battle that could literally end her life. Let's also be sympathetic to people who live in a culture that feeds and targets our appetites.

Ephesians 4:1–3: "I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, am begging you to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "All For Jesus"?: "All for Jesus, all for Jesus! All my being's ransomed powers: All my thoughts and words and doings, All my days and all my hours. All for Jesus! All for Jesus! All my days and all my hours; All for Jesus! All for Jesus! All my days and all my hours."

April 26—Stop Grieving The Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)

Ephesians 4:30: "And stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

<u>Verse 30</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't grieve God. Don't break his heart. His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you, is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself. Don't take such a gift for granted."

These previous sins that Paul has addressed—lying, anger, stealing, not controlling our tongue—grieve the Holy Spirit who indwells us. God's Holy Spirit is a Person. He is naturally grieved when that which is unholy comes into our thoughts, our words or our actions.

Is anything in our lives grieving the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 1:13: "In Him you also having heard the word of the truth, the good news of your salvation, in Him also having believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "The Holy Spirit of God should never be pushed away, ignored, or rejected. If we would remember that the One who lives in us is God's own Spirit, we would be much more selective about what we think, read, watch, say, and do."

When there is disobedience or outright rebellion, the Spirit is grieved. I love the beautiful prayer Gary L. Thomas includes in his book, *The Beautiful Fight*:

Father God, please transform my eyes from being selfish consumers of personal pleasure, and sanctify them to be your servants of glory. Let them settle on what is pure and true and good, and make them want to turn from whatever is vile. Help me to see with your concern, and

awaken me to your perception. I offer my eyes to you as your servants; take them, use them, transform them, for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Carol Kent says: "The faith that gets us through unthinkable circumstances begins with being flat-out needy and allowing God's love to wrap us up, hold us close, and dry our tears."

Randy Alcorn in Eternal Perspectives says:

The youthful build their hopes upon the mists of dawn. The healthy launch their optimistic conquests under the fleeting smile of a noonday sun. Those who succeed enjoy the fickle favors of fortune for a while. But after youth has flown, health is gone, and earthly aspirations recede before the advancing shadows of senility and death, then, turning from the wreckage of our shattered dreams, we scan the farther banks of Jordan and long for home.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of "All For Jesus": "Let my hands perform His bidding, Let my feet run in His ways; Let my eyes see Jesus only, Let my lips speak forth His praise. All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Let my lips speak forth His praise; All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Let my lips speak forth His praise."

April 27—Deal With All Bitterness (Ephesians 4:31)

Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and shouting, and slander, be put away from you, with all ill will."

<u>Verse 31</u>: The Message paraphrases this verse: "Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk."

Paul points out \underline{six} ways the tongue can bring grief to the Holy Spirit. These qualities are also destroyers in personal relationships:

- 1. Bitterness. Pentecost says: "This primarily has the view, irritability. It produces an animosity in a person. This irritability will manifest itself in harsh words, thoughts or opinions against somebody. This individual will be sour and crabby."
- 2. Wrath. This is an intense emotional state induced by displeasure or anger, with an intent to punish or get revenge.
- 3. Anger. This is the reaction to wrath.
- 4. Shouting. This is reviling or reproaching using a scathing denunciation.
- 5. Slander. This is hurtful to someone else's character.
- 6. Ill Will. This is a bad attitude developed out of the preceding manifestations listed.

Oswald Chambers said: "If we want to maintain personal intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ, it will mean refusing to do or even think certain things."

And say certain things!

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "All For Jesus": "Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside; So enchained my spirit's vision, Looking at the Crucified. All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Looking at the Crucified; All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Looking at the Crucified."

April 28—Forgiving Each Other (Ephesians 4:32)

Ephesians 4:32: "And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave you."

<u>Verse 32</u>: The apostle gave us \underline{six} destroyers of personal relationships in the previous verse. In this verse, Paul gives \underline{five} qualities that develop personal relationships and please the Holy Spirit:

1. Be kind to one another.

Barclay says: "The Greeks define this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbors affairs as it does of its own. Kindness is as concerned with the sorrows, the struggles, the problems of other people as it is with its own. Kindness has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time and not inwards."

This quality is necessary for the church body relationship Paul described in previous verses.

2. Be compassionate.

This is "love in action" for others.

Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan to a young lawyer when he asks the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Down the road, a priest and Levite passed a man who had been robbed and beaten on the opposite side of the road. In Luke 10:33-34 (NASB), we read: "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him."

The rest of the story is what that compassion compelled the Samaritan to do for that hurting, injured broken man.

3. Forgive each other as God in Christ forgave you.

Paul states the Christian standard of forgiveness. We are to forgive as God in Christ forgave us. This forgiveness is exemplified by the first words Christ spoke from the cross. They had just completed driving the nails into his hands and feet. They suspended His body between heaven and earth. Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34 NASB)

The apostle spoke of this forgiveness in Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we are having our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace." We do not deserve this forgiveness. It is a result of God's love and grace. This forgiveness forgives and forgets as though it never happened.

I love the definition of the word "forgiveness" in the Greek text. It is the picture of a person carrying around a big pot with all the offenses that person has experienced. The Greek could be translated "let the pot drop."

Joy, forgiveness and freedom come from doing the right thing!

This verse is a present imperative. Paul instructs us to be kind, compassionate and forgiving as God in Christ forgave us on a daily basis.

Richard Sibbes in his book, Tender Heart, says of a tender heart:

- 1. It is sensible.
- 2. It is pliable.
- 3. It is yielding.

Charles H. Spurgeon said: "There is no monotony in real joy. The chief joy of life is to be right with yourself, your neighbor, your God."

Lewis B. Smedes in *Days of Grace Through the Year* says: "When you forgive a person who wronged you, you set a prisoner free, and then you discover that the prisoner you set free is you. When you forgive, you walk hand in hand with the very God who forgives you everything for the sake of his Son. When you forgive, you heal the hurts you never should have felt in the first place."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 4 of "All For Jesus": "Oh, what wonder! how amazing! Jesus, glorious King of kings, Deigns to call me His beloved, Lets me rest beneath His wings. All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Resting now beneath His wings; All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Resting now beneath His wings."

April 29—Imitations of God (Ephesians 5:1)

Ephesians 5:1: "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

<u>Verse 1</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents."

Our verse begins with the final "therefore" in this passage. We have seen <u>three</u> occurences:

- 1. Chapter 4, verse 17: "This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord."
- 2. Chapter 4, verse 25: "Therefore, having laid aside falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."
- 3. Verse 1: "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Each Christian should be an imitator of God because he is God's child. As a child imitates his parents, so ought a believer to imitate God."

In this verse, Paul continues his list of <u>five</u> qualities that develop personal relationships. We saw the first <u>three</u> in the previous verse:

4. Be imitators of God as beloved children.

The apostle challenges us to be like our Father.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 5:43-45 (TLB): "There is

the saying, 'Love your friends and hate your enemies.' But I say: Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way you will be acting as true sons of your Father in heaven. For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too."

St. Francis of Assisi prayed: "Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood, as to understand. To be loved, as to love. For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

Westcott says: "The attainment of the Divine character is a process of life and growth."

Steve McVey in *Grace Walk* says: "Someone has said that Jesus gave His life for us so that He could give His life to us and live His life through us."

Ruth Myers in her book, The Perfect Love, shares:

Betty Stam was a missionary in China, where she and her husband were killed by Communists in the 1930s. She was the author of these lines:

I CANNOT LIVE LIKE JESUS
EXAMPLE THOUGH HE BE,
FOR HE WAS STRONG AND SELFLESS
AND I AM TIED TO ME.
I CANNOT LIVE LIKE JESUS;
MY SOUL IS NEVER FREE;
MY WILL IS STRONG AND STUBBORN;
MY LOVE IS WEAK AND WEE.
BUT I HAVE ASKED MY JESUS
TO LIVE HIS LIFE IN ME.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "More Like The Master"?: "More like the Master I would ever be, More of His meekness, more humility; More zeal to labor, more courage to be true, More consecration for work He bids me do. Take Thou my heart, I would be Thine alone; Take Thou my heart and make it all Thine own; Purge me from sin, O Lord, I now implore, Wash me and keep me Thine forevermore."

April 30—Walk In Love (Ephesians 5:2)

Ephesians 5:2: "And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell."

<u>Verse 2</u>: In this verse, Paul completes the $\underline{\text{five}}$ qualities that develop personal relationships:

5. Walk in love.

Love cannot be legislated. The Spirit of God's activity in our lives produces love.

In Ephesians 4:32, Paul gave the standard for forgiveness: "even as also God in Christ forgave you." In this verse, he gives the standard for love: "even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell."

Christ's love was great enough that He gave up His rights and prerogatives. He emptied Himself of His privilege to become a sin offering and blood sacrifice to God. He did all of this so we might have the privilege of a relationship with God the Father.

Paul shows this love in Philippians 2:17-18: "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am joying and rejoicing with you all. But you also, be rejoicing in the same thing and be rejoicing with me."

In The Life You've Always Wanted, John Ortberg says:

Here is the principle: There is an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do something.

Spiritual disciplines are to life what calisthenics are to a game. Once the game starts, basketball players get no bonus points based on how many free throws they shot in practice. The only reason to practice them is to be able to make them in a game.

Warren W. Wiersbe in *The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2* quotes A.W. Tozer: "The whole matter of moral choice centers around Jesus Christ. Christ stated it plainly: 'He that is not with me is against me' (Matthew 12:30)."

Billy Graham in his book, *Nearing Home*, says: "But most of all, as we learn to trust every day in His hands, the golden years can be a time of growing closer to Christ. And that is life's greatest joy."

FREE ME COMPLETELY

O! DEAR GOD, THIS ACHING DESIRE!

MY HEART CRIES FOR IT, LONGS FOR IT.

WITH DEEP THROBBING INTENSITY!

YET IN THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL

I KNOW THAT WHAT I ASK

IS NOT YOUR HIGHEST OR YOUR BEST FOR ME.

I CANNOT COME TO YOU BOLDLY

NOR CAN I MAKE MY REQUEST

IN THE NAME OF YOUR SON.

I dare not ask for a stone
When You offer me bread.
And so My Lord
Though the longing clutches my heart,
I yield it to You totally.
I ask not that You grant my desire,
But that You free me completely
From desiring it.

—Unknown Author

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "More Like The Master": "More like the Master I would live and grow; More of His love to others I would show; More self-denial, like His in Galilee, More like the Master I long to ever be. Take Thou my heart, I would be Thine alone; Take Thou my heart and make it all Thine own; Purge me from sin, O Lord, I now implore, Wash me and keep me Thine forevermore."

MAY

May 1—Conduct Fitting To The Saints (Ephesians 5:3)

Ephesians 5:3: "But immorality and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be named among you, as is fitting among saints."

<u>Verse 3</u>: Many of the problems in spiritual growth originate with self-will. We struggle with self-will when we insist on having our own way and we're unwilling to surrender to God's way.

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Rivers of Living Water*, said: "To master my will He had to melt my heart." She further says: "Surrender is a crisis that develops into a process."

In this passage, Paul continues to direct our responsibility in the body of Christ. In this section, the apostle will be addressing our conduct. It is God's plan for living in the light. In verses 3–4, the apostle lists <u>six</u> behaviors the believer should be careful to avoid:

- 1. Immorality
- 2. Uncleanness
- 3. Covetousness
- 4. Wickedness
- 5. Silly talking
- 6. Coarse jesting

The first three sins noted involve the sinfulness of the body (1) immorality, (2) uncleanness, and (3) covetousness.

Bill Bright in *Revolution Now* says: "We are in the position today of men who are straightening pictures on the walls of a burning house. We are dealing with peripheral issues. It is the hearts of men that need to be changed. The problems of evil in the world that are threatening to engulf humanity can be solved only in Jesus Christ and He has commanded His disciples to go and tell His message everywhere."

In the previous passage, we studied sins against others, but in this passage, we study sins against ourselves. The apostle emphasizes: "let it not be named among you, as is fitting among saints."

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "Ephesus, with its pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana (Acts 19:23–31), was similar to our society in that sexual immorality and greed ran rampant. Paul warned the believers in Ephesus to avoid these pitfalls."

Robertson says: "It is 'unbecoming' for a saint to be sensual or covetous."

J. Vernon McGee says: "If you can get into sin and not be troubled or bothered by it, you are not a child of God. I do not think there is any other alternative. But if there is conviction in your heart, you can rise and go to your Father as the Prodigal Son did. You are a son of the Father, and only sons want to go to the Father's house...The sins listed here are low sins which characterize the ungodly person."

Patzia adds: "The writer is emphatic in stating that, since his readers are God's holy people, the question is not only one of nonparticipation; rather, there must not be even a hint of these sins among them. When believers approach sin with an attitude of indifference, then it is not uncommon to discuss and to make light of one's personal sins or the sins of others. This is to be avoided in their fellowship."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "More About Jesus": "More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love Who died for me. More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me."

May 2—Giving of Thanks (Ephesians 5:4)

Ephesians 5:4: "And wickedness and silly talking, or coarse jesting, which are not proper, but rather giving of thanks."

<u>Verse 4</u>: In verses 3–4, the apostle lists \underline{six} behaviors the believer should be careful to avoid:

- 1. Immorality
- 2. Uncleanness
- 3. Covetousness
- 4. Wickedness
- 5. Silly talking
- 6. Coarse jesting

In verse 3, the first <u>three</u> sins noted involve the immorality of the body. The <u>three</u> sins addressed in this verse involve the immorality of the tongue:

- 1. Wickedness. This word is speech that would offend moral purity. It is speech which is indecent or obscene.
- 2. Silly talking. This involves foolish talking or any speech that would be offensive to decency.
- 3. Coarse jesting. This references the speaking of immorality through the use of words which have a double meaning, something that can be interpreted in two ways.

This speech is not proper for the saint. In contrast, Paul teaches us to give thanks. He encourages this further in verses 18–19: "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with all your heart to the Lord. Giving thanks always concerning all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God even the Father."

J. Vernon McGee quotes François de la Mothe Fénelon:

Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself as to others.

"Giving of thanks." It is our godly alternative to the <u>six</u> sins the apostle mentioned. 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "More About Jesus": "More about Jesus let me learn, More of His holy will discern; Spirit of God, my Teacher be, Showing the things of Christ to me. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me."

May 3—No Inheritance (Ephesians 5:5)

Ephesians 5:5: "For you may be sure of this, that every immoral or unclean man, or one who is covetous, that is an idolater, is not having an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

<u>Verse 5</u>: The little word "not" occurs <u>eight</u> times in verses 3–18.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "A greedy person is an idolater in the sense that greed, like idols, puts things before God."

In this verse, Paul provides the <u>first</u> reason for the previous commands made: "You may be sure of this that those practicing the things mentioned above are not having an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

After listing the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:21, the apostle says: "I am forewarning you even as I did forewarn you that those who are in the habit of practicing things such as this shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Hughes says: "We conclude on the authority of God's Word that anyone who is living a lustful life of sensuality and is unwilling to turn from it is lost and has no inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Christ. Such a person is an "idolater" because he has put his sensual desire in the central place only God should occupy."

Radmacher, Allen & House point out: "The modern laxity of morals in many religious circles is contrary to God's word. Unclean and greedy people will have no inheritance in the kingdom."

Westcott says: "Such sins as have been enumerated exclude from the kingdom of God and bring down the wrath of God upon those who are guilty of them."

Revelation 21:8 (NASB): "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "More About Jesus"?: "More about Jesus, in His Word, Holding communion with my Lord; Hearing His voice in ev'ry line, Making each faithful saying mine. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus, More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me."

May 4—The Sons of Disobedience (Ephesians 5:6-7)

Ephesians 5:6: "Let no one be deceiving you with empty words, for because of these things there is coming the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." Ephesians 5:7: "Therefore, do not be sharing with them."

<u>Verse 6</u>: The apostle gives a strong warning instructing believers to not be involved in immoral behavior: "Let no one be deceiving you with empty words." Some modern versions of this these empty words are:

- If it was wrong, everyone else wouldn't be doing it.
- We have the right to do whatever we want.
- We're planning to get married later on anyway so it's OK to have sex now.
- No one will know.
- There's no harm in trying things.

Paul provides the <u>second</u> reason for being on your guard: "for because of these things there is coming the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." The <u>first</u> reason was in verse 5: "the one doing such things does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and God."

MacArthur says: "No Christian will be sinless in this present life, but it is dangerously deceptive for Christians to offer assurance of salvation to a professing believer whose life is characterized by persistent sin and who shows no shame for that sin or hunger for the holy and pure things of God. They are headed for wrath (2:2), and believers must not partner in any of their wickedness (v. 7)."

Ruth Paxson in her book, Life on the Highest Plane, says:

He lives under a three-fold bondage, from which it is impossible for him to extricate himself.

He is in bondage to sin.

John 8:34, R.V., "Jesus answered them Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is *the bondservant* of sin."

He is in bondage to self.

2 Corinthians 5:15, "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth *live unto themselves*, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

He is in bondage to Satan.

2 Timothy 2:26, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, *who are taken captive by him at his will.*" The natural man is in helpless captivity to sin, self and Satan.

Tony Evans in *Kingdom Man* says: "Men, you are in a battle. You are in a war. The stakes of this war and its casualties are higher than a checkmark in the win or loss column. Lives will be lost. Eternities will be shaped. Destinies will either be discovered or dismissed. Dreams will be attained or relinquished."

<u>Verse 7</u>: This is a negative command, but does not refer to loving them. We are still to be involved in their lives with the purpose of helping them.

As we face the world, the challenge is not to conform, but to transform by standing for our convictions. Do we want to be a thermostat or a thermometer? The thermostat regulates the environment, but the thermometer simply registers it.

2 Corinthians 6:17–18: "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,' says the Lord Almighty."

Do not share in their sin, but share the Savior with them.

I love the way Phillips paraphrases Romans 12:2: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "More About Jesus": "More about Jesus; on His throne, Riches in glory all His own; More of His kingdom's sure increase; More of His coming, Prince of Peace. More,

more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me."

May 5—The Fruit of This Life (Ephesians 5:8-9)

Ephesians 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: be walking as children of light."

Ephesians 5:9: "For the fruit of this light is found in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

<u>Verse 8</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The reason believers should not be partners with the unregenerate is that Christians are no longer part of the darkness, in which they used to live but are light in the Lord."

1 John 1:5–7: "And this is the message which we have heard from Him and we are proclaiming to you, that God is light, and in Him there is not one bit of darkness. If we say that we are having fellowship with Him and we are walking around in the darkness, we are lying and not doing the truth. But if we are walking around in the light as He Himself is in the light, we are having fellowship one with the other, and the blood of Jesus His Son is cleansing us from every sin."

Before you became a Christian, "you were once darkness," but in contrast, "now you are light in the Lord." We are instructed: "be walking as children of light."

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "The believers' position has changed from darkness (sin) to light (righteousness). Believers are to change their walk to correspond to their position in Christ (Rom. 12:2)."

Proverbs 4:18: "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day."

Revelation 22:5 (NASB): "And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever."

John 8:12: "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Ken & Joni Eareckson Tada in Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story quote J.C.Ryle:

FEAR NOT BECAUSE YOU SOMETIMES WALK IN DARKNESS AND HAVE NO LIGHT.

REMEMBER THAT YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE MIND OF THE LORD,

NOR THE MEANING OF HIS DEALINGS.

BUT WHEN THE CLOUDS COMPASS YOU ABOUT, BELIEVE IN GOD

As Daniel did; trust in the Lord Jesus at all times;

SING TO HIM IN THE DUNGEON, AS PAUL AND SILAS;

SING TO HIM EVEN IN THE FIRE, AS THE THREE HEBREW CHILDREN DID;

BE SURE, BE VERY SURE, HE WHO BELIEVES SHALL NEVER BE ASHAMED.

Verse 9: In this verse, Paul gives a <u>three</u>-fold identification of the fruit in this relationship with Christ. The light is found (1) in all goodness, (2) in righteousness, and (3) in truth. This fruit is the result of the Spirit of God working in the life of the child of God. Those ugly behaviors won't be seen.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "Christ's prayer is, 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' The more truth you believe, the more sanctified you will be. The operation of truth upon the mind is to separate a man from the world unto the service of God. Just in proportion as truth is given up, worldliness and frivolity are sure to prevail."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Stepping In The Light": "Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior, Trying to follow our Savior and King, Shaping our lives by His blessed example, Happy, how happy, the songs that we bring. How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Stepping in the light, Stepping in the light; How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Led in paths of light."

May 6—What Is Pleasing To The Lord (Ephesians 5:10-11)

Ephesians 5:10: "Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

Ephesians 5:11: "And do not be associating with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather be exposing them."

<u>Verse 10</u>: Notice this is a command from the apostle. In the previous verse, he commanded: be walking as children of the light."

In many areas of our lives, we do not have specific commands to guide us in given situations, but this command gives us a basis for testing that which is questionable: Is it pleasing to the Lord?

As His children, can God the Father say that He is pleased with us?

MacArthur says: "Finding out carries the idea of testing or proving to learn by clear and convincing evidence what is truly honoring to God. The point is that, as believers walk in the light of the truth, the knowledge of the Lord's will becomes clear. See Romans 12:1, 2 where Paul says the same thing, stating that it is only after presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God that we can know His acceptable will."

Gloria Repp in *Nothing Daunted* quotes Isobel Kuhn: "'I have a prayer that I often use when I run into problems: *If this obstacle be from Thee, Lord, I accept it; but if it be from Satan, I refuse him and all his works in the nature of Calvary.*"

<u>Verse 11</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are."

In this verse, we have a negative and positive command. Negatively, "do not be associating with the unfruitful works of darkness," but positively, "rather be exposing them."

In verse 9, Paul spoke of the fruit of the light, but in this verse, he calls the works of the darkness "unfruitful." Following the works of darkness ultimately

leads to destruction.

It is possible for convictions to be expressed with concern. Let your life and words serve as your witness.

John 3:19–21: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Stepping In The Light": "Pressing more closely to Him Who is leading When we are tempted to turn from the way, Trusting the arm that is strong to defend us, Happy, how happy, our praises each day. How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Stepping in the light, Stepping in the light; How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Led in paths of light."

May 7—Exposed By The Light (Ephesians 5:12-13)

Ephesians 5:12: "For it is a shame even to speak of the things which they do in secret."

Ephesians 5:13: "But when any thing is exposed by the light, it is made visible, for every thing that is being made visible is light."

<u>Verse 12</u>: We are commanded to expose their "unfruitful" works because they are shameful.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The things done in secret are too shameful even to talk about. The term the disobedient in the NIV wrongly suggests that this refers to unbelievers. However, the Greek has 'what is done by them,' thus indicating that Paul may be referring to believers who commit 'deeds of darkness."

Warren W. Wiersbe in The Best of A. W. Tozer: Book 2 quotes A.W. Tozer:

Sometimes the best way to see a thing is to look at its opposite. Eli and his sons are placed in the priesthood with the stipulation that they honor God in their lives and ministrations. This they fail to do, and God sends Samuel to announce the consequences. Unknown to Eli this law of reciprocal honor has been all the while secretly working, and now the time has come for judgment to fall. Hophni and Phineas, the degenerate priests, fall in battle, the wife of Phineas dies in childbirth, Israel flees before her enemies, the ark of God is captured by the Philistines and the old man Eli falls backward and dies of a broken neck. Thus stark utter tragedy followed upon Eli's failure to honor God.

<u>Verse 13</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "When light exposes evil deeds, they become visible, manifest for what they really are. Seeing them as evil,

a believer then cleanses himself of them, realizing they are detrimental not only to him but also to other believers."

J. Vernon McGee says: "In less than six months that man made a decision for Christ. He had been listening to the wrong preacher before that. She had been preaching to him when she should have been a light. Remember that darkness is not dissipated by lecturing or by preaching. Darkness is dissipated by light."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Stepping In The Light"?: "Walking in footsteps of gentle forbearance, Footsteps of faithfulness, mercy, and love, Looking to Him for the grace freely promised, Happy, how happy, our journey above. How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Stepping in the light, Stepping in the light; How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Led in paths of light."

May 8—Wake Up (Ephesians 5:14)

Ephesians 5:14: "Therefore, it is said, be waking up he who is sleeping, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you."

<u>Verse 14</u>: John 8:12: "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Gaebelein says: "The exhortation in verse 14, to awake and arise, is not addressed to an unsaved person, but to a Christian. Many believers are in the state of spiritual sleep among the spiritually dead in the world; but the promise is given, that Christ will give light when the awakening comes."

Joel C. Rosenberg in his book, *Implosion*, says: "For us, the verse at the base of the Statue of Liberty is not trite. It has real and personal meaning. *'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if however a man be overtaken in a sin, you who are the spiritual ones restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, keeping an eye on yourself, lest you also should be tempted."

I love the way Phillips paraphrases Romans 13:11–14: "Why all this stress on behaviour? Because, as I think you have realised, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God's salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the day has almost dawned. Let us therefore fling away the things that men do in the dark, let us arm ourselves for the fight of the day! Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the "delights" of getting drunk or playing with sex, nor yet in quarrelling or jealousies. Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Stepping In The Light": "Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior, Upward, still upward, we follow our Guide; When we shall see Him, the King in His beauty, Happy,

how happy, our place at His side. How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Stepping in the light, Stepping in the light; How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, Led in paths of light."

May 9—Making The Most of The Time (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Ephesians 5:15: "Take heed therefore, how carefully you are walking, not as unwise men, but as wise."

Ephesians 5:16: "Making the most of the time because the days are evil."

<u>Verse 15</u>: Building on what was said previously in the passage, Paul gives a command and warning in this verse. The apostle says: "take heed therefore, how carefully you are walking," negatively, "not as unwise men," but positively, "as wise."

This verse references verse 8: "for you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord, be walking as children of light."

Proverbs 3:5–6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Colossians 4:5–6: "In wisdom be ordering your behavior towards those outside, buying up for yourselves the time (making the most of the time). Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, to the end that you know how you ought to answer everyone."

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Life on the Highest Plane*, says: "My answer to you would be, 'Test the power of Jesus Christ's victory over sin on your besetting sin and give Him a fair chance to prove to you that He can save to the uttermost, even to make you dead to that sin. Take the sin that is dragging you down into the very depths of despair and let Him who is your sanctification make you dead to it."

<u>Verse 16</u>: The Psalmist says in Psalm 90:12: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

With a sense of urgency, Jesus told the disciples in John 4:35–36: "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."

John 9:4: "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."

Paul had this same urgency in Philippians 3:13–14: "Brethren, I am not considering myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing: I am forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to what is laying ahead. I am pressing onward toward the goal for the prize of the call from above of God in Christ Jesus."

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "Redeeming the time means taking advantage of opportunities for service. We each have a limited amount of time on this earth.

Paul exhorts us to use as much of that time as possible for advancing Christ's purposes in this world."

Psalm 39:4–6: "Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "When We All Get To Heaven": "Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace; In the mansions bright and blessed He'll prepare for us a place. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory."

May 10—What The Will of The Lord Is (Ephesians 5:17)

Ephesians 5:17: "On this account do not be foolish, but be understanding what the will of the Lord is."

<u>Verse 17</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants."

This verse is key to God's plan described in Ephesians. Referencing the previous verse: "the days are evil," Paul states negatively, "do not be foolish," but positively, "be understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Understanding and pursuing His will is the greatest protection against the evil influences around us.

MacArthur says:

Do not be foolish repeats and reinforces Paul's previous plea for believers not to be unwise, and understand what the will of the Lord is expands and makes more explicit his plea to walk wisely (v. 15).

In light of the urgency to make the most of our time, not being foolish includes, among other things, not becoming anxious or panicked. When we look around at the pervasiveness of evil and at the unending needs for evangelism and service to others in Christ's name, it is easy to be overwhelmed. We are tempted either to give up and withdraw or to become hyperactive, losing precision, purpose, and effectiveness in a frenzy of superficial activity.

Gary L. Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* says: "It's not as if I'm called to find out the will of God and then accomplish it in my own strength. On the contrary, not only does God call me; He also equips me, sustains me, and empowers me. Anything less is a Christless Christianity."

John Newton wrote:

I ASKED THE LORD THAT I MAY GROW
IN FAITH AND LOVE AND EVERY GRACE,
MIGHT MORE OF HIS SALVATION KNOW,
AND SEEK MORE EARNESTLY HIS FACE.

"Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and He I trust has answered prayer, But it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair.

I thought that in some favored hour, at once He'd answer my request, And by His Love's transforming power, subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of that He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart, And bade the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part.

Nay, more, with His hand He seemed intent to aggravate My Woe,

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted My Gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why this?" I trembling cried.

"Wilt Thou pursue this worm to death?"

"This is the way," the Lord replied,

"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ

FROM SIN AND SELF TO SET THEE FREE,

AND CROSS THY SCHEMES OF EARTHLY JOY

AND THOU MIGHT FIND THY ALL IN ME."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "When We All Get To Heaven": "While we walk the pilgrim pathway Clouds will overspread the sky; But when trav'ling days are over, Not a shadow, not a sigh. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory."

May 11—Filled With The Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)

Ephesians 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

<u>Verse 18</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Verse 18 includes a negative command and a positive one. The negative is to abstain from getting drunk on wine with which there is incorrigibility. The word asōtia is translated debauchery, "excess," "riot," and "dissipation." All these give the idea of profligate or licentious living that is wasteful. In this verse the literal sense of incorrigibility seems best, for a drunken man acts abnormally. Rather than controlling himself, the wine controls him. Conversely, the positive command is, be filled with the Spirit. Thus a believer, rather than controlling himself, is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

"Be filled with the Spirit". This includes everything in practical experience: walk, talk and thoughts. We are able to "be filled with the Spirit" when we are submissive to His activity in our lives.

Dr. Ryrie in his book, Balancing the Christian Life, says:

To be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by the Spirit. The clue to this definition is found in Ephesians 5:18 where there is contrast and comparison between drunkenness and Spirit-filling. It is a comparison which gives a clue, for just as a drunken person is controlled by the liquor which he consumes, so a Spirit-filled Christian is controlled by the Spirit. As a result, he will act in a manner unnatural to him, not an erratic or abnormal manner, but one contrary to the old life. Controlled by the Spirit is a necessary part of spirituality.

Charles R. Swindoll in Embraced by the Spirit says:

"Be filled" is a command, which means I play a part in it. For example, I cannot be filled with the Spirit while I have unconfessed sin within me. I cannot be filled with the Spirit while at the same time conducting my life in the energy of the flesh. I cannot be filled with the Spirit while I am resisting God's will and relying only on myself. I need to be sure that I have taken care of the sins that have emerged in my life, that I have not ignored the wrong that I have done before God and to others. I need to walk in conscious dependence on the Lord on a daily basis.

He further says:

It's also given in a passive voice—grammatically that means something is done to us. You're not doing the filling; you have to be filled. One Bible translation says, "Let the Spirit fill your life" (CEV). He knows what you really need in the moment, so be at peace. Find your comfort, wisdom, and confidence in Him. He is able to bring you those things through the filling of His Spirit, but He's not a coercive God. He waits for you to ask Him: "Lord, I'm Yours today. Lord, I want to glorify You today. Please enable me to accomplish that. Fill me with Your power ... strength ... peace ... love. I need You to do that."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "When We All Get To Heaven"?: "Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving ev'ry day; Just one glimpse of Him in glory Will the toils of life repay. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory."

May 12—Making Melody (Ephesians 5:19)

Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with all your heart to the Lord."

<u>Verse 19</u>: Please notice the little word "all." Do this "with <u>all</u> your heart" in this verse and "giving thanks always concerning all things" in verse 20.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Paul then gave four results of being filled with the Spirit."

The <u>four</u> results of a Spirit-filled life Paul gives the Ephesians are in verses 19–21. The first two are in this verse:

1. Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Drinking will produce almost constant conversation and loud talking. However, one who is filled with the Spirit will be speaking to others in the body of Christ in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

2. Singing and making melody with all your heart to the Lord.

Another result of intoxication is singing. This is also true of one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. However, one filled with the Spirit will sing and make melody with all of their heart to the Lord.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: "The outcome of being filled with the Spirit is described in vv. 19—20 in a series of four participles that virtually amount to imperatives. Each of these expressions of the Spirit's fullness has to do with praise."

Randy Alcorn in Eternal Perspectives says:

Ah, the people of God ought to be the happiest people in all the wide world! People should be coming to us constantly and asking the source of our joy and delight—redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, our yesterdays behind us, our sin under the blood forever and a day, to be remembered against us no more forever. God is our Father, Christ is our Brother, the Holy Spirit our Advocate and Comforter. Our Brother has gone to the Father's house to prepare a place for us, leaving with us the promise that He will come again!

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "When We All Get To Heaven": "Onward to the prize before us, Soon His beauty we'll behold; Soon the pearly gates will open, We shall tread the streets of gold. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory."

May 13—Giving Thanks (Ephesians 5:20)

Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks always concerning all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

<u>Verse 20</u>: This reminds me of Psalm 100:1–5: "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."

Paul directs us again to "giving thanks." Ephesians 5:4: "Giving thanks always concerning all things," not just the good, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father." This is the <u>third</u> result of a Spirit-filled life:

3. Giving thanks concerning all things.

1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

August L. Storm penned these words in the Swedish Salvation Army paper in 1891. They were translated from Swedish to English by Carl E. Backstrom in 1931. Later, they were included in the hymn "Thanks to God" by George C. Stebbins:

Thanks to God for my Redeemer,

Thanks for all Thou dost provide,
Thanks for times now but a memory,

Thanks for Jesus by my side.

Thanks for pleasant balmy springtime,

Thanks for dark and dreary fall,
Thanks for tears by now forgotten,

Thanks for peace within my soul.

THANKS FOR PRAYERS THAT THOU HAST ANSWERED, THANKS FOR WHAT THOU DOST DENY, THANKS FOR STORMS THAT I HAVE WEATHERED, THANKS FOR ALL THOU DOST SUPPLY. THANKS FOR PAIN AND THANKS FOR PLEASURE, THANKS FOR COMFORT IN DESPAIR, THANKS FOR GRACE THAT NONE CAN MEASURE, THANKS FOR LOVE BEYOND COMPARE. THANKS FOR ROSES BY THE WAYSIDE, THANKS FOR THORNS THEIR STEMS CONTAIN. THANKS FOR HOME AND THANKS FOR FIRESIDE, THANKS FOR HOPE THAT SWEET REFRAIN. THANKS FOR JOY AND THANKS FOR SORROW, THANKS FOR HEAVENLY PEACE WITH THEE. THANKS FOR HOPE IN THE TOMORROW, THANKS THROUGH ALL ETERNITY.

Kristin Armstrong in her book, Happily Ever After, says:

When we thank God for all things, even the things that hurt, things we don't like or wouldn't choose, those things lose power over us. In praise we enter into the realm of Jesus.

In everything give thanks: In spite of everything.
During everything.
Because of everything.
Through everything.
In the midst of everything.
Always, in everything...
Give thanks.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "There are some desponding, morbid, murmuring, ungrateful souls who find reasons for complaining everywhere, but a man of David's spirit, on the contrary, sucks honey out of every flower and praises God in connection with everything."

Patrick Shaughnessy in *Inspiring Quotations* said: "There are four things you can do with the hurts that come into your life, nurse them; curse them; rehearse them; or reverse them."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Count Your Blessings": "When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count

your blessings, See what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done."

May 14—Humble Yourselves (Ephesians 5:21)

Ephesians 5:21: "Putting yourselves in subjection to one another in respect of Christ."

<u>Verse 21</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says of verses 19–21:

It gives us the four results of being filled with the Spirit.

- 1. Communication with one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
- 2. Communication with the Lord by singing and making melody.
- 3. Thanking God the Father.
- 4. Submitting to one another. That is, willingly serving others and being under them rather than dominating them and exalting themselves.

In this verse, Paul gives the <u>fourth</u> result of a Spirit-filled life. This is also key to a harmonious husband-wife relationship:

4. Submitting to one another—Submission.

Our wills and rights are put aside to be in subjection to one another. Submission is voluntary yielding in love. Notice the apostle focuses on our responsibilities as he begins to address the marriage relationship. Many failures in marriage can be traced back to a spiritual problem of submission and love.

"Putting yourselves in subjection to one another in respect of Christ." In this submission, we are recognizing Christ's exalted position and His authority as the Head of the body, the church. When we are more dependent and submissive to Him, we are more dependent and submissive to one another.

Ruth Harms Calkin wrote:

SEPTEMBER 3RD—OUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

LORD, I WONDER WHY TODAY
I SHOULD SUDDENLY REMEMBER
ONE OF OUR FIRST RIDICULOUS QUARRELS.
IT WASN'T AT ALL FUNNY THEN
BUT I SMILE NOW WHEN I RECALL
MY STUBBORN RESENTMENT—
MY BLATANT RETORT:
"I WISH YOU'D GO FLY A KITE."
IN ONE SHINING MOMENT, GOD

You seemed to pour all the love From all the corners of the world Into My Husband's Gentle Voice:
"I will," he said disarmingly,
"If you'll fly it with Me."
We've been flying together
For thirty-eight years.

H. Norman Wright said: "As believers, we are called to servanthood as an expression of our new life in Christ."

Max Lucado in his book, *Fear Not*, says: "With perfect knowledge of the past and perfect vision of the future, He loves you perfectly in spite of both."

Linda Dillow said: "When difficult circumstances come into my life, I hear God's voice saying, '... let me be the blessed controller. Surrender. Accept my timing. Accept my ways. Accept my outcome. Let your trust be in me alone."

Stu Weber in Tender Warrior: God's Intention for a Man says:

Coaching legend Vince Lombardi, no New Testament theologian by any stretch, but a man who knew men, certainly understood this truth. His Green Bay Packers ran over the top of everybody in professional football in the sixties. And they did it together. Connected by "fond affection." Lombardi, their leader, insisted upon it. He said it straight forward:

You've got to care for one another. You have to love one another. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy. The difference between mediocrity and greatness is the feeling these players have for one another. Most people call it team spirit. When the players are imbued with that special feeling you know you have yourself a winning team.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Count Your Blessings": "Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly, And you will be singing as the days go by. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your blessings, See what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done."

May 15—Wives Submit to Your Husbands (Ephesians 5:22)

Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, be putting yourselves in subjection to your own husbands, as to the Lord."

Verse 22: The word "subject" or "submission" has three parts:

1. Awareness—the divine order of things.

- 2. Attitude—our response to this order of things.
- 3. Authority—the responsibility.

Robert Lewis and William Hendricks in their book, Rocking The Roles, say:

However, submission is not a role but a response—a very special, empowering response. Properly understood and practiced, it affirms and energizes a husband's leadership in the home and releases him to lead.

The wife's response of submission helps her husband fulfill his God-given role. God wants every husband to lead his family with Christlike service and leadership. But the odds are against most men ever becoming servant-leaders. That's a sobering reality, and it should be a warning to every wife. It's not that men can't lead, or don't want to. But so much is stacked against them from the very start.

In the 60th year of our marriage, I found a beautiful Valentine's Day card with an older couple outside in the snow. They are bundled up with hats, mittens, boots, coats and scarves. They are smiling. She is holding a heart-shaped balloon. He says:

No flowers are as lovely, No face is as fine. No chocolate's as sweet, As knowing you're mine.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Count Your Blessings"?: "When you look at others with their lands and gold, Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold; Count your many blessings, money cannot buy Your reward in Heaven, nor your home on high. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your blessings, See what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done."

May 16—The Husband Is The Head of The Wife (Ephesians 5:23)

Ephesians 5:23: "Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body."

<u>Verse 23</u>: This verse provides the reason for the wife's submission: "Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body."

There are two headships: (1) the husband of the home and (2) Christ of the church. The authority structure is clearly defined by Paul in his Corinthian letter in 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I am desiring you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."

Paul references the church under the term "body." As the head of the church, Christ is Himself the Savior of the body. Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, Christ."

1 Peter 3:7: "... as to those who are also joint heirs of the grace of life."

T.S. Eliot said: "Marriage is the greatest test in the world ... but now I welcome the test instead of dreading it. It is much more than a test of sweetness of temper, as people sometimes think; it is a test of the whole character and affects every action."

Gary & Betsy Ricucci say: "One of the best wedding gifts God gave you was a full-length mirror called your spouse. Had there been a card attached, it would have said, 'Here's to helping you discover what you're *really* like!"

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Count Your Blessings": "So, amid the conflict, whether great or small, Do not be discouraged, God is over all; Count your many blessings, angels will attend, Help and comfort give you to your journey's end. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your blessings, See what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done."

May 17—An Illustration of Submission (Ephesians 5:24)

Ephesians 5:24: "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be subject in everything to their husbands."

<u>Verse 24</u>: The word "everything" references the marriage relationship. This is a positional, not personal point of view.

When an obligation has to be forced, it is not *submission*, but *slavery*. Robert Lewis and William Hendricks in *Rocking the Roles* say:

It's not that submission has no place in a marriage. It does. It's a biblical term. But unfortunately, submission has been misused and misinterpreted...If we want to understand the wife's role wholistically, we have to look beyond the few statements on submission to the many statements that portray her as an active, creative, dynamic, and contributing member of the marriage.

When we do this, we find that God calls a wife to a positive, creative, challenging, and vital role in the family. Her role revolves around helping and loving. Without these contributions, her husband and children will be at great loss. She offers them a one-of-a-kind support and nurturing that no one else can provide. If she callously ignores or abandons this function, her family will be de-stabilized and damaged in catastrophic ways.

Foulkes says: "Husband and wife are to see their relationship as following the pattern of the relationship between Christ and His Church."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Surely Goodness and Mercy": "A pilgrim was I, and a wand'ring, In the cold night of sin I did roam, When Jesus the kind Shepherd found me, And now I am on my way home. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever, And I shall feast at the table spread for me; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life."

May 18—Husbands Love Your Wives (Ephesians 5:25)

Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

<u>Verse 25</u>: The focus for the wife is upon the subject of authority in the previous verses. The focus for the husband is upon their affections. This is a statement of sacrificial servant leadership.

The Message paraphrases this verse: "Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the Church—a love marked by giving, not getting." Robert Lewis and William Hendricks in Rocking the Roles say:

The kind of leadership Jesus defines for His followers has to do with:

- Responsibility, not privilege.
- Service, not being served.
- Support, not superiority.

This kind of Christlike love involves loving and giving himself up for her, but also giving himself up. This was exemplified in Christ love for the church.

- 1. Sensitive
- 2. Sacrificial
- 3. A Servant

John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Love is displayed by our willingness to give of ourselves to others. Likewise, sacrifice is the thrill of giving the best that we have to the one we love the most.

Gary L. Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* says: "We simply cannot limit our Christian experience to the incarnation and Jesus' death and resurrection. To be sure, those are precious truths that make our salvation possible. But let us press on to embrace the power, hope, and glory of the ascension, the reality of a living, inthe-flesh Jesus. He is the embodiment of all that we can be when we surrender to his reign."

Song of Solomon 2:3–4: "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to

my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Surely Goodness and Mercy": "He restoreth my soul when I'm weary, He giveth me strength day by day; He leads me beside the still waters, He guards me each step of the way. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever, And I shall feast at the table spread for me; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life."

May 19—Washing With The Word (Ephesians 5:26)

Ephesians 5:26: "In order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word."

<u>Verse 26</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The purpose of Christ's death was to make the Church holy 'to set apart' for Himself as His own forever which He did by cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word."

In verses 26–27, Paul describes Christ's <u>three</u>-fold purpose of love and sacrifice for the church: (1) provision and preparation, (2) presentation, and (3) protection.

The <u>first</u> purpose of provision and preparation is stated in this verse: "In order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word." The daily application of the Word of God provides the sanctified cleansing.

John 15:3: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

2 Corinthians 7:1: "Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God."

In the husband-wife relationship, the husband should make provision for his wife's exposure to the Word of God on a regular basis.

David Roper in his book, *Seeing Through*, quotes Martin Luther on the Protestant Reformation: "I did nothing. The Word did it all. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word, otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept and drank Wittenburg beer with Philipp and Amsdorf, the Word weakened all who opposed me."

In verse 25, we had the altar of sacrifice, but in this verse, we have the laver of cleansing.

Psalm 119:9, 11: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

This love of Christ for the church is great. He gave of Himself in the past. In the present, He gives of Himself to precipitate growth. In the future, the ultimate giving will be of the church to Himself in glorification.

A husband's love for his wife involves love (1) which is not only involved in giving of himself up for her, but also (2) which is involved in her daily development and spiritual growth.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Surely Goodness and Mercy"?: "When I walk thru the dark lonesome valley, My Savior will walk with me there; And safely His great hand will lead me To the mansions He's gone to prepare. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever, And I shall feast at the table spread for me; Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days, all the days of my life."

May 20—Preparation For Eternity (Ephesians 5:27)

Ephesians 5:27: "In order that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things; but in order that she might be holy and blameless."

<u>Verse 27</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness."

Paul continues Christ's <u>three</u>-fold purpose of love and sacrifice for the church in this verse. In the previous verse, we saw Christ's provision and preparation of the church by cleaning with the Word. In the first part of this verse, we have the second purpose: Christ's presentation of the church. It is "in order that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things."

The Lord is preparing a presentation for Himself. Jude 1:24–25: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

In the second part of the verse, we have the <u>third</u> purpose: Christ's protection of the church. This completes the <u>three</u>-fold purpose of Christ's love and sacrifice:

- 1. The provision and preparation of the bride—"in order that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing with the Word."
- 2. Her presentation—"in order that He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing."
- 3. Her protection—"in order that she should be holy and blameless."

Here is the goal of the work of Christ: "in order that He might present the church to Himself in splendor," negatively "not having sport or wrinkle or any such things," but positively, "in order that she might be holy and blameless."

In these verses, we could include the <u>three</u> great theological terms summarizing these purposes:

- 1. In the past, we experience justification.
- 2. In the present, we experience *sanctification* or *being set apa*rt and *made holy*.
- 3. Ultimately in the future, we will experience glorification.

John tells us soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Our

blessed Savior *gave* of Himself in the past, He *nurtures* in the present through the Word, and He will ultimately *present* us in the future in glory.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "Crown Him With Many Crowns": "Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne; Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns All music but its own! Awake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee, And hail Him as thy matchless King Through all eternity."

May 21—Love Your Wives Like You Love Yourselves (Ephesians 5:28)

Ephesians 5:28: "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. The one who is loving his own wife is loving himself."

<u>Verse 28</u>: The word "so" is the result or logical conclusion from the previous illustration and references back to the husband's love for his wife in verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." A husband's love for his wife should be in like measure as Christ's love for the church."

In the Song of Solomon, you often hear Shulammite give the words "ani ladodie wadodie le"—"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Song of Solomon 8:6–7: "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."

It's about responsibility not rank, sacrifice not selfishness, and duty not domination.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "Give of your hands to serve and your hearts to love."

Tony Evans in *Kingdom Man* says: "The problem in marriages today isn't that we have too many women who don't want to submit. The problem is that we have too many men who don't want to submit—to the headship of Jesus Christ. You should not be surprised if a woman is not following your lead if you are not following Christ's lead. If you are not openly and actively following Christ's lead, you cannot complain when your wife is not following you."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "Crown Him With Many Crowns": "Crown Him the Son of God Before the worlds began, And ye, who tread where He hath trod, Crown Him the Son of Man; Who ev'ry grief hath known That wrings the human breast, And takes and bears them for His own, That all in Him may rest."

May 22—Nourishing & Cherishing (Ephesians 5:29)

Ephesians 5:29: "For no one ever yet hated his own flesh, but is nourishing and cherishing it, even as Christ does the church."

Verse 29: In this verse, Paul states the reason husbands are under a moral obli-

gation to love their wives: "for no one ever yet hated his own flesh, but is nourishing and cherishing it."

This is nurtured and bestowed affection "as Christ (nourishes and cherishes) the church." The apostle again references verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." What an illustration of the responsibilities on the part of the husband!

"Cherishing" involves the idea of keeping warm. It is the picture of a mother hen keeping her little chickens warm under her wings.

The words "nourishing and cherishing" also remind us of Jesus' words the night before He was crucified in John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Fruit results from this living union between Christ and the church. It is born in one's own life and the lives of others as they are also influenced by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

MacArthur says: "Nourishes and cherishes. These express the twin responsibilities of providing for her needs in order to help her grow mature in Christ and to provide warm and tender affection to give her comfort and security."

Charles Colson in his book, The Sky Is Not Falling, says:

As we debate the wisdom of legalizing so-called gay marriage, we must remember that, like it or not, there is a natural moral order for the family. History and tradition—and the teachings of Jews, Muslims, and Christians—support the overwhelming empirical evidence: the family, led by a married mother and father, is the best available structure for both child-rearing and cultural health.

This is why, although some people will always pair off in unorthodox ways, society as a whole must never legitimize any form of marriage other than that of one man and one woman, united with intentions of permanency and the nurturing of children. Marriage is not a private institution designed solely for the individual gratification of its participants. If we fail to protect the institution of marriage, we can expect not just more family breakdown, but also more criminals behind bars and more chaos in our streets. The stakes could not be higher.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus": "What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!"

May 23—Marriage (Ephesians 5:30-31)

Ephesians 5:30: "Because we are members of His body."

Ephesians 5:31: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."

<u>Verse 30</u>: This verse references Genesis 2:23: "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man."

Christ nourishes and cherishes us because we are members of His body. Lorenzo Scupoli in his book, *The Spiritual Combat*, said:

I desire this of you, beloved, that you should have no other will than Mine, that all your thoughts, your aims, your desires, should be of Me and according to My Will, that I may will, think, intend, and see all that you will, think, intend, and see; so that your nothingness may be swallowed up in the depth of My infinity, and transformed into it. Thus will you be fully blest and happy in Me, and I completely contented in you.

<u>Verse 31</u>: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "Verse 31 is a free rendering of Genesis 2:24, indicating that the bond between husband and wife is greater than that between parent and child."

Marriage is the union of making two people one. To leave and to cleave or join are key actions that must be taken in biblical marriage.

Wuest, in commenting on the two words "leave" and "cleave," says: "'To leave behind, depart from.' 'Joined,' is *proskollao*, 'to glue upon, to glue to, to join one's self to closely, cleave to, stick to.' The compound verb denotes a most intimate union."

Ruth Myers in 31 Days of Praise says: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. —Psalm 73:25"

If you are married, make your partner the topic of your praise. If you are not married, choose another person who is close to you: a family member, roommate, or friend. Give thanks for that person's good qualities—even if right now you find it difficult to focus on those good points.

When I perform a wedding ceremony, I always remind the bride and groom at the end of the service that they came into the ceremony with love, but leave the ceremony with work.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus"?: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer."

May 24—Christ The Church (Ephesians 5:32)

Ephesians 5:32: "This is a great mystery, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

<u>Verse 32</u>: "This mystery" is the mystery of the union of Christ and the church. Marriage is a picture of that union. This references Ephesians 3:6: "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

This is the primary application of the truth presented, but the secondary application will be seen in the next verse.

MacArthur says: "A great mystery. In the NT, mystery identifies some reality hidden in the past and revealed in the NT age to be written in Scripture. Marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between the Messiah and His Church, completely unknown until the NT."

Ken & Joni Eareckson Tada in *Joni & Ken, An Untold Love Story,* say: "In a strange moment of almost dual vision, Joni saw Ken the bridegroom and Jesus the Bridegroom at the same time. This is how it will be when we see Jesus. Overcome with longing. Overtaken with joy. We'll catch a glimpse of Him and want to run to Him. Right out of this life and into the next one."

Steven J. Lawson in his book, *Heaven Help Us*, said: "You will be exponentially closer to your spouse in Heaven than the happiest day of your marriage here. Your relationship will be far more meaningful then because there will be no misunderstandings. No hurt feelings. No selfishness. No impatience. Just perfect love."

In Christ / Life, Ruth Myers records this beautiful prayer:

My wonderful Lord, I thank You for Your intensely personal love that has actually invited me to take Your hand in marriage!

I have accepted Your proposal. And I know that You are and always will be entirely faithful to Your promise to betroth me to Yourself forever in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy.

I especially want to thank You for our friendship, a friendship in which You reveal so much to me and share so much with me—so many of Your plans and desires and promises and commitments ... so much about Yourself and so much about me.

O Lord, my beloved King, thank You for gladly welcoming me into full citizenship in Your kingdom. Your promised kingdom is indeed my true and best homeland. May Your kingdom come!

And may I day by day find fresh delight in the many-sided belongingness I have with You.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus": "Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge, Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do your friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer; In His arms He'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there."

May 25—The Bottom Line (Ephesians 5:33)

Ephesians 5:33: "However, let each one be loving his own wife as himself, and the wife that she respects her husband."

Verse 33: The word "nevertheless" points us to the summary. It is a two-fold summary for the husband and wife:

- 1. Husband—Let each husband be loving his own wife as himself.
- 2. Wife—Let the wife see to it that she respects her husband.

Robert Lewis and William Hendricks in Rocking the Roles say:

Your core role as a wife, then, is to be a husband-lover and a child-lover. They need your touch and your support to stabilize and energize their lives. So, please, for their sakes, be there!

Advanced Studies in your man—Admiration, support, companionship, and physical responsiveness. These four ingredients go a long way toward "completing" your husband. If you follow these suggestions, I believe you're well on your way toward a level of insight and intimacy with your husband that few wives ever achieve.

This statement by the apostle is a command and summarizes the teaching of the whole passage. This verse is vital to God's plan for the husband and wife relationship. It is summarized in two words:

- 1. For the wives—submission.
- 2. For the husbands—love.

Countless numbers of marriages could be saved and made into a joyful fulfilling experience if God's plan was being followed for the husband and wife relationship.

Oswald Chambers said: "Love is spontaneous, but it has to be maintained through disciple."

Gary L. Thomas in The Glorious Pursuit says:

Humility is the disposition that makes us available to be blessed by God. The Psalms seem obsessed with God's eagerness to reach out to the humble: God saves the humble, guides the humble, sustains the humble, and even crowns the humble. Notice that everything flows *from* God *to* the humble servant.

Pride seeks to reverse this. Pride is self-reliance and self-dependence. Arrogance seeks to *obligate* God instead of *receive* from Him.

Kristin Armstrong in her book, Work In Progress, says:

When we are in proper relationship to one another, we yield a circle of strength that more easily rolls over the potholes of life. A woman's softness, or her vulnerability, is the catalyst for a man to demonstrate his wisdom and power, which in turn makes a woman feel loved and protected, which in turn makes a man feel respected and needed, which in turn makes a woman feel special and cherished, which in turn makes a man feel appreciated and irreplaceable, which in turn makes a man want to go the extra mile, which in turn makes a woman want to go the extra mile, which is what loving someone is all about in the first place.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of Stuart Hamblin's wonderful hymn, "Until Then": "My heart can sing when I pause to remember, A heartache here is but a stepping stone Along a trail that's winding always upwards, This troubled world is not my final home. But until then my heart will go on singing, Until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."

May 26—Obedience Is Right (Ephesians 6:1)

Ephesians 6:1: "Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

<u>Verse 1</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The Spirit-controlled life (5:18) is necessary for having a good parent-child relationship."

The apostle directed wives to put themselves in subjection to their own husbands and husbands to love their wives. Paul directs his attention to children now: "Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

When a family is filled with the Spirit, the wife is submissive, the husband is loving, and the children are obedient to their parents.

Command #1: Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord.

This is a command stated for the reason: "this is right." It is right because:

- 1. This is a natural behavior in the family.
- 2. It is commanded by Scripture.
- 3. The Lord Jesus exemplified this obedience with his own parents.

Luke 2:51–52: "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Paul addresses "children" directly, taking it for granted that they will be present in the congregations where the letter is being read. They belong to the total Christian family, the church.

Obedience by children consists in listening to the advice given by parents, an obligation supported by many passages in both OT and NT.

Eadie says:

The love which Jesus showed to children, when He took them in His arms and blessed them, should induce them, in a spirit of filial faith and fondness, to obey their parents, and to regard with special sacredness every parental injunction. And that obedience, if prompted, regulated, and bounded by a sense of religious obligation, will be cheerful, and not sullen; prompt, and not dilatory; uniform, and not occasional; universal, and not capricious in its choice of parental precepts.

Nature claims it, while Scripture enjoins it, and the Son of God exemplified it. It is in perfect consistency with all our notions of right and moral obligation.

Lange says: "The verb coming first has the emphasis: this one precept comprises the main part of filial duty in itself."

MacArthur says: "The child in the home is to be willingly under the authority of parents with obedient submission to them as the agents of the Lord placed over him, obeying parents as if obeying the Lord Himself."

The child demonstrates a Spirit-filled relationship with the Lord by expressing obedience to his parents.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "The best education is education in the best things."

Isaiah 30:1: "Woe to the obstinate children,' declares the Lord, 'to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Until Then": "The things of earth will dim and lose their value If we recall they're borrowed for awhile And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble, Remembered there will only bring a smile. But until then my heart will go on singing, Until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."

May 27—Honoring Your Parents (Ephesians 6:2)

Ephesians 6:2: "Be honoring your father and your mother; this is the first commandment with a promise."

<u>Verse 2</u>: In this verse, Paul gives the <u>second</u> command:

Command #2: Be honoring your father and mother.

Eadie says: "Honor comprehends in it all that respect, reverence, love and obedience which the filial relationship so fully implies."

Wuest says: "To honor someone therefore, is to evaluate that person accurately and honestly and treat him with the deference, respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy and obedience which his station in life or his character demands. Obedience is the duty, honor is the disposition of which the obedience is born."

Colossians 3:20: "Children, be obeying your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord."

"This is the first commandment with a promise." The apostle points out that obedience to this particular command carries a promise with it.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of "Until Then"?: "This weary world with all its toil and struggle May take its toll of misery and strife The soul of man is like a waiting falcon, When it's released it's destined for the skies. But until then my heart will go on singing, Until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."

May 28—Blessing & Long Life (Ephesians 6:3)

Ephesians 6:3: "In order that it may be well with you, and in order that you may live long upon the earth."

<u>Verse 3</u>: This verse states the promise for honoring your father and mother from the previous verse. It is defined by <u>two</u> purposes:

1. It may be well with you.

This is the promise of a good life. This puts you in a position for God to bless and prosper you.

2. That you may live long upon the earth.

This is the promise of a longer life.

- J. Vernon McGee says: "Samson and Absalom are two examples in Scripture of boys who did not follow this commandment, and their lives were short. Samson, a judge, died when he was a young man. Absalom rebelled against his father David, and he was killed when he was a young man."
- C.H. Spurgeon in Exploring the *Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "A smile from Jesus in the morning will be sunshine all the day."

François de la Mothe Fénelon in *The Seeking Heart: Volume 4* says: "Suffering is necessary for all of us. You will be purified by dying to your own desires and will. Let yourself die! You have excellent opportunities for this to happen—don't waste them!"

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us": "Saviour, like a shepherd lead us, Much we need Thy tender care; In Thy pleasant pastures feed us, For our use Thy folds prepare. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Thou hast bought us, Thine we are. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Thou hast bought us, Thine we are."

May 29—Discipline & Instruction of The Lord (Ephesians 6:4)

Ephesians 6:4: "And fathers, do not make your children angry, but be bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

<u>Verse 4</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master."

Paul moves from addressing the children to addressing the fathers. He gives them a negative and positive command. Negatively, "do not make your children angry," but positively, "be bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Command #3: Fathers, do not make your children angry.

Command #4: Be bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, do not be irritating your children, in order that they may not lose heart (become discouraged)."

1 Thessalonians 2:11–12: "Just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children: exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory."

Biblically, the father is exhorting, encouraging, and leads as an example.

"To be bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The words "discipline" and "instruction" reflect 5:29: "For no one ever yet hated his own flesh, but is nourishing and cherishing it."

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8: "Though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ's ambassadors. But we became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children. So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us."

It is the father's responsibility to exemplify in the home how Christ loves and cares for the church.

1 Samuel 12:23: "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, *Thirsting for God*, says: "Earlier in my life, I couldn't have been as honest as I have been in sharing some of my own history and failings in this book. Slaying the glittering image has been incredibly freeing! The story of my life could be summed up like this: God has done some very good things

in my life and I have done some very bad things, but through it all, God's grace has prevailed."

Warren W. Wiersbe in *The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2* quotes A.W. Tozer: "We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened by threats of death because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances; their only compulsion will come from within—or from above."

In Voices from the Past: Puritan Devotional Readings edited by Richard Rushing, we read:

If you can be assured in your own soul that God has taught you as well as chastened you, you are a blessed man. O brethren, it is sad when men come out of affliction the same as they went in—when they continue to be just as ignorant, proud, worldly, impatient, unsavoury, and as much strangers to Christ and their hearts as before—how exceedingly sad! When affliction does not lead to correction, men come out of the furnace with the dross intact. There are many blessings to be learned in the furnace of affliction.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us": "We are Thine, do Thou befriend us, Be the guardian of our way; Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us, Seek us when we go astray. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Hear Thy children when they pray. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Hear Thy children when they pray."

May 30—In Sincerity of Heart (Ephesians 6:5)

Ephesians 6:5: "Slaves, be obeying those who according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ."

<u>Verse 5</u>: In this section of the passage, we come to the employee-employer relationship.

The first instruction given in this section is: "be obeying those who according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ."

This obedience should be given "with fear and trembling" and "in sincerity of heart." With fear and trembling, Paul went to Corinth to minister. We are also commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We are to obey with an anxious care so that we do not come short of what is required. We should work as sincerely for our employers as we would for Christ.

In this verse, Paul continues his commands regarding relationships:

Command #1: Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord.

Command #2: Be honoring your father and mother.

Command #3: Fathers, do not make your children angry.

Command #4: Be bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Command #5: Slaves, be obeying those who according to the flesh are your masters.

The apostle provides <u>three</u> ways for us to be obedient: (1) with fear and trembling, (2) in sincerity of heart, and (3) as to Christ.

MacArthur says: "With fear and trembling. This is not fright, but respect for their authority."

John Eldredge in Beautiful Outlaw says:

We chitchat. We spend our days at a level of conversation as substantive as smoke. We dance around one another like birds in a mating ritual, bobbing, ducking, puffing out our chests, flapping our wings, circling one another, now advancing, now retreating. If we filmed a week of it in time-lapse photography, it would make the Discovery channel.

Let's be honest—why aren't we more honest with each other?

M. Craig Barnes in his book, *When God Interrupts*, says: "We do not live by faith in God's intervention. We live by faith in God's grace when there is no intervention."

Eadie says: "The slave is ever tempted to appear to labour while yet he is loitering, to put on the seeming of obedience and obey with a double heart."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us": "Thou hast promised to receive us, Poor and sinful though we be; Thou hast mercy to relieve us, Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Early let us turn to Thee. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Early let us turn to Thee."

May 31—Doing The Will of God (Ephesians 6:6)

Ephesians 6:6: "Not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

<u>Verse 6</u>: The apostle states <u>seven</u> phrases that describe the slave or employee relationship with the employers in verses 5–7. This job description is as follows:

- 1. With fear and trembling—verse 5.
- 2. In sincerity of heart—verse 5.
- 3. As to Christ—verse 5.
- 4. Not in the way of eye-service as men-pleasers—verse 6.
- 5. As servants of Christ—verse 6.
- 6. Doing the will of God from the heart—verse 6.
- 7. With goodwill rendering service as to the Lord and not of men—verse 7.

Negatively, "not in the way of eye-service as men-pleasers," but positively, "as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart."

Work diligently all of the time. As servants of Christ, view your work as doing the will of God from the heart.

MacArthur says: "Eyeservice. This means working well only when being watched by the boss. Menpleasers. Working only to promote one's welfare, rather than to honor the employer and the Lord, whose servants we really are."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "We are watched by a thousand eagle eyes; let us so act that we shall never need to care if all heaven, and earth, and hell, swelled the list of spectators."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, *The Beautiful Fight*, says: "The gospel of transformation calls me to progress from not lusting to having eyes that honor, respect, and generate compassion. God wants to transform my eyes from being selfish possessors and consumers to being his servants of selfless love."

Peter Kreeft says: "Saints agree they are sinners, only sinners think they are saints."

Andrew Murray said: "The truth is this – pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you."

Max Lucado in *The Great House of God* says: "The next time your plate has more broccoli than apple pie, remember who prepared the meal. And the next time your plate has a portion you find hard to swallow, talk to God about it. Jesus did. In the garden of Gethsemane His Father handed Him a cup of suffering so sour, so vile, that Jesus handed it back to heaven. 'My Father,' He prayed, 'if it is possible may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.' (Matt. 26:39)"

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us"?: "Early let us seek Thy favor, Early let us do Thy will; Blessèd Lord and only Saviour, With Thy love our bosoms fill. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still. Blessèd Jesus, Blessèd Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still."

JUNE

June 1—With Good Will Rendering Service (Ephesians 6:7)

Ephesians 6:7: "With good will rendering service, as to the Lord and not men."

<u>Verse 7</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God."

In this verse, Paul gives us the <u>seventh</u> point of the employee's job description. The other six qualities were described in verses 5–6:

- 1. With fear and trembling—verse 5.
- 2. In sincerity of heart—verse 5.

- 3. As to Christ—verse 5.
- 4. Not in the way of eye-service as men-pleasers—verse 6.
- 5. As servants of Christ—verse 6.
- 6. Doing the will of God from the heart—verse 6.
- 7. With goodwill rendering service as to the Lord and not of men—verse 7. It will transform your work if you view it as work to the Lord and not to men.

1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Life On The Highest Plane*, says: "The spiritual man has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, filling him, leading him, teaching him, empowering him. Through the new birth God's own life, eternal and uncreated, has been imparted to him and now Jesus Christ is his very life."

Carolyn Custis James in *When Life And Beliefs Collide* says: "This is why it is so crucial for us to develop and test our theology within earshot of the dying cries of Jesus. At the foot of the cross, we begin to understand that God's plan, shaped and propelled by his love and goodness, includes pain and tragedy—for Jesus and for us. Strange as it seems, God's goodness and love become more vivid in the tragedy itself."

Joni Eareckson Tada in her book, A Place Of Healing, says:

As you may know from your own Bible study, that word "work-manship" in the original language, Greek, is *poiema*, from which we get our English word "poem."

He has a plan and purpose for my time on earth. He is the master artist or sculptor, and He is the one who chooses the tools He will use to perfect His workmanship. What of suffering, then? What of illness? What of disability? Am I to tell Him which tools He can use and which tools He can't use in the lifelong task of perfecting me and molding me into the beautiful image of Jesus? Do I really know better than Him, so that I can state without equivocation that it's always His will to heal me of every physical affliction? If I am His poem, do I have the right to say, "No, Lord. You need to trim line number two and brighten up line three and five. They're just a little bit dark." Do I, the poem, the thing being written, know more than the poet?

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "We'll Understand It Better": "We are often tossed and driv'n on the restless sea of time, Somber skies and howling tempests oft succeed a bright sunshine, In that land of perfect day, when the mists have rolled away, We will understand it better by and by. By and by, when the morning comes, When all the saints of God are gathered home, We will tell the story how we've overcome, For we'll understand it better by and by."

June 2—Rewarded By The Lord (Ephesians 6:8)

Ephesians 6:8: "Knowing that each one, whatever good he may do, this he will receive from the Lord, whether he is a slave or whether he is free."

Verse 8: There is a day of examination coming. Whether we are slave or free, we will receive reward by the Lord for our faithfulness in work here on earth.

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad."

Gary L. Thomas in his book, Sacred Marriage, says:

I realized that I was being deluded by my sense of self-righteousness. Instead of focusing on what Lisa could improve, I should have been on my knees, begging God to change *me*. This thought was magnified one morning when I awoke and started praying through Scripture. All of a sudden, a question startled me: "Does Lisa feel like she's married to Jesus?"

I almost laughed out loud, until I was shaken by another thought. I am told over and over in Scripture that my duty as a Christian is to become more and more like Jesus Christ. Over time, my wife *should* start to feel like there's at least a family resemblance. I realized how pitifully short I had fallen in my task of improving myself for my wife's sake.

Gail T. Burton in Charity: A Collection of Poems by Gail T. Burton wrote:

THE JOY OF HIS EMBRACE

When the problems of my earthly life are more than I can stand, And I learn what is required of me is a heavy harsh demand.

I FIND MY LORD IS EVER NEAR
WITH COMFORT FOR THE DAY,
AND PROBLEMS THAT HAVE PLAGUED MY LIFE
SO QUICKLY FADE AWAY.

Tho' He comforts me along my path this world will not relent, Each day I face anew the threat of problems life has sent. But when the silver cord of life has finally reached the end, The glory of His perfect love Will make me comprehend.

EVERY PROBLEM, CARE, AND THREAT WILL BE CONQUERED BY HIS GRACE. AND I'LL SPEND A GRAND ETERNITY IN THE JOY OF HIS EMBRACE.

Joni Eareckson Tada in A Place of Healing says:

It's been a long time since I've actually kneeled in prayer. Those long-ago days at that little Reformed Episcopal Church seem so far away, softened and made more beautiful in the golden haze of memory.

But the day is drawing near, isn't it? It's drawing so close to the time when I, and so many others who cannot walk, will be able to kneel. I know it. I can feel it. Heaven is just around the corner.

If you sense His coming is soon, would you please do me a favor? Do what so many of us who are paralyzed or too lame or too old or disabled can't do. Would you open your Bible to Psalm 95:6, read it aloud, and then do what it says?

I can't kneel, but if you can, do.

Kneel before the Lord God, your Maker and mine. And while you're down there, if you feel so inclined, thank Him for being so good to a paralyzed woman named Joni.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "We'll Understand It Better": "We are often destitute of the things that life demands, Want of food and want of shelter, thirsty hills and barren lands; We are trusting in the Lord, and according to His Word, We will understand it better by and by. By and by, when the morning comes, When all the saints of God are gathered home, We will tell the story how we've overcome, For we'll understand it better by and by."

June 3—The Master Is Watching (Ephesians 6:9)

Ephesians 6:9: "And masters, do the same to them, giving up your threatening, knowing that also their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is not partiality with Him."

<u>Verse 9</u>: In this verse, Paul completes his commands regarding relationships. We have the <u>sixth</u> and final command. Let's review all of the commands of this passage:

Command #1: Children, be obeying your parents in the Lord.

Command #2: Be honoring your father and mother.

Command #3: Fathers, do not make your children angry.

Command #4: Be bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Command #5: Slaves, be obeying those who according to the flesh are your masters.

Command #6: Masters, do the same to them (rendering service with good will and working for the Lord), giving up your threatening.

The apostle addresses the employers. A master is someone with authority. It is possible for that authority to be misused. Paul admonishes masters to render service with good will to their employees, work for the Lord, and give up threatening.

Barkley says: "But Paul has a word for masters too, his word for them is quite simple. The master of men must remember that although he is master of men, he is still the servant of God. He too must remember that all he does is done in the sight of and in the presence of God and above all he must remember that the day comes when he and those over whom he was set, will stand before God and then the ranks of the world will no longer be relevant. They will both simply be men in the presence of God."

Colossians 4:1: "Masters, be displaying justice and fairness to your slaves, knowing that you also are having a Master in heaven."

MacArthur says: "There should be mutual honor and respect from Christian employers to their employees, based on their common allegiance to the Lord. Giving up threatening. The Spirit-filled boss uses his authority and power with justice and grace—never putting people under threats, never abusive or inconsiderate. He realizes that he has a heavenly Master who is impartial."

Galatians 6:7–9: "Stop leading yourselves astray, God is not being sneered at: whatever a man is sowing, this also he will reap. Because the one sowing unto his own flesh, from his flesh shall reap decay; But the one sowing unto the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap life eternal. Now, Let us not lose heart in doing that which is good, for at its proper season we shall reap if we are not being exhausted."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "We'll Understand It Better": "Trials dark on ev'ry hand, and we cannot understand, All the ways that God would lead us to that blessed Promised Land; But He guides us with His eye and we'll follow till we die, For we'll understand it better by and by. By and by, when the morning comes, When all the saints of God are gathered home, We will tell the story how we've overcome, For we'll understand it better by and by."

June 4—Strong In His Strength (Ephesians 6:10)

Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, be strong in the Lord in the strength of His might."

<u>Verse 10</u>: The same power which saved us is the same power that is available

for us to have victory in our Christian lives. It is a wonderful thing to know as we endeavor to live life according to God's plan.

Philippians 4:13: "I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong."

The hymnwriter wrote:

We go in faith our own great weakness feeling And needing more each day, Thy Grace to know If from our hearts a song of triumph pealing, We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

Ephesians 1:19: "And what is the surpassing greatness of His power in us who are believing, according to the working of His great might."

1 Thessalonians 5:24: "Faithful is the One who is calling you, who also will do it."

- 1 Kings 18:46: "The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel."
- 2 Corinthians 12:9: "And He has said to me, 'My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

O'Brien says: "The first imperative, 'be strong,' is best understood as a passive, meaning 'be made strong, be strengthened.' This fits with the corresponding passive in the prayer of 3:16, 'that you may *be strengthened* with power through his Spirit,' and indicates that believers do not empower themselves, even if they are to heed the apostolic injunction and lay hold of the divine resources available to them. Rather, their strengthening comes from an external source, which the following phrase indicates is *the Lord* Jesus."

In Boice's commentary, he quotes Martin Luther in his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," regarding this verse:

DID WE IN OUR OWN STRENGTH CONFIDE,
OUR STRIVING WOULD BE LOSING;
WERE NOT THE RIGHT MAN ON OUR SIDE,
THE MAN OF GOD'S OWN CHOOSING.
DOST ASK WHO THAT MAY BE?
CHRIST JESUS, IT IS HE;
LORD SABAOTH HIS NAME,
FROM AGE TO AGE THE SAME,
AND HE MUST WIN THE BATTLE.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 1 and 2 of Stuart Hamblen's hymn, "It Is No Secret"?: "The chimes of time ring out the news, Another day is through, Someone slipped and fell, Was that someone you? You may have longed for added strength, Your courage to renew, Do not be disheartened, For I bring hope to you. There is no night, for in His light you'll never walk alone, Always feel at home wherever you may roam. There is no power can conquer you, While God is on your side, Just take Him at His promise, Don't run away and hide. It is no secret what God can do, What He's done for others, He'll do for you. With arms wide open, He'll pardon you, It is no secret, What God can do."

June 5—The Whole Armour of God (Ephesians 6:11)

Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armor of God, to the end that you may be able to hold your ground against the stratagems of the devil."

<u>Verse 11</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "The form of the Greek imperative put on indicates that believers are responsible for putting on God's (not their) full armor with all urgency."

He gives this command so that you may be able to hold your ground against the devil's schemes. Victory comes when we realize we cannot win battles in our own strength. We must put on the whole armor of God to succeed. Paul outlines this armor in the following verses.

How successful has Satan been with his strategies in our personal lives?

Ray Stedman says: "From beginning to end the picture given in the Bible is that all human beings, without exception, regardless of how clever or educated or cultured they may be, if without Christ, are helpless victims of satanic control. Under the control of satanic forces human beings are uncomfortable and unhappy, but they are also completely unable to escape by any wisdom or power of their own."

Tony Evans in *Kingdom Man* says: "When Christ disarmed Satan, he removed the authority Satan had gained in the garden over humankind. Satan still has power, but he has not authority. There is a big difference between those two. Just like there is a big difference between someone standing in front of you holding a loaded gun and someone standing in front of you holding a gun that is not loaded. The person with the loaded gun ought to evoke a completely contrary response than the person with the empty gun."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "Sound The Battle Cry": "Sound the battle cry! See, the foe is nigh. Raise the standard high For the Lord. Gird your armor on; Stand firm ev'ry one. Rest your cause upon His holy Word. Rouse, then, soldiers, rally round the banner. Ready, steady, pass the word along. Onward, forward, shout aloud 'Hosanna!' Christ is Captain of the mighty throng."

June 6—The Enemy (Ephesians 6:12)

Ephesians 6:12: "Because we are not wrestling against blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

<u>Verse 12</u>: Paul states the reason to "put on the whole armor of God to the end that you may be able to hold your ground against the stratagems of the devil." It is because "we are not wrestling against blood and flesh."

The word "against" occurs five times in this verse.

As believers, we are at war.

- 1 Peter 4:1: "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same insight, because the one who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."
- 2 Timothy 2:3–4: "Suffer hardships with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one engaging in military service is allowing himself to become entangled in civilian pursuits in order that he may please the One who enlisted him as a soldier."

Negatively, "we are not wrestling against blood and flesh," but positively, "against [four enemies] in the heavenly places." The <u>four</u> enemies are (1) the principalities, (2) the powers, (3) the world rulers of this darkness, and (4) the spiritual forces of wickedness.

In her book, *Lord, Could You Hurry A Little*, we read Ruth Harms Calkin's poem:

THE ADVERSARY!

How crafty, how clever his tactics.

Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion attempting to tear me into scattered bits.

At other times he comes as an angel of light.

Suggesting with coy subtlety how could anything so beautiful be wrong? Lord, I stand clad in your armor claiming your name and singing your praise.

For your power over him is greater by far than his power over me.

Gary L. Thomas in *Thirsting For God* says: "We need direction to weed out those prejudices and attitudes that block further spiritual growth. A broken attitude can hold us down for years if we never realize its power over us, but a wise spiritual director might be able to spot such an attitude or faulty assumption within min-

utes. Why limit our growth to our own wisdom? Why not explore the fullness of life in Christ by learning from those who walk the journey with us?"

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Life On The Highest Plane*, said: "This satanic system, 'the world,' is like a colossal octopus that has sent forth myriads of tentacles to lay hold upon every phase of human life and draw it unto itself. It has its grip upon the corporate life of mankind in its homes, marts, school, politics, even its churches. It has penetrated into every relationship of the individual's life, personal, family, social, national and international."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Smooth Stones Taken From Ancient Books* quotes Puritan Thomas Brooks: "Conflicts with Satan are usually the sharpest and hottest; they spend and waste most the vital and noble spirit of the saints; and therefore the Lord, after such conflicts, ordinarily gives his people his choicest and his strongest cordials."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "Sound The Battle Cry": "Strong to meet the foe, Marching on we go, While our cause we know, Must prevail. Shield and banner bright Gleaming in the light; Battling for the right, We ne'er can fail. Rouse, then, soldiers, rally round the banner. Ready, steady, pass the word along. Onward, forward, shout aloud 'Hosanna!' Christ is Captain of the mighty throng."

June 7—Stand Your Ground (Ephesians 6:13)

Ephesians 6:13: "On this account, take the whole armor of God in order that you may be able to stand your ground in the evil day, and after proving victorious over everything, to stand your ground."

<u>Verse 13</u>: "On this account" references the previous verse stating "we are not wrestling against blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." For this reason: "take the whole armor of God. We are to take the whole armor of God "in order that you may be able to stand your ground in the evil day."

1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has laid hold of you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted beyond that with which you are able to cope, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to bear up under mistreatment."

James 4:7: "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

"And after proving victorious over everything, to stand your ground." Your greatest moment of vulnerability with Satan is after proving yourself victorious over something in your life. At that time, you relax. Then his attack often accomplishes its purpose. Paul advises "and after proving victorious over everything, to stand your ground." The apostle recognizes that Satan isn't finished. He'll be back on another occasion. The Lord experienced this pattern in the wilderness when He was attacked three different times in three different areas. However, the Lord was victorious in all of them.

Lorenzo Scupoli in *The Spiritual Combat* says: "This I said, 'if you persevere,' for it is not enough to resist once, or twice, or thrice, but every time that you are tempted. For it is the custom of the devil to try to-morrow what he could not do to-day, and next week what he could not accomplish in this; and thus he goes on, continuously from time to time, with much patience, now with fury and then with craftiness, till he gains his point."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus": "Stand up, stand up for Jesus!, Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss; From vict'ry unto vict'ry His army shall He lead, Till every foe is vanquished And Christ is Lord indeed."

June 8—The Breastplate of Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14)

Ephesians 6:14: "Stand therefore, after you have girded your waists with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness."

<u>Verse 14</u>: In these next verses, the apostle will outline his description of "the whole armor of God," detailing the pieces. There are <u>six</u> pieces of armor:

1. The belt of truth.

One of the greatest offensives man can have is a conviction in the truth.

1 Timothy 4:1–2: "But the Spirit explicitly is saying that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and to teachings of demons (demonic teachings), by the hypocritical preaching of liars, seared in their own consciences (with a red hot branding iron)."

The apostle is speaking of the written and living Word of God – the epitome of truth.

John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

2. The breastplate of righteousness.

This protection can be (1) the righteousness which becomes our possession when we come to know Christ as Savior or (2) the righteousness of our daily lives.

The quality of my changed life bears witness to me in times of doubt.

Anders says: "To put on the breastplate can be understood as choosing not to harbor and nurture known sin. It is striving to be like Christ and live according to his ways of righteousness."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "There is enough within thy soul, O Christian, though thou be one of the best of saints, to destroy thee in an hour unless the grace of God guard thee and keep thy passions in check, and prevent thy stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 2 and 3 of "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus"?: "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The trumpet call obey; Forth to the mighty conflict in this His glorious day. Ye that are men now serve Him Against unnumbered foes; Let courage rise with danger, And strength to

strength oppose. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you Ye dare not trust your own; Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer; Where duty calls or danger, Be never wanting there."

June 9—Shoes For Your Feet (Ephesians 6:15)

Ephesians 6:15: "And having sandaled your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace."

Verse 15: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "This verse does not speak of the spreading of the gospel, for Christians are pictured in vv. 10–16 as standing, not advancing. Instead this refers to a believer's stability or surefootedness from the gospel which gives him peace so he can stand in the battle."

Paul continues his list of the six pieces of "the "whole armor of God":

3. The equipment of the gospel of peace.

"Having sandaled your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace."

Wuest says: "The Christian soldier should see to it that his feet are equipped with the sandals which will give him a firm footing, namely the good news that speaks peace to a sinful heart for the Lord Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross, making a way for a holy God to reunite himself with a believing sinner who in Adam had been separated from him and his life."

Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which is surpassing all comprehension, shall hold in custody your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This peace is first inward. Then, it is upward because we are reconciled to God the Father. Finally, this peace is manifested outward.

Isaiah 32:17 (KJV): "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus": "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The strife will not be long; This day the noise of battle, The next, the victor's song; To him that overcometh A crown of life shall be; He with the King of Glory Shall reign eternally."

June 10—Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6:16)

Ephesians 6:16: "In addition to all these, taking the shield of faith, by means of which you can put out all the flaming darts of the evil one."

Verse 16: In this verse, we have our next piece of armor:

4. The shield of faith.

Paul adds that with this shield we can "put out all the flaming darts of the evil one."

We received the Lord Jesus by faith. By daily faith, we walk with Him. We count on Him to provide the strength and victory to live life according to God's plan.

This shield of faith is seen in verse 10: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

When we are in the heat of battle, this is the faith we use to trust His ability. It reminds us He doesn't lose, but always leads in triumph.

Meyer says: "As each fiery dart, tipped with the flames of hellish hate, comes speeding to the soldier of the cross, deafened by the din and blinded by the smoke of battle, he must catch and quench it on the golden shield of faith, that it reach not his head or heart."

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "The well-instructed believer is very much afraid of himself; he dares not go into temptation, for he feels that a man who carries a bomb-shell within him ought to mind that he keeps away from sparks, and that he who has a powder-magazine in his heart ought not to play with fire."

Ruth Paxson in *Life On The Highest Plane* says: "Satan schemes to cause deflection from God's plan and purpose in work. He will do anything to keep God's child from the direct work of saving souls. He directs the attention to secondary matters; he divides the energy over unnecessary tasks, and he darkens the mind over questions of guidance."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 1 of "Onward, Christian Soldiers": "Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before: Christ, the royal Master, Leads against the foe; Forward into battle, See, His banners go. Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before."

June 11—Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17)

Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

<u>Verse 17</u>: In this verse, Paul completes his list of <u>six</u> pieces of "the whole armor of God":

5. The helmet of salvation.

It is the assurance of our salvation. It protects our head.

Barclay says: "We must always remember that salvation is not something which looks back only; salvation is not something which means only forgiveness for past sins. It means strength to deal with all future attacks of sin. The salvation which is in Christ gives us forgiveness for the sins of the past and strength to conquer sin in the days to come."

Wuest points out: "The salvation spoken of here must therefore be salvation from the power of sin in this present life, salvation from the onslaughts of Satan."

6. The sword of the Spirit – the Word of God.

Jesus used the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, on <u>three</u> different occasions in the temptation of the wilderness during His earthly ministry. All <u>three</u> responses came from the book of Deuteronomy.

Ruth Paxson in *Life On The Highest Plane* says: "Satan hates the Word of God and works against it by blinding men's eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4), by substituting his

own doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1–2), by contradicting it (Genesis 3:5), by wresting it (Matthew 4:6), by leading men to disbelieve it (2 Timothy 4:3–4), by taking it out of men's hearts (Mark 4:15). Above all he would keep God's children ignorant of the truth concerning himself which the Bible reveals, and of the victory which Christ Jesus has already gained over him at the cross."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 2 of "Onward, Christian Soldiers": "Like a mighty army Moves the Church of God; Brothers, we are treading Where the saints have trod; We are not divided, All one body we, One in hope and doctrine, One in charity. Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before."

June 12—Prayer & Supplication (Ephesians 6:18)

Ephesians 6:18: "Through every prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit, and maintaining a constant alertness in the same with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

<u>Verse 18</u>: It is through prayer we will be dependent upon the Lord. Then, we are able to fulfill the requirements of verse 10: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

Barclay says:

Finally, Paul comes to the greatest weapon of all—and that is the weapon of prayer. We must note three things that Paul here says about prayer. (a) It must be constant. It must be at every time in life. It is maybe the greatest lack in the Christian life that our tendency is so often to pray only in the great crises of life. It is from daily prayer that there comes the daily strength of the Christian. (b) It must be intense. It must be sleepless and persevering. Prayer demands concentration. Limp prayer never got a man anywhere. It demands the concentration of every faculty upon God. (c) It must be unselfish; it must be for all God's consecrated people. The Jews had a saying, "Let a man unite himself with the community in his prayers." I think that often our prayers are too much for ourselves, and too little for others.

MacArthur says: "Over a hundred years ago, Charlotte Elliot wrote the words for another hymn:

Christian, seek not yet repose, Cast thy dreams of ease away; Thou art in the midst of foes; Watch and pray. Principalities and power,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours;
Watch and pray.

WATCH AS IF ON THAT ALONE
HUNG THE ISSUE OF THE DAY,
PRAY THAT HELP MAY BE SENT DOWN;
WATCH AND PRAY.

Westcott points out: "The power of prayer is gained by systematic discipline." Gary L. Thomas in his book, *Sacred Marriage*, says: "A man might be able to preach a sterling sermon, write inspiring books, and quote the Bible front to back. But if he hasn't learned how to be a servant to his wife, to respect her, and to be considerate of her, then his spirituality is still infantile. His prayer life—the lifeblood of his soul—will be a sham."

Oswald Chambers said: "Prayer is not preparation for the work, it is the work."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 3 and 4 of "Onward, Christian Soldiers"?: "Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane, But the Church of Jesus Constant will remain; Gates of hell can never 'Gainst that Church prevail; We have Christ's own promise, And that cannot fail. Onward, then, ye people, Join our happy throng, Blend with ours your voices In the triumph song; Glory, laud, and honor Unto Christ the King; This thru countless ages Men and angels sing. Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before."

June 13—Personal Request (Ephesians 6:19)

Ephesians 6:19: "And on behalf of me, in order that there might be given me utterance in the opening of my mouth in boldness, to proclaim the mystery of the gospel."

<u>Verse 19</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "And don't forget to pray for me. Pray that I'll know what to say and have the courage to say it at the right time, telling the mystery to one and all."

The apostle asked the Ephesians to pray for him. He desired to receive the utterance and boldness to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

Ephesians 3:7: "Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power."

C.H. Spurgeon in Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers says:

The flesh is striving against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and though the lion shall one day lie down with the lamb, the flesh will never agree with the spirit. As the Lord hath war with

Amalek for ever and ever, so there is war between the spirit and the flesh so long as the two are in the same man.

Character often hinges on a day's resolve.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 through 3 of "Battle Hymn Of The Republic": "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on. I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps; They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps; I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps; His day is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat; He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat; O be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on. Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Our God is marching on."

June 14—Ambassador In A Chain (Ephesians 6:20)

Ephesians 6:20: "For which I am an ambassador in a chain, in order that in it I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

<u>Verse 20</u>: "For which I am an ambassador in a chain." 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making His appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Philippians 1:12–14: "Now I am desiring you to know, brethren, that the things concerning me (my imprisonment) have turned out rather in the progress of the gospel, so that it has become evident that my imprisonment (bonds) are because of Christ in the whole Praetorian Guard and to all the rest, and the great majority of the brethren, having become confident in the Lord through my imprisonment (bonds), are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear."

Acts 4:31: "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness."

Steve McVey in *Grace Walk* says: "When one feels like a failure, especially in a culture that places so much importance on success, there is a dull pain that can't fully be described. In the movie City Slickers, Mitch, the character played by Billy Crystal, is talking to a friend at work on his thirty-ninth birthday. He asks, 'Do you ever reach a point in your life when you say, "This is the best I'll ever look, the best I'll ever feel, the best I'm ever gonna do, and it ain't that great"?"

John 9:4(KJV): "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work."

As we get older, we should develop an even greater desire to share the message of Christ.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verses 1 and 2 of the Promise Keeper's song, "Let It Be Said Of Us": "Let it be said of us That the Lord was our passion, That with gladness we bore Every cross we were given; That we fought the good fight, that we finished the course; Knowing within us the power of the risen Lord. Let it be said of us, We were marked by forgiveness; We were known by our love And delighted in meekness; We were ruled by His peace, Heeding unity's call, Joined as one body That Christ would be seen by all. Let the cross be our glory And the Lord be our song! By mercy made holy, by the Spirit made strong. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song! 'Till the likeness of Jesus be through us made known. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song."

June 15—The Tychicus Mission (Ephesians 6:21-22)

Ephesians 6:21: "But in order that you also might know how I am, and what I am doing, all things to you, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make known."

Ephesians 6:22: "Whom I sent to you for this same purpose, in order that you might know these things concerning us, and that he might encourage your hearts."

<u>Verse 21</u>: By sending Tychicus to them, Paul wants the saints in Ephesus to know how he is and what he is doing. There are \underline{two} qualities the apostle says of Tychicus. He is:

1. A beloved brother.

He belongs to the family of God through his relationship to the Lord Jesus.

2. A faithful minister in the Lord.

He exercises the gift which God has given him. He is building up the body of Christ.

Dr. Edman says of Tychicus:

Tychicus had two pre-eminent qualifications as a Christian. He was a brother beloved, obviously of a loving disposition by the indwelling Spirit. A man considerate of others, courteous, compassionate and Christ-like, a living example of a loving Saviour. He was also a faithful minister. The word is old-fashioned and means a servant. Just as our Lord declared, whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister, for even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. The Bible nowhere states that Tychicus, like Apollos was eloquent in the Scriptures but it repeats that he was faithful, who served with Paul as needed and willing to go anywhere. Like his master in heaven, Tychicus, all his days on earth was loving and loyal, diligent and dependable, indifferent to self and eager to serve. He preached the gospel as much by his life as by his lips. His conduct corroborated

the content of his preaching and his actions spoke as loudly as his words. His commendation can be rightly coveted by each of us, a brother beloved, a faithful minister in the Lord.

Tychicus is all of these things. They are the result of living life according to God's plan.

<u>Verse 22</u>: The purpose of Tychicus traveling to the Ephesians was "in order that you might know things concerning us." Paul sent him with the hope that he might encourage them.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verses 1 and 2 of Fanny Crosby's hymn, "Draw Me Nearer": "I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me; But I long to rise in the arms of faith, And be closer drawn to Thee. Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, By the pow'r of grace divine; Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, And my will be lost in Thine. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

June 16—Peace, Love & Grace (Ephesians 6:23-24)

Ephesians 6:23: "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 6:24: "Grace be with all those who are loving our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love."

<u>Verse 23</u>: Paul completes this beautiful letter with a <u>four</u>-fold blessing upon those who would receive it:

1. Peace.

Ephesians 2:17: "And having come, He proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."

2. Love.

Ephesians 3:19: "And to know the love of Christ which is surpassing knowledge in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

3. Faith.

"From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

John Eldredge in his book, Beautiful Outlaw, says:

I was going to call this book *Jesus of a Thousand Hearts*, because of the way he continually breaks into my life. He "speaks" to me through hearts. I'll find stones in the shape of hearts in rivers where I'm fishing. I've seen them almost step-by-step up a mountain side when on a grueling climb. Praying in the morning I'll look out the

window and passing by will be a heart-shaped cloud. Dinner rolls, seashells, stains on my jeans. I've won the lottery when it comes to hearts from Jesus. But I am ashamed to admit that last summer, I grew a little impatient with them. I was going through a trying time and seeking God for the answer to many questions. Often, he would simply give me a heart in reply. I'd be walking down the sidewalk, and there in the cement see a heart-shaped hole, made by a bubble when they poured the sidewalk.

I actually grew a little dismissive of them. I didn't want hearts—I wanted *answers*.

So, Jesus stopped giving these treasures of our friendship.

Last fall, while walking through an alpine meadow bow hunting, I was asking him, *How come you don't give me hearts anymore?* I asked it in a pouting kind of way. At that moment something gray caught my eye. I looked down midstride, and there in the grass, about as big as a dinner plate, was a dried piece of cow mature—in the perfect shape of a heart.

If I didn't know Jesus adores me, if I didn't know he is playful, and if our relationship didn't allow me to receive a playful tease, I might have misinterpreted the icon. But I loved it. It was both, *Oh, so now you want a heart?* and, *I adore you still.* A cow-pie heart. That is *so* Jesus. Wish I'd taken a photo of it—we could have put it on the cover of this book.

<u>Verse 24</u>:

4. Grace.

Ephesians 4:7: "But to each one of us there was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ might settle down in your hearts through faith in love, having been rooted and grounded."

Ephesians 5:2: "And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for it, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell."

David Roper in his book, Every Day Is A New Shade Of Blue, says:

God stays with us despite our ruin; He discerns the possibilities even in our defilement. He uses our sin to awaken our need for His grace. Sin softens us and makes us more susceptible to His shaping. When we fall, we have fallen into His hands.

"Sin is dark, dangerous, damnable," F. B. Meyer wrote, "but it cannot staunch the love of God, it cannot change the fact of a love that is not of yesterday, but dates from eternity itself."

Rather than mourn our humiliation, we must accept God's grace and His offer of forgiveness and then move on. "By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken," says an old proverb (Proverbs 15:13 KJV).

We must not let sorrow and self-pity set us up! It will break us in the end. We must forget "our own paltry self with its well-earned disgrace, and lift up our eyes to the glory which alone will quicken us" (George MacDonald).

Sin may have consequences with which we must live, but sin acknowledged and confessed can only work for good. It is, in fact, one means by which God shapes us into His image.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers* says: "The man who is all aglow with love to Jesus finds little need for amusement. He has no time for trifling. He is in dead earnest to save souls, and establish the truth, and enlarge the kingdom of his Lord."

On this morning, we conclude our study of Ephesians. Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 3 and 4 of "Draw Me Nearer"?: "O, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend! There are depths of love that I cannot know Till I cross the narrow sea; There are heights of joy that I may not reach Till I rest in peace with Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessèd Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

June 17—Philemon & Family (Philemon 1:1-3)

Philemon 1:1: "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon the beloved and our fellow-worker."

Philemon 1:2: "And to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church which meets in your home."

Philemon 1:3: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This morning, we will begin our journey through the little book of Philemon. Paul is in prison when he writes this letter. It is a letter of recommendation for Onesimus, a slave that had come to know Jesus Christ in Rome. You will become familiar with its characters and understand the plot as you read this book.

Malcolm Muggeridge said: "Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message."

These verses in Philemon emphasize God at work and His providence. God is working behind the scenes as He did with Esther and Ruth. These first verses regard Philemon and his family.

<u>Verse 1</u>: Paul was a man who had a life-changing experience when he was on

his way to the city of Damascus to apprehend Christians there. He was a very intelligent man. God greatly used him because he allowed himself to be completely available to what God wanted him to do. His single ambition in life was to know Jesus Christ.

He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ because everything that happened to him was permitted by Jesus Christ. His whole life centered around Jesus Christ.

"And Timothy the brother." Timothy was a real friend of Paul's and a wonderful Christian. He was Paul's right hand man. He was willing to go anywhere or do anything at any cost for the Lord.

Timothy was not Paul's brother in the flesh, but he is called "the brother" because he was Paul's brother in Jesus Christ. They were both part of the family of God.

"To Philemon the beloved and our fellow-worker." Philemon was a wealthy slave owner who lived in Colossae. He was the master of Onesimus, the runaway slave. Onesimus is standing before Philemon as he reads this letter from Paul.

Paul calls Philemon "the beloved." The apostle had the privilege of sharing Jesus Christ with Philemon and he responded. He is a "fellow-worker" for his leadership in the church at Colossae.

<u>Verse 2</u>: Like Timothy, Apphia is not Paul's physical relative, but he calls her sister because she is a Christian woman. She is his spiritual sister because she knows Christ. She was probably Philemon's wife, a Christian housewife.

"Archippus our fellow-soldier." Archippus was probably the son of Philemon and Apphia. Paul calls him a fellow-soldier because he had gone into the ministry.

Colossians 4:17: "And say to Archippus, take heed of the ministry (pay attention to your duty) which you received in the Lord, in order that you may perform it (discharge it fully)."

"And to the church which meets in your home." The church met in Philemon's home. They didn't have church buildings in those days.

<u>Verse 3</u>: Before God could have you in His family, He had to resolve your sin. God is holy and just. He demands that sin brings death, not a family relationship.

Ephesians 2:8–9: "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith; and this [salvation] is not of yourselves—it is the gift of God, not because of works, in order that no one might boast."

However, before grace can operate, we must first recognize we are guilty. We must recognize our need for His grace. When we accept God's gracious provision in Jesus Christ by faith, we have peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

By accepting God's love-gift in Jesus Christ, we are born into the family of God. We become His sons and daughters.

Are you in the family of God? Have you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior?

God is at work in His providential dealings with Philemon and his family. But He is also involved in your life!

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of one of my favorite hymns, "It Is Well With My Soul": "When peace, like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well, with my soul.' It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul."

June 18—The Prayer of Praise (Philemon 1:4-5)

Philemon 1:4: "I am thanking my God always, remembering you on the occasions of my prayers."

Philemon 1:5: "Hearing of your love and faith which you are having towards the Lord Jesus and unto all the saints."

<u>Verse 4</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, 'Oh, thank you, God!'"

There is a love that God gives us for each other because we are members of the same family.

Paul prayed often. He prayed for others and their needs, as well as for himself. The apostle thanks God for Philemon.

Andrew Murray in 199 Treasures of Wisdom On Talking With God says:

I must take time to come into God's presence, to feel my weakness and my need, and to renew my fellowship with Him.

Time alone with the Lord Jesus each day is the indispensable condition of growth and power.

Let this be my chief object in prayer, to realize the presence of my heavenly Father. Let my goal be: "Alone with God."

My close, abiding fellowship with Christ begins with deep dependence and unceasing prayer.

I have learned how indispensable it is to meet with God every morning in prayer and allow Him to take charge of my life for the day.

The two key words in this verse are:

1. Thanking.

As Paul begins to pray, he thanks God for Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and all of the brethren in Colossae who know Jesus Christ. The apostle is grateful for their companionship and response to the gospel.

2. Remembering.

He remembers the petitions, requests and needs of this flock in Colossae.

Verse 5: Paul speaks of their relationship with God: "Hearing of your love and faith which you are having towards the Lord Jesus" and with each other "and unto all the saints."

Onesimus and Epaphras told Paul of Philemon's "love and faith." When people hear of you, what do they hear?

Philemon must have two things to be able to forgive Onesimus:

- 1. Love for him, even though he had run away.
- 2. Faith in him that he had really changed.

Hannah Hurnard in her book, *The Mountain of Spices*, said: "When men love, they fulfill the law of their being. When they break the law of love, they disrupt and frustrate the very law of life. As long as they love, they are healthy and happy and harmonious, but when they cease to love and begin to think envious, resentful, bitter, unforgiving and selfish thoughts, they begin to destroy themselves. For every part of their being is poisoned then by unloving thoughts."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "It Is Well With My Soul": "Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul. It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul."

June 19—The Prayer of Petition (Ephesians 1:6-7)

Ephesians 1:6: "That the fellowship (sharing) of your faith may become effective in the knowledge of every good thing which is in us unto Christ."

Ephesians 1:7: "For I had much joy and encouragement on account of your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."

<u>Verse 6</u>: This verse is Paul's prayer petition: "That the fellowship (sharing) of your faith may become effective in the knowledge of every good thing which is in us unto Christ."

As we love with God's love, He gives us the opportunity to share our faith with others. This is one of the greatest experiences for a Christian. When we share love with others, we are convinced of our own faith through that love. Seeing it work in their lives is a stimulus for further growth in our own.

Our love is proven by our willingness to share. We reflect our love for the Savior by our conduct.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull said: "It's good to be a seeker, but sooner or later you have to be a finder. And then it is well to give what you have found a gift into the world for whoever will accept it."

<u>Verse 7</u>: The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Refreshed' ... is the word the Lord used in Matthew 11:28, 'Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' ... 'I will refresh you."

This verse begins with the word "for," an expression for reason. There are <u>two</u> things the apostle had: (1) much joy and (2) encouragement on account of your love.

The reason he had these two things was: "because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother." In prison, Paul was affected by the love of

Philemon in Colossae. Not only was Paul affected, but the hearts of other members of God's family.

Are you a joy and encouragement to others by your love for them? Are you sharing that love with others or keeping to yourself?

God has provided His love for you because you are in His family. However, He wants that love displayed for others in the family, as well as those who aren't in the family.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss in Choosing Gratitude says:

Should it not follow, then, that super-abounding grace ought to be met by super-duper-abounding gratitude?

But does it? Is the gratitude that flows out of your life as abounding as the grace that has flowed into your life?

Undeniable guilt, plus undeserved grace, should equal unbridled gratitude.

The beauty of Christian gratitude is that one little act of thanksgiving on our part—when directed toward or inspired by its rightful Recipient—can bound and rebound from one end of the kingdom to the other, not only blessing God, not only benefiting us, but even lodging itself in places and in people where God's love might never have been received any other way.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 3 of "It Is Well With My Soul": "My sin, O, the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul."

June 20—A Command or A Request (Philemon 1:8-9)

Philemon 1:8: "Wherefore having much boldness in Christ to be commanding you that which is befitting (your duty)."

Philemon 1:9: "Through love rather I am begging you, being such a one as Paul, an ambassador (the aged), but now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus."

<u>Verse 8</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "In line with all this, I have a favor to ask of you. As Christ's ambassador and now a prisoner for him."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Because of his position in Christ, he could be right to tell Philemon what to do in this case, but he would rather do it another way if he could."

François de la Mothe Fénelon said: "Small opportunities are unforeseen; they come by any given moment; they constantly put us in conflict with our pride, our laziness, our arrogance, our recklessness and our pain. They go around breaking our

will in everything and leaving us no reserve if we want to be faithful."

There is a contrast between verses 8 and 9. In verse 8, the apostle says that because of his "boldness in Christ," he could be "commanding you that which is befitting (your duty)." However, in verse 9, Paul says "through love rather I am begging you."

Verse 9: Paul appeals to Philemon on the basis of love.

"I am begging you, being such a one as Paul, an ambassador (the aged), but now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus." This request cannot be lightly refused. It comes from a man in a prison who is ready to sacrifice his life for the Gospel of Christ.

Helen Keller said: "As selfishness and complaint pervert and cloud the mind, so love with its joy clears and sharpens the vision."

D. De Haan said:

Lord, help me see the heartfelt needs
Of those within my care,
And grant that through my words and deeds
Your love with them I'll share.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of "It Is Well With My Soul"?: "And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend, 'Even so,' it is well with my soul. It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul."

June 21—A Spiritual Birth In Prison (Philemon 1:10-12)

Philemon 1:10: "I am begging you concerning my child, of whom I became the father while in prison."

Philemon 1:11: "Onesimus, the one who was once useless to you, but now useful both to you and to me."

Philemon 1:12: "Whom I sent back to you. It is he himself that is my very heart."

<u>Verse 10</u>: Paul hasn't mentioned Onesimus at this point. He was leading up to tell Philemon everything before making his request.

"I am begging you concerning my child, of whom I became the father while in prison." Paul shared his faith with others, even while he was in prison. Nothing stopped him from sharing his Savior with men.

In the family of God, there are educated theologians like Paul, housewives like Apphia, wealthy businessmen like Philemon, ministers like Archippus, missionaries like Timothy and outcast slaves like Onesimus. The barriers are broken down. All are one in Christ and members of the family of God.

Caterine de Hueck Doherty in *The Gospel Without Compromise* said: "The Gospel can be summed up by saying that it is the tremendous, tender, compassionate, gentle, extraordinary, explosive, revolutionary revelation of Christ's love."

<u>Verse 11</u>: The name Onesimus means "profitable." In the past, he was unprofitable, but now he is living up to his name.

Martin Luther said: "We are all God's Onesimi."

He ran away a pagan, but Paul returns him a Christian.

What a tribute to the grace of God! Now, Onesimus is an example of the power of God like the thief on the cross and the prodigal son.

James Denny says: "Christianity is the power which can make bad men good."

No one is impossible to God. The first battle is over when a man is brought face to face with his neglected, rejected Savior. He finds himself falling at Jesus' feet, the willing captive of His love and power.

Who can measure the power of God in the human life? The Power that created the universe and put the stars in place is the same Power that changes hearts. He changed the heart of Onesimus and can change our hearts as well.

<u>Verse 12</u>: In verse 10, Paul called Onesimus "my child." Now, he calls him "my very heart."

Paul displays the love of God in his concern for Onesimus.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "God Leads Us Along": "In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet, God leads His dear children along; Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet, God leads His dear children along. Some thro' the waters, some thro' the flood, Some thro' the fire, but all thro' the blood; Some thro' great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long."

June 22—I Wanted To Keep Him Here (Philemon 1:13)

Philemon 1:13: "Whom I was wishing to hold back with me (for myself), in order that in your behalf he might be ministering to me in my imprisonment for the sake of the gospel."

<u>Verse 13</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "I wanted in the worst way to keep him here as your stand-in to help out while I'm in jail for the Message."

Paul wished Onesimus could stay with him "in order that in your behalf he might be ministering to me in my imprisonment for the sake of the gospel." This supports his previous statement that Onesimus was useful now.

C.H. Spurgeon in *Morning and Evening* said:

Labour to help others, and especially strive to *encourage* them. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious enquirer, lovingly try to remove stumbling-blocks out of his way. When you find a spark of grace in the heart, kneel down and blow it into a flame. Leave the young believer to discover the roughness of the road by degrees,

but tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, and of the charms of communion with Christ. Aim to comfort the sorrowful, and to animate the desponding. Speak a word in season to him that is weary, and encourage those who are fearful to go on their way with gladness. God encourages you by His promises; Christ encourages you as He points to the heaven He has won for you, and the Spirit encourages you as He works in you to will and to do of His own will and pleasure. Imitate divine wisdom, and encourage others, according to the word of this evening.

Please join me this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "God Leads Us Along": "Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright, God leads His dear children along; Sometimes in the valley in the darkest night, God leads His dear children along. Some thro' the waters, some thro' the flood, Some thro' the fire, but all thro' the blood; Some thro' great sorrow, but God gives a song; In the night season and all the day long."

June 23—I Wanted To Consult With You First (Philemon 1:14)

Philemon 1:14: "But without your mind I decided to do nothing, in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will."

<u>Verse 14</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "But I didn't want to do anything behind your back, make you do a good deed that you hadn't willingly agreed to."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "Retaining a slave could be done only with the owner's consent. Though Paul probably could have talked Philemon into letting him keep Onesimus in Rome, he did not want to take undue advantage of their relationship. Paul preferred that such permission would be spontaneous (hekousion, 'voluntary,' used only here in the NT). No one knows whether Philemon freed Onesimus and sent him back to minister to Paul in Rome, but it is an interesting thought."

2 Corinthians 9:7: "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God is loving a cheerful giver."

As we come to the end of this verse, it is impressive to see God's providential power. Recognize how God orchestrated all of the circumstances for Onesimus and Paul to meet. Then, see the power of the gospel to transform Onesimus' life when he came to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

To God be the glory! He has done great things. He is still doing great things. He is willing to work in the hearts and lives of those who respond to Him by faith.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of "He Leadeth Me": "He leadeth me, O blessed thought! O words with heav'nly comfort fraught! Whate'er I do, where'er I be Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me."

June 24—God's Purpose (Philemon 1:15)

Philemon 1:15: "For perhaps on this account he was parted (from you) for a brief time in order that you might be possessing him forever."

<u>Verse 15</u>: Paul provides \underline{two} possible purposes for these providential circumstances. The \underline{first} is in this verse:

1. He was parted from you for a brief time "in order that you might be possessing him forever."

If we dwell only on the present situation, we often fail to see how what is adverse is being molded by God to His purposes.

See how God is working in this situation. Notice His grand design and marvelous plan.

Onesimus might have been a wild young man who was tired of his master's religion. Whatever the reasons, he ran away a criminal, but came back a Christian.

God has a purpose for each of our lives. His plan is meant for our good. When we isolate events, we will always come to a wrong conclusion. Suffering and problems are opportunities that lead to benefit and advantage.

THE WEAVER

My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me; I cannot choose the colors He worketh steadily.

OFT TIMES HE WEAVETH SORROW AND I, IN FOOLISH PRIDE, FORGET HE SEES THE UPPER, AND I THE UNDERSIDE.

NOT TIL THE LOOM IS SILENT AND THE SHUTTLES CEASE TO FLY, SHALL GOD UNROLL THE CANVAS AND EXPLAIN THE REASON WHY.

THE DARK THREADS ARE AS NEEDFUL IN THE WEAVER'S SKILLFUL HAND, AS THE THREADS OF GOLD AND SILVER IN THE PATTERN HE HAS PLANNED.

—BENJAMIN MALACHI FRANKLIN

Romans 8:28 (Phillips): "Moreover we know that to those who love God, who

are called according to his plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good."

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of "He Leadeth Me"?: "Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom, Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom, By waters still, o'er troubled sea, Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me."

June 25—From Slave To Brother (Philemon 1:16)

Philemon 1:16: "No longer as a slave, but above a slave, a brother, a beloved one, most of all by me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

<u>Verse 16</u>: Paul says negatively, "no longer as a slave," but positively, "above a slave." Then, he outlines what it means to be "above a slave": (1) a brother, (2) a beloved one and (3) most of all by me, but much more to you.

In this verse, we have the <u>second</u> possible purpose for these providential circumstances.

2. He was parted from you so he could be your "brother, a beloved one." F.B. Meyer says: "In the flesh, Philemon had the brother for a slave; in the

Lord, he had the slave for a brother."

The apostle knows it is necessary for Philemon to see that in God's purpose Onesimus has been made a part of the family of God. Onesimus is a Christian. Because of his faith, he is Philemon's brother in the family of God. Paul wants Philemon to see God's purpose in all of this.

In Christianity, it can be difficult for the Christian to accept the new Christian. Because of self-righteousness, we may think we are better than they are. We might refuse to associate with them. However, this type of attitude can keep folks out of the family of God.

Paul wants Philemon to understand that Onesimus is a brother and a beloved one. If that is his relationship with Paul, how much deeper and stronger is his relationship with Philemon.

God has a purpose for our lives and provides for us. He knows what is best for us as our Creator. God has provided a family, His love, His power and His purpose. All of these gifts are communicated to us through Jesus Christ.

An unknown source said: "Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "He Leadeth Me": "Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ever murmur nor repine; Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis my God that leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me."

June 26—A Partner & A Payment (Philemon 1:17–18)

Philemon 1:17: "If therefore you are having me as a partner, receive him as me."

Philemon 1:18: "If he wronged you in anything or is owing you, charge this to my account."

<u>Verse 17</u>: Paul encourages Philemon to take Onesimus to himself as to Paul. The apostle has presented his case and plea. On the basis of all of his points, he asks Philemon for a favorable response.

This is a beautiful picture of our acceptance by Christ.

Catesby Paget wrote this poem:

Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he.
So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith he loves the Son—
Such is his love to me.

How can it be that God should accept me as He does His only Son?

Paul identifies himself with Onesimus. This is what Jesus Christ has done for us. God the Father and God the Son were united in the plan for bringing us into the family of God. The plea of the Son when we accept His provision is accepted by the Father.

Gary Smalley & Ted Cunningham in *From Anger to Intimacy* say: "One of the best definitions of forgiveness we've ever heard is this: Forgiveness is me giving up the right to hurt you for hurting me. Rather than wanting to get even, I want to help you. Even though I have a right to hurt you back because you offended me, I give up that right. I respond rather than react."

Oswald Chambers said: "We talk glibly about forgiving when we have never been injured; when we are injured we know that it is not possible, apart from God's grace, for one human being to forgive another."

Nancy Leigh DeMoss says: "I think that's a picture of forgiveness. It's like pressing the 'delete' button."

Bill Hybels in *Axiom: Powerful Leadership Proverbs* says: "Wherever you see something going well—whenever light begins to chase back the darkness that threatens to engulf our world, look closely. There stands a leader who is holding the candle."

Verse 18: Paul wants to pay his debt. A child's debt is his father's. Paul sees Onesimus as his child.

This is a perfect illustration of what Christ has done for us. We broke the law

of God. We were guilty criminals deserving death. Because of His love and grace, God has paid our debt and brought us into His family. We have been forgiven and accepted by the Beloved.

Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe, Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as now.

However, many see it as:

Jesus paid it 90%, Only 10% I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it light pink.

Jesus paid it all. It is finished! The debt has been cancelled.

C.S. Lewis said: "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God had forgiven the inexcusable in us."

Please join me this morning as we sing together verses 1 and 4 of "Jesus Paid It All": "I hear the Saviour say, 'Thy Strength indeed is small; Child of weakness, watch and pray, Find in Me thine all in all.' And when, before the throne, I stand in Him complete, 'Jesus died my soul to save,' My lips shall still repeat. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

June 27—His Debt Is My Debt (Philemon 1:19)

Philemon 1:19: "I Paul write it with my own hand, I will repay in order that not to say to you that you are owing yourself also to me in addition."

Verse 19: Paul uses wonderful, reconciling words in verses 17–19 to resolve this issue with Philemon: (1) partner, (2) if he wronged you, (3) he ... is owing you, (4) charge this to my account, and (5) I, Paul, write it with my own hand, I will repay.

This verse is an I.O.U. from the apostle in prison to pay any debt Onesimus has.

In His own blood, Jesus Christ signed and sealed our I.O.U. to God.

Martin Luther said: "As Paul took over the entire debt of Onesimus, so Christ took our entire debt but in a higher sense."

It is an unbreakable law. Someone has to pay the price of sin.

In signing the I.O.U., Paul reminded Philemon of his debt to the apostle. Philemon became a Christian through Paul's ministry.

Max Lucado in his book, Just Like Jesus Devotional, says:

Recently I shared a meal with some friends. A husband and wife wanted to tell me about a storm they were weathering. Through a series of events, she learned of an act of infidelity that had occurred over a decade ago. He had made the mistake of thinking it'd be bet-

ter not to tell her, so he didn't. But she found out. And as you can imagine, she was deeply hurt.

Through the advice of a counselor, the couple dropped everything and went away for several days. A decision had to be made. Would they flee, fight, or forgive? So they prayed. They talked. They walked. They reflected. In this case the wife was clearly in the right. She could have left. Women have done so for lesser reasons. Or she could have stayed and made his life a living hell. Other women have done that. But she chose a different response.

On the tenth night of their trip, my friend found a card on his pillow. On the card was a printed verse: "I'd rather do nothing with you than something without you." Beneath the verse she had written these words:

I forgive you. I love you. Let's move on.

The card might as well have been a basin. And the pen might as well have been a pitcher of water, for out of it poured pure mercy, and with it she washed her husband's feet.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verses 1 and 4 of "Glory To His Name": "Down at the cross where my Saviour died, Down where for cleansing from sin I cried, There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name! Come to this fountain so rich and sweet, Cast thy poor soul at the Saviour's feet; Plunge in today, and be made complete; Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name."

June 28—Refresh My Heart In Christ (Philemon 1:20)

Philemon 1:20: "Yes, brother, let me get profit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ."

<u>Verse 20</u>: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Do me this big favor, friend. You'll be doing it now for Christ, but it will also do my heart good."

In this verse, Paul appeals to the family relationship when he calls Philemon "brother." The apostle wants (1) "profit" from Philemon and (2) his heart refreshed by Philemon's response.

The Christian must welcome back the man who has made a mistake. Jesus Christ trusts us on the very field of our defeat.

"Refresh my heart." Are these not the words of Christ to each of us? He desires for each of us to be profitable servants. He wants us to refresh His heart by the lives we live.

Patzia says: "The phrase refresh my heart recalls a similar expression in verse 7, where Philemon's love 'refreshed the hearts of the saints.' Here Paul appeals to Philemon's love, but for a personal reason. The acceptance of Onesimus by Philemon would refresh his heart. But it is a joy that is unselfish because it is placed in the

sphere of the Lord (in Christ). Paul will rejoice because he knows that Philemon is responding from the new life that he has experienced in Christ."

Lewis B. Smedes in Days of Grace Through the Year says:

Forgiveness, at bottom, is a very simple sort of miracle. Forgiveness is a new beginning. Forgiveness is starting over and trying it again with the person who caused you pain. Take God, for instance. When God forgives, he offers us a new start with him. He holds out his hand and says, "Come on, take it, I want to be your friend again. In spite of everything, I want to be with you, and I want to be under you and over you and in you, as the loving power of your existence. I am not going to let anything you do get in my way. So let's begin again." This is what God does when he forgives: he breaks down the walls we build and gets into the back yard of our souls to make a new relationship.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verses 1, 3, and 4 of "Blessed Be The Name"?: "All praise to Him Who reigns above In majesty supreme, Who gave His Son for man to die, That He might man redeem! Redeemer, Saviour, Friend of man Once ruined by the fall, Thou hast devised salvation's plan, For Thou hast died for all. His Name shall be the Counselor, The mighty Prince of Peace, Of all earth's kingdoms Conqueror, Whose reign shall never cease. Blessèd be the Name, blessèd be the Name, Blessèd be the Name of the Lord! Blessèd be the Name, blessèd be the Name, Blessèd be the Name of the Lord!"

June 29—Knowing You, You Will Do More (Philemon 1:21-22)

Philemon 1:21: "Having confidence in your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even beyond the things I say."

Philemon 1:22: "And at the same time also prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be granted to you."

<u>Verse 21</u>: Paul expresses his confidence in the obedience of Philemon. He is certain Philemon will receive Onesimus back in response to his plea. He not only believes Philemon will receive him back, but will do beyond what Paul has asked.

"Obedience" is the key word in this verse.

"Having confidence in your obedience." Paul knows Philemon's heart and his desire to do the right thing.

Proverbs 8:34: "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway."

Oswald Chambers in My Utmost For His Highest said:

The lives of others are examples for us, but God requires us to examine our own souls. It is slow work—so slow that it takes God

all of time and eternity to make a man or woman conform to His purpose. We can only be used by God after we allow Him to show us the deep, hidden areas of our own character. It is astounding how ignorant we are about ourselves! We don't even recognize the envy, laziness, or pride within us when we see it. But Jesus will reveal to us everything we have held within ourselves before His grace began to work. How many of us have learned to look inwardly with courage?

<u>Verse 22</u>: Paul is confident Philemon will respond to his plea, but he also hopes to come and see this reconciliation with Onesimus. He also acknowledged Philemon's prayers for him.

Eugene H. Peterson in his book, A Year With Jesus, says: "Jesus Christ, I want to take your words to me just as seriously and personally as I do your acts for me. I need your help, but I also need your direction. Lead me from the faith that responds to your mercy into the faith that becomes obedient discipleship. Amen."

John MacArthur in *Found: God's Will* says: "God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering. God's Word makes all this clear. Do not read on until you have grasped these five principles."

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 and 4 of "Face To Face": "Face to face with Christ, my Savior, Face to face, what will it be? When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ Who died for me. Face to face! O, blissful moment! Face to face, to see and know; Face to face with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Who loves me so. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!"

June 30—Greetings From The Family (Philemon 1:23-25)

Philemon 1:23: "Greetings from Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus."

Philemon 1:24: "And Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers."

Philemon 1:25: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

<u>Verse 23</u>: Epaphras was a pastor in Colossae. Being close to Laodicea, he was known to the Ephesians. He was in Rome with Paul discussing some of the problems of the church in Colossae.

He may have been imprisoned with Paul in Rome at some point. Just as Paul, he was also a spiritual prisoner of Jesus Christ. His will was captive to the Savior.

It is interesting that the Spirit of God prompted Paul to mention these <u>five</u> men in his closing greetings. These were spiritual brothers of the apostle and an encouragement to others.

1. Epaphras—a minister who was faithful in doing what God called him to do.

Verse 24:

- Mark—who started out to be a missionary, but went home when it became difficult. However, he recovered and became a real soldier of the cross.
- Aristarchus—a man from Macedonia who experienced persecution for the cause of Christ. He was apprehended in the uproar in Ephesus, but he continued on faithfully serving the Lord.
- 4. Demas—who started out serving the Lord, but the attraction of the world was too great and he left the ministry.
- 5. Luke—a missionary doctor Paul greatly loved. He gave of himself completely to the cause of Christ.

Which biography of these members of the family of God will be the story of your life?

<u>Verse 25</u>: The apostle ends this letter as he began—with grace. What is grace, but God's provision? Something undeserved. God's grace is seen several times in this epistle. It is also in God's provision for us now.

Because of His love, God's grace has paid our debt and brought us into the family of God. We have been forgiven and accepted in the Beloved.

C.H. Spurgeon in Morning and Evening said:

Paul, when grown old, sitting grey-haired, shivering in a dungeon in Rome, could say with greater emphasis than we can, "I know whom I have believed," for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like ascending another summit, and his death seemed like gaining the top of the mountain, from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of Him to whom he had committed his soul. Get thee up, dear friend, into the high mountain.

As we finish this study, please join me this morning as we celebrate and sing together verses 1 through 3 of Francis Havergal's "Like A River Glorious": "Like a river glorious, Is God's perfect peace, Over all victorious In its bright Increase; Perfect, yet it floweth Fuller ev'ry day, Perfect, yet it groweth Deeper all the way. Hidden in the hollow Of His blessed hand, Never foe can follow Never traitor stand; Not a surge of worry Not a shade of care, Not a blast of hurry Touch the spirit there. Ev'ry joy or trial Falleth from above, Traced upon our dial By the Sun of Love. We may trust Him fully All for us to do; They who trust Him wholly Find Him wholly true. Stayed upon Jehovah, Hearts are fully blest; Finding, as He promised, Perfect peace and rest."

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Jeremiah 15:16





Don Anderson is a popular guest speaker at churches, para-church organizations, conferences, and retreats. His refreshing style and unique insights, captured on CD and DVD and published in his many books, effectively communicate timeless truths from Scripture and their application to everyday life.



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