

4. Do you 'fight' in your own strength?
5. How often do we put on Christ?

WATCH AND PRAY

Ephesians 6:18-24

Paul had many enemies. Here he thought of Satan's hosts. He had told these Christians to:

- a) Stand under the authority of Jesus' name,
- b) Put on the 'armour of God.'
- c) Pray 'in the Spirit' on all occasions (6:18).

We are weak and slow to understand what God wants. The Holy Spirit knows our weak minds and bodies and keeps on helping us. He is there all the time. He prays for us, He prays with us, and He prays through us. He is our powerful partner in prayer. He brings prayers to our minds. He gives us strength to keep praying. He tells us what is God's will. He helps us say 'no' to our own selfish will. He searches our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10-12). We do not know how He works "all things together for good," but that is God's promise (Romans 8:28). He intercedes for us "with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8:26). He presents to the Father all that is right in our prayers, because they are His prayers.

"Be alert and always keep on praying . . ." It is easy to fall asleep while praying. The enemy makes us feel tired, but we must be awake and expect God to answer our prayers. His answer may be:

- a) No, not now.
- b) Slow up, you are in too big a hurry,
- c) Let your faith grow first,
- d) Go for it!

Last of all, Paul makes a special request. It is not for comfort, or for his health. It is for boldness to speak for Jesus Christ.

He will send Tychicus to them to let them know how he is. God had answered their prayers for his health and he wanted them to know this.

TALK ABOUT

1. What does it mean to 'pray in the Spirit'?
2. Why do we feel weak when we pray?
3. Do you watch to see what God is doing (Isaiah 21:8)?
4. Are praying and 'waiting on the Lord' the same?
5. What was Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus (3:14-19)?
6. Are you an ambassador for God (6:20)?

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Books of the Bible

EPHESIANS

Bible Study Commentary
written in Everyday English

by

Fred Morris

TO THE READER . . .

Read your Bible first, then study these notes. Bible verses are taken from the New International Version. They are shown as (7:6), chapter 7 verse 6. When verses are given from other versions, they are shown as: KJV - King James Version; NASB - New American Standard; TLB - The Living Bible; NLT - New Living Translation. TALK ABOUT: Questions are for groups to discuss.

Paul wrote this letter to Christians in the city of Ephesus. He said their city was ruled over by Satan and demon spirits. That is why he wrote so much to them about the power of God. God's power is greater than Satan's power.

AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

☛ Ephesians 1:1-8

Paul used a common greeting: He was "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God . . ." An apostle means one sent with a message.

He sent his letter to "the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus . . ." He wished them "grace and peace . . . from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). Paul made Jesus equal with God. Jesus, the Son, is God (John 1:1).

The Bible says: 1. Man is a sinner, lost from God (Romans 3:23). 2. Jesus came to earth and died to save us from our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). 3. His death was for us and in our place (1 Peter 3:18). 4. As we believe this, we are saved from sin's punishment. 5. Christians are 'in Christ' (1:13-14). 6. Christ comes to live in their hearts by His Spirit.

TALK ABOUT:

Paul said these things about the Christians at Ephesus:

1. They were "saints" or holy brothers and sisters,
2. They were faithful believers,
3. They were 'in Christ Jesus' (1:1). Talk about each of these.

BLESSINGS FROM HEAVEN

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the greatest mystery in the Bible. He said three things:

- a) God created man and woman "in His image" (Genesis 1:28).
- b) God chose us to have Life.
- c) He chose us to be holy and blameless in His sight. He called these things 'blessings from Heaven' (1:4).

Paul called these blessings "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (1:3). God's blessings come to us in Christ. You cannot have them unless you take Jesus as your Saviour.

Ephesians by Chapters

1. The Church is Christ's and Christ fills the Church
2. Building the Church – Christ the cornerstone
3. The purpose of the Church – the mystery
4. Unity in the Church – being 'in one Christ'
5. The walk of the Church – harmony in the family
6. The warfare of the Church – prayer in the Church

open your heart and your Bible. Seek the Lord and wait on Him. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit (Luke 11:13). Paul spoke of different pieces of armour worn by a Roman soldier:

- a) "The belt of truth . . ." This held the soldier's cloak tightly around him and the other pieces of armour in place. The truth makes us free to move and come against the enemy's attacks,
- b) The breastplate of Christ's righteousness. The Tightness of Christ is put on by faith,
- c) "Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel . . ." The sure-footed goat can climb the rocky cliffs and not fall. The Christian knows the gospel and carries it in his heart. He is sure of what Christ has done for him. His feet are on the Rock (Ps 40:2).
- d) "Take up the shield of faith . . ." The Roman shield turned aside all arrows and put out ones that were burning. Paul thought of Satan's 'arrows' as 'flaming arrows.'
- e) "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." The soldier put on his helmet and took up his sword only when in danger. The word of God is our greatest weapon against Satan. We do not attack Satan, Christ did that. We stand and use the sword of the Spirit against him. Speak God's words and Satan will fall back.

TALK ABOUT

1. We cannot fight against Satan. We cannot injure him. We can only claim Christ's shed blood against him. We stand in the power of Jesus' name (Acts 4:10). Christ's name gives us authority over all evil (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:10).

THERE IS NO HELP IN MAN

David wrote: "Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. With God, we can gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies" (Psalm 108:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Satan uses evil men in his plans (Ephesians 4:14; 6:11). Paul knew Satan was very busy and very strong. And it is not a 'flesh and blood' war. It is Christ's Church against "rulers and authorities" who serve Satan. Paul had these 'authorities' in mind (Ephesians 1:21; 3:10). They were the "darkness of this present evil world" that has taken over men's hearts (4:18; 5:8). Any rule or authority not under God's Spirit belongs to Satan and his hosts (2:1-2).

The Father gives us Christ's victory. "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Stand in the victory Christ has already won for you. When the enemy tries to trick you with his lies, stand on God's promise. "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19, KJV).

TALK ABOUT

1. How does Satan get a "foothold" in our lives (4:27)?
2. What passions and desires play into Satan's hands?
3. Does it take an effort to put on God's armour?

CHILDREN OBEY “IN THE LORD”

☛ Ephesians 6:1-9 (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)

After Paul wrote rules for Christian parents, he wrote to their children. Children must obey their parents “in the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). This pleases the ‘ Lord and brings His blessing (6:3; Exodus 20:12).

Paul quoted “Honour your father and mother . . . He took these words from God’s commands given to Moses. Children in Israel obeyed their parents. Their parents taught them the commands of God and they grew up to live sober and useful lives. God promised them an abundance of years (Deuteronomy 5:16).

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training . . . of the Lord” (6:4). Do not provoke your children to anger (KJV).

God holds fathers responsible for training and discipline in the home. They are not to be “harsh” to their wives or to their children, but fair and firm.

Be reasonable. Don’t lose patience with them or have favourites. All children need rules to live by. These must encourage them to live for God.

We live in a godless age. Training our children in the things of God is most important (2 Timothy 3:16), yet we give less and less time to this task.

Children obey “in the Lord” and fathers train their children “in the Lord.” This is a joint venture, father and child working together. This ‘work’ is done in Christian homes. It is God’s law for peace in the home and success in life.

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters . . .” (6:5). Many Christian families owned slaves. Some slaves had received Christ. They were part of the family. Many other Christian slaves served heathen masters. Some masters treated them kindly and some harshly. “Obey them . . . just as you would obey

Christ,” Paul told these slaves.

Paul called Christians ‘slaves of Christ.’ They “do the will of God from your heart” (6:6). God will reward all labour and service done ‘unto Him.’

THE WAR AGAINST SATAN

☛ Ephesians 6:10-17 (Isaiah 59:16-17)

Our enemy is Satan, not our local culture or merchants like the silversmiths of Ephesus (Acts 19:23). Every ‘soldier of Christ’ faces Satan’s hosts (2:2). How can we battle these great powers?

Every believer must put on “the full armour of God.” Jesus is our armour. He is salvation and truth. He is our righteousness! We ‘put on’ Jesus

Christ and we stand against everything that is evil (Romans 13:14). We must do this every day or the enemy will win the fight. He attacks us all the time! God gives us spiritual armour to protect us and the power of the Holy Spirit to help us put it on. The believer must put the armour on; God does not put it on for us. Kneel in prayer and

The Spirit of Christ in us gives us grace to:

- Respect those over us.
- Be honest and sincere in all we do.
- Do all to the glory of God (6:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Wait for God to reward us (6:8).

God is three Persons, but One:

- God the Father chose us before time began (1:3-5).
- The Son, Jesus Christ, redeemed us at great cost (1:7-12; Romans 4:7-8).
- The Holy Spirit sealed us into God’s family. (1:13-14)
- God had this planned before He created the world (1:4).

Sin keeps us from away from God and His blessings, so He sent Jesus Christ to redeem us from sin (1:7). Christ’s death on the cross paid the price or ransom for our sin. When we believe that, God forgives our sins. We are freed from sin’s punishment (Romans 8:1).

To redeem something means to buy it back after it has been sold, or to free someone from prison (Galatians 3:22). This was all part of God’s eternal plan. Even before we were born, God had this plan to redeem us from Satan’s power. He wants us to:

- Live as His sons and daughters!

- Inherit a place in His Kingdom,
- Enjoy His blessings now.

But you have to agree with God that you are a sinner and need Him to save you.

When God saves us from sin, He gives us Heaven’s blessings in Christ. We have Christ with us and we have everlasting life (John 3:36).

Blessings . . .

- from the Father (1:3)
- from the Son (1:4-13a)
- from the Holy Spirit (1:13b-14)

TALK ABOUT

- What three things did Paul say about the Christians at Ephesus (1:1)?
- What does the word ‘apostle’ mean?
- How can we have “every spiritual blessing”?
- What are the ‘spiritual blessings’ from Heaven?
- What does the word ‘redeem’ mean?

GOD CHOSE US TO BE HOLY

God chose to have sons and daughters who love and obey Him (Romans 8:14). He chose them to be “holy and blameless.” like Himself (1:4).

‘Blameless’ means pure in the way we live. God wants to fill us with Himself and make us holy. Only then can we be ‘like Him’ and please Him.

When He calls us, He starts with ‘nothing’ – no faith in us. There is nothing in us that would want to listen to His voice or answer His call. He takes the first step toward us. He gives us a longing to know Him and adds faith. That is God’s grace.

God did all this for us because He is rich in grace (1:7). Because God loves us, He wants to freely give us all Heaven’s blessings. He does not hold anything back from those who trust Him.

This good news about Jesus Christ is called the gospel (John 17:3).

Themes in Ephesians

- The blessings God gives us in Jesus Christ (1:1-14).
- God’s great wisdom.
- God’s purpose in calling men and women to come back to Him.
- God’s great power which He will give us to use for Him “(3:20).
- How Satan makes war on God’s people (6:10-18).
- The power of prayer.
- Living a holy life.

Paul preached this 'good news' of the gospel in Ephesus. Many believed it and became sons and daughters of God, so Paul said they were 'chosen.'

The moment they believed, every good thing was theirs 'in Christ.' For ever after, they would be to "the praise of His (the Father's) glory" (1:12). Their lives bring Him praise!

TALK ABOUT

1. What was God's plan for men and women?
2. How can you be a part of it?
3. Were all the Christians at Ephesus 'holy'?
4. What does 'blameless' mean?
5. How can a person be blameless before God?
6. What happened when Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)?

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

👉 Ephesians 1:9-11

The mystery is that Christians are 'in Christ' Paul used the words 'in Christ' to mean those who are saved. They were in Christ's Kingdom. God lived in them and ruled in their hearts. Paul wrote of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27) . . . their hope of future glory!

'In Christ' can mean:

- a) A state of being,
- b) A place in God's family,
- c) A relationship we enjoy with Jesus Christ and with the Father in Heaven.

God's plan was to bless all mankind. He did this through His Son, Jesus Christ. His plan is to save men and women from sin. He will not push you to join His plan. He waits patiently for you to come to Him (2 Peter 3:9). He is wise, working out everything by His plan and for His purpose (1:11).

No one could know God's plan, so He revealed His plan to men of faith. He filled them with His Spirit and they wrote down what God said. "Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

In the ages past, God's plan was not clear, even to His prophets. They "looked diligently" in the Scriptures, trying to find the time and the place where Christ would be born (1 Peter 1:10). Then Christ came and made God's plan clear (Hebrews 1:1-2). "He made known to us the mystery of His will . . ." (1:9). The Holy Spirit, living in our hearts, helps us to understand God's plan (1 Corinthians 2:12).

The temple of Diana, a heathen goddess, stood guard over the city of Ephesus. The whole city worshipped Diana. The Ephesians were tricked into thinking the idol-god Diana would help them, but they were only held more tightly by Satan's evil powers.

Paul said "man-made gods are no gods at all." Every evil thing comes from Satan. All idol worship is Satan worship and behind every idol there are demon spirits. Demons often enter the person who worships the idol. The demons spirits cause fear, anger, sickness and many of the bad things that happen to people who worship idols.

When Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, many people believed. Sick people were healed and evil spirits (demons) left them. Many came to Paul and openly confessed their evil deeds. People who had practiced witchcraft brought their fetishes and books and burned them in the city square (Acts 19:11-20).

People stopped buying silver idols of Diana. (Artemis is the Greek name for Diana) This made the merchants angry and they started a riot (Acts 19:23-41).

If the head of the woman is the man, and the Head of Christ is God, then man and women must be equal, because Father and Son are equal (1 Corinthians 11:3). Jesus Christ is Head of His family, the Church, and God put man at the head of his family.

Every family must have a 'head' and God holds the husband responsible for leading his family. Headship means power to care, not to crush. It means loving our wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her (5:25), Men fall far short, but that is the goal!

WE ARE TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVED

"Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:25). He did this every day of His life,

- a) He gave up His glory and power,
- b) He set aside His majesty and came to earth (Philippians 2:7).
- c) He gave up His right to work, earn a living and enjoy the comforts of a home,
- d) He gave up His right to take a wife and have a family,
- e) He gave up His right to privacy, to have time alone,
- f) He gave up His right to a fair trial (Isaiah 53:7).
- g) He gave up life itself.

For a Christian this means 'dying' to what we want, so that we can give ourselves to God, our wives and families (Ephesians 5:25). Wives and mothers must 'die' to what they want, for their family's sake. God's servants give up their own wishes and serve their Master as bond-slaves (Luke 17:7-10).

TALK ABOUT

1. How much did Christ love the Church (5:25)?
2. How is the Christian Church like the marriage of man and woman?
3. How should husbands love their wives? What does this mean in practical, everyday living?
4. Should we 'present ourselves to God' only once, or every day (Romans 12:1-2)?

LIVING TOGETHER IN HARMONY

The curse brought women pain in childbirth and man's domination (Genesis 3:16). Sin in men's hearts has caused them to selfishly rule over women. Men have made women slaves to their passions.

Jesus brought freedom to women. He honoured women and spoke to them when no Jewish man would do this (John 4:9). In Christ women are free to follow a career, or to stay at home.

"Wives submit . . . husbands love . . ." (5:24-25). This is how one partner should respond to the other's love. The Bible calls this "agape love." It is a self-sacrificing love, only seen in Christian homes. It is not the mushy kind of passion we call love today. True love is two people giving to each other.

TALK ABOUT

1. The Bible says God created man to be 'head'. What does this mean (1 Corinthians 11:3)?
2. The Bible says 'love' and 'submit.'

- d) Stop doing foolish things that do not please God.
- e) Understand what the Lord's will is for us.
- f) Be filled with His Spirit (5:18).

Wine takes away our self-control and leads us to do wrong things. The Holy Spirit wants to grow Spirit-control in our lives (Galatians 5:23). So Paul wrote, 'Be being filled with the Holy Spirit' (5:18). 'Filled' here means 'controlled.' He does not come to 'fill' and empty space, but to control a life.

We must be under His control every day. God said we are to 'ask' to this control (Luke 11:13). We are to ask over and over again. We come often, we come boldly, we come asking; that pleases our Father (Hebrews 10:19-22).

"Speak to one another . . ." Share what God has given you from His word. Speak Christ's name, sing His praises as you work, "always giving thanks." When you do this, other spirits around you will be lifted up to Heaven. And do all "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:19-20).

TALK ABOUT

- 1. What is your potential for God? Are you reaching it?
- 2. What are some 'worthless deeds' that you do?
- 3. From today, how will you try to please the Lord (5:10)?
- 4. God wants 'clean' hearts and churches! How can we have them?
- 5. When we put off our old habits what do we put on in their place (4:25-29)?
- 6. What must we ask for (Luke 11:13)?

WIVES AND HUSBANDS

☛ Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-4:1

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord . . ." To submit means to give one's self up to another. To love means the same. When Paul wrote 'Wives submit, husbands love' he meant both husbands and wives giving themselves up to one another.

God created men and women equal, but sin spoiled this relationship. Only "in Christ" can men see women as their equal and have respect for them.

Paul knew there could be no peace in the churches if there was no peace in their homes. In the Church, husbands and wives are to be "subject one to another," not one ruling over the other at home or in church.

God created men and women in His image, "male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). One sex is not more like God than the other. Adam and Eve were equal in the garden of Eden and equal in the fall. When Eve sinned, both of them were cut off from God and put out of the garden.

NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE

In God's sight, "There is neither male nor female . . ." (Galatians 3:28). This has nothing to do with the role of father or mother. It is a matter of the person's relationship to God and to the other person.

TALK ABOUT

- 1. God sees only two kinds of people. Those who have believed and are 'in Christ' and those who have not.
- 2. How do we get to be 'in Christ'?
- 3. Isaiah there any hope for the world apart from Jesus Christ?

THE FIRST TO HOPE IN CHRIST

☛ Ephesians 1:12-14

"In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ . . ." (1:12). In Israel, every young wife wished for a son. When Eve gave birth to Cain she cried out, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man" (Genesis 4:1). Sarah and Abraham had a 'son of promise' (Genesis 17:19). Hannah prayed for a son. God answered her prayer and gave her Samuel (1 Sam 1:11). All these sons were born first in their families.

Paul thought of these believers as his 'sons.' He said they had come into God's Kingdom first, before the many who would believe later. So to him they were like 'first-born sons' (Num 3:13).

Friend, you are like a first-born son to God. He had you in His heart long before you were born into this world. Even before the creation of the world. God knew all about you and He loved you. He wanted you to be one of His own sons or daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18).

TALK ABOUT

- 1. The Christians at Ephesus were some of the first to hope in Christ: True False (1:12)?
- 2. God wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9)?
- 3. How will men hear if no one goes to preach to them (Romans 10:9-10)?

THEY HAD A NEW BIRTH

When a man believes and turns from his old life of sin, God's Spirit gives him a 'new birth' (John 3:8). This is not a physical birth, but a birth by God's Spirit. Paul said this happened "when you heard the word of truth, the gospel . . . having believed, you were marked in Him (in Christ) . . . with the promised Holy Spirit" (1:13).

Look at the parts of this verse, (1:13):

- a) "When you heard . . ." – Men must hear the gospel clearly,
- b) "Having believed . . . the gospel." – Faith sprang up in their hearts,
- c) "You were marked . . . with a seal . . . the Holy Spirit."

"God has told us His secret reason for sending Christ, a plan He decided on in mercy long ago . . . that when the time is ripe He will gather us – His sons and daughters by faith in Jesus Christ . . . to be with Him forever." (Ephesians 1:9-10 TLB)

God's ways . . .
"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The moment we believe, we are sealed into God's family by the Holy Spirit. God gives the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus (Romans 8:9).

Long ago, God's prophets said that His Spirit would come to live in those who believed (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus gave His Disciples the same promise (John 14:16,17) God sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-5). Now God's Spirit comes to every born-again person the moment they believe. He is like a first payment on all the blessings God will give us (2 Corinthians 1:22).

TALK ABOUT

1. What was special about being a first-born son?
2. Isaiah our faith different to the faith men had in Old Testament times?
3. What did Paul mean by a spiritual birth (John 3:8)?
4. Who is the Holy Spirit?

PAUL THANKED GOD FOR THEM

☛ Ephesians 1:15-20 (1 Corinthians 2:6-13)

"I have not stopped giving thanks . . ." Paul wrote (1:16). He prayed for the Christians in Ephesus:

- a) He gave thanks to God for them,
- b) He asked God to give them 'the Spirit of wisdom' (1:17).
- c) And that the eyes of their hearts be opened (1:18).

Paul wanted these believers to understand all that God had done for them. He wanted them to praise God from hearts filled with the Holy Spirit. They knew God, but they needed to know Him better. Even Moses, the man of God, cried out to know the Almighty God better (Exodus 33:13).

Before their eyes had been blinded by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4), but the Holy Spirit opened them. Now the eyes of their hearts must see the great mysteries of God: a) He called us to a great hope, b) He counts us as His riches, His inheritance, c) We can experience His great power working in our lives. His power in us is like the power that raised Jesus from the dead. And it is "for us who believe" (1:19).

When Jesus rose from the dead, God showed His mighty power in an earthquake. The rocks split and graves were opened. His power also works in the hearts of men, changing them to be like Jesus. When we preach the gospel, God's power breaks Satan's power in the lives of other people (Romans 1:16). He wants to work in us and through us to bless others (1:20).

THEY MUST LOOK TO JESUS CHRIST

☛ Ephesians 1:21-23

God the Father glorified the Son by raising Him from the dead. Jesus is now seated in Heaven (Hebrews 1:3; 12:1).

1. The Messiah-Christ is "raised far above all rule and authority" on earth and in Heaven (1:21).
2. He is above all angels and demon spirits.

3. How can we 'tame' our tongues?
4. What does it mean to be a bond-slave of Jesus?
5. Will God receive an offering from dirty hands?

LIVE IN THE LIGHT

☛ Ephesians 5:3-7

Paul named some of their past sins (5:3-5). They must leave these and live as God's holy people. They must not be like those around them.

Some had sinned with their bodies, others with their mouths. Dirty jokes and 'foolish talk' must stop.

In its place they must give thanks to God for saving them. The Holy Spirit will change their talk as they yield to Him.

"Let no one deceive you . . ." False teachers said these 'sins of the flesh' did not matter. But God's wrath comes on men because of their sins. Any person who went on living in sin would not share in the riches of God's Kingdom (5:5).

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE HOLY

☛ Ephesians 5:8-14

"You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (5:8). "Live as children of light," Paul wrote. They had God's light to help them live open, good lives. Such living is "the fruit of the light" (5:9).

Believers shine for Jesus because His light is in them (Philippians 2:16). When we trust Christ, His light fills our minds. The Holy Spirit works in us "the fruit of the light" which is goodness, righteousness and truth (Philippians 1:11). And we stop doing worthless deeds, done in secret (5:12).

Where Christ's light shines, it exposes sin and we put the sin out of our lives. We find out what pleases the Lord and we do only those things.

The prophet of old cried out: 'Wake up, sleeping ones, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light' (Isaiah 60:1). The people of Israel were God's witnesses, but they were asleep. The prophet told them to let God's light shine in them (Daniel 12:3).

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Paul said,

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18)

☛ Ephesians 5:15-20

'Be careful how you walk . . .' or how you live your life (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15).

Be wise and be true to Christ. "The days are evil," Paul said, so we have to be more careful to:

- a) Keep away from evil,
- b) Expose it when we find it.
- c) Do good,

SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVERS

1. Give thanks always (5:20)
2. Sing praise to God (5:19)
3. Submit to others (5:21)
4. Love their wives "as Christ loved the Church." (5:25)
5. A child obeys parents (6:1)
6. Do all "unto the Lord" (6:7)
7. Become more like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18)

—adapted from Oswald Sanders

control of the Holy Spirit (James 3:6). So Paul said, "Put off talk that does not honour God.' 'Un-whole-some' comes from a word that means rotting fruit or fish. That is how some of our talk smells to God!

Ask God to take your tongue and make it clean. Put on talk that builds up others. This is one thing you can give them. Every time you meet another person, talk about Jesus Christ and what He has done for you (Malachi 3:16). Speak a Bible verse!

Put off all anger and put on humility, forgiveness and love. Don't be angry with a brother, or carry, a grudge against someone.

We must control our emotions. Are you bitter? Put your bitter spirit on the cross. If you feel your brother or sister has done something against you, go to them and tell them, "I forgive you" (Matthew 18:15). This will set your spirit free. Many try to hide their hurts, but God sees and knows them (Hebrews 4:13).

Did Paul write 'Don't steal' to Christians? Yes, he did! We can 'steal' in many ways: By not giving a good day's work. By borrowing and not paying back. Put off all the things that give the devil a foothold (Ephesians 4:27).

Work with your hands, so that you will have enough for yourself and your family and some over to give to others (4:28).

DON'T MAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT SAD

👉 Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Put off anything that makes the Holy Spirit sad. When we grieve the Holy Spirit, He withdraws (Ephesians 4:30). We may keep working, but we work without the Holy Spirit's power in our lives. We do things our way and in our own strength. God calls this "dead works" (Hebrews 9:14). Tell God you are sorry, repent of your sin and ask God for more of His Spirit (Luke 11:13).

We all need self-control. This is a fruit of God's Spirit. If you don't see any self-control in a person's life you can be sure there is no Spirit-control.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another . . ." (4:32). Put on kindness and love the other person. "Forgive one another just as in Christ, God forgave you" (4:32). God forgives and we must forgive. If you do not forgive the other person, you won't love them. God says 'Forgive your brother then come and bring your gift to Me' (Matthew 5:23-24).

Putting off the old ways is not a once-for-all thing. Old habits come back to bind us again. We have to stand against them in the name of Jesus. We must ask for His blood to cover us against Satan. You cannot say, 'I have put off the last sinful thing.' But you can say, 'Christ gives me the victory over Satan. I will not obey the devil any longer' (Romans 6:13-14).

As you put your 'old ways' off, the Holy Spirit will work the character of Jesus in you. We can be "imitators of God" as we give ourselves up and let the Holy Spirit work in our lives (5:1).

TALK ABOUT

1. How can we show God's love to others?
2. What does it mean to 'put off our old ways'?

3. He has "all power and dominion" (Matthew 28:18).
4. He has a name or title that is 'above every other name' (Philippians 2:9).
5. He is appointed "Head over everything for the Church, which is His body" (1:22-23).
6. He gives us His power and authority as we live for Him each day (2 Peter 1:3).
7. He waits to fill every Christian (the Church) with His power.

God gave Adam and Eve dominion, or power to rule over everything He created. When Adam sinned, man lost this power. Satan took it from him. Now Satan has dominion over men and nations. He is "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). Satan rules over all those who do not trust in Jesus.

Jesus broke Satan's dominion. Each time a person truly believes in Jesus Christ, Satan's power over that person is broken.. And all who are joined to Christ share in His victory over Satan. They raise Christ's banner over their homes and where they live. Their lives of victory and joy say to all evil hosts. "Christ has won the victory!" (2 Timothy 2:3).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Paul 'give thanks' (1:16)?
2. What was his prayer for the Christians?
3. God gave Adam over the things He created?
4. How did Jesus win over Satan?

"He (Jesus Christ) is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the Head of the body, the Church . . . "(Colossians 1:17-18).

WE ALL NEED GOD'S POWER

Satan and his demons spirits 'ruled' the city of Ephesus. Tradesmen and citizens worshipped idols and ate the food offered to them. At their 'feasts' people got drunk and had sex with temple girls (Acts 19:23-34). The Christians needed the Holy Spirit's power to keep them from these sins. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the power to say no!

We can have this power as we let Christ reign in our lives (Romans 5:17).

"This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in Heaven and earth, under Christ as Head" (1:10 TEV).

All government will be put under Christ (1:22). We do not see this happening in our world now, but God is at work to bring it about. God is Spirit and God's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom (John 18:36; Acts 13:41).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Paul pray all the time? What did he want them to know?
2. What might make you stop praying for someone?
3. How can we enjoy this mighty power of God? Can we have it anytime? How should we use it? Why did they need this power in Ephesus?

"And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death -even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord . . . " (Philippians 2:8-11.NRSV).

MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

👉 Ephesians 2:1-3

Before Christ saved them:

- a) They were lost from God - "dead in . . . transgressions and sins" (2:1).
- b) They followed the evil ways of the world (2:3).
- c) They were held by Satan "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (2:2).
- d) They were "by nature objects of (God's) wrath" (John 3:36). In the Judgment 'they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead' (1 Peter 4:5).

The world – your city and my city – is ruled over by Satan. He stops men from seeing the truth. He does this so that he can keep them slaves.

Men who do not trust in Jesus Christ are slaves to their own sinful nature. They cannot change the way they live. All must hear the word of truth and believe the gospel. Jesus Christ is the only One who can change us.

POWER OVER SATAN AND DEMONS

'All of us lived in the world at one time' (2:3). Paul joined himself with them. He, too, had been held fast by 'the cravings of a sinful nature' and lived like all those around him. They blindly follow Satan, the prince of darkness (2:2). They obeyed their evil desires and thoughts (2:3).

The gospel sets Satan's slaves free. He is angry about this and goes around in the earth making trouble (1 Peter 5:8). You won't see him, for he is a spirit, 'ruling over the kingdoms of the air' (2:2).

Satan's demons are very busy working in people's lives. They make people sick and angry and confused. Satan is a cruel master and his kingdom is full of violence and death.

Jesus cast out demons with a word; His apostles did, too. And believers have the same authority to speak God's word against Satan (6:11).

TALK ABOUT

1. What idol goddess did the Ephesians worship?
2. How could the Christians have God's power to win over Satan?
3. How does Satan rule and where (2:2)?
4. How should we stand up to Satan's attacks?

YOU ARE SAVED BY GRACE

👉 Ephesians 2:4-10

"But God, who is rich in mercy . . ." (2:4). It was God's mercy that sent Paul to Ephesus. He- went there to preach the gospel. When men hear the gospel and receive it, the gospel sets them free. Many in Ephesus received Jesus Christ into their hearts.

The gospel comes against the darkness in men's souls. The gospel:

Jesus said to the Pharisees who refused to believe, "You belong to your father the devil" (John 8:44). Those who don't serve God, serve Satan. And he is a very hard master!

Satan reminds Christians of their sins and make them feel badly. When we feel badly, we don't serve the Lord. God calls us to live in the light and to be free in our spirits.

"How can I know that God has forgiven me?" one man asked. God promises: "I will forgive their wickedness and I will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12). God forgets our past and He will help us do the same.

Paul used the Gentiles as a picture of the world outside of Christ. Men who have no faith in God are:

- a) Dark in their minds,
- b) Cut off from the life of God.
- c) Hard in their hearts,
- d) Do not care about the other person - not sensitive,
- e) They give themselves to all kinds of evil.

'You know better!' Paul told the Christians. 'You were not taught like that' (4:20-21). Believers did not learn the ways of the world from Paul or the other apostles. Paul taught them to live pure lives.

PUT OFF THE OLD LIFE AND PUT ON THE NEW

👉 Ephesians 4:22-29

Paul told them to 'put off' or 'put to death' the old ways. God would make their minds new, but they must work together with His Spirit. Put off the evil ways, the old customs of your past religion.

"Be made new in the attitude of your minds . . ." (4:23). They had lived for Satan and the world. It had moulded their minds. Now the Holy Spirit would change their thinking or attitudes.

"Put on the new self, created to be like God . . ." (4:24). God cannot do these things for us; we must want them and do them. We must think godly thoughts and seek God's ways. That is what God created us for.

TALK ABOUT

1. If we are body, soul and spirit, what part of us does God create again (2 Corinthians 5:17)?
2. Who can change our attitudes (4:23)?
3. What sort of 'talk' should Christians be known for (4:29)?
4. How do we grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30)?
5. What happens when we grieve God's Spirit?

THE TONGUE – LAST TO BE TAMED

👉 Ephesians 4:23-29

The tongue is one of the last members in our body to be 'tamed' or brought under the

LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS

☛ Ephesians 4:8-13

Jesus Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings and it is His nature to give royal gifts to His loyal subjects. The “rulers and authorities” in the heavens watch as King Jesus scatters gifts and leads His people in triumph. Christ’s ‘captives’ – millions of born-again spirits – are bound to Him by love, not chains. And He took their hearts with Him when He went back to Heaven. At His death, Christ won the victory and gave victory-gifts to the Church. He gifted men and women to bless and benefit all believers. He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets or teachers (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5), some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers (4:11).

Leaders in a meeting were charged “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (4:12).

All gifts are of equal value in God’s sight and all are to be used in the body. When this is done, it brings a “unity of faith.” This is closely joined to “knowing the Son” and “being filled with Christ.” This cannot happen in a group unless men and women “seek the truth in love” and “walk in the light” with each other (4:15; 1 John 1:7).

GROW UP IN CHRIST

☛ Ephesians 4:14-16

Many false teachers tried to deceive them with teaching. Some of them listened to cunning and crafty men. These false teachers led them away from the truth (1 Timothy 1:6).

Study God’s word and hold to it and you will not be blown around like leaves in the wind.

Speak the truth in love, not to hurt the other person (4:15). “Truth without love is too hard! Love without truth is too soft” (Hale).

All God’s children are under one Head, even Christ. They take their orders from Christ. As they do this they “in all things grow up into Him” (4:15).

The Christian Church is a living, growing body. Each member is joined to the other; each member does his or her part. And there is peace (4:3;16).

LIVING AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

☛ Ephesians 4:17-21 (Philippians 2:1-18, 3:12-21)

‘I insist on this, that you don’t live as the Gentiles do. .You are children of Light, they are children of darkness,’ Paul said (4:17-18). ‘You are children of God, they are children of Satan.’ .

A Unity of Faith . . .

“Until finally we all believe alike about our Saviour, God’s Son, and all become full-grown in the Lord - yes, to the point-of being filled full with Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 TLB)

- a) Brings men and women ‘new life in Christ.’
- b) It ‘raises them up’ out of death.
- c) It seats them with Christ in Heaven (2:5-6).

“By grace you have been saved,” Paul told them (2:8). God did this work, when no one else could. He rescued you from the “dominion of dark -ness” and brought them into the Kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13).

They were “saved, through faith . . .” Two things worked together. God’s grace came toward these sinners. When they heard the truth, faith rose up in their hearts and they believed (Romans 10:10; Hebrews4:2). Then they received all the ‘riches’ of God ‘in Christ Jesus’ (2:7).

NOT BY ANYTHING WE DO

The Ephesian Christians were not saved by anything they did, so that no one could say, ‘Look what I have done!’ (2:8-9). A sinner cannot change himself. Oh, we try hard. We spend money on clothes, diets and pills. We go to all the right places, and say all the right things, but does that change our hearts?

“You are God’s workmanship . . .” The silver idols were man’s work, but these born-again Christians were the work of God. Only God could change them from idol-worshippers to Christ-worshippers. They were born again by God’s Spirit and had their feet on the road to Heaven (John 3:8).

God set a path of ‘good works’ for them to walk on. It is a path of holy living and works of love. Only a Christian can do such works of faith.

No two people have the same path to walk. God knows what each person can do. He makes one path level and another steep. When we find the path He has laid out for us and follow it faithfully, we bring honour to His name (1:12; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 1:11, 2:13).

Walking in God’s way is not a game or fun. It is very serious work. It is the race of life. The Christian life is not for show, it is meant to build character in us.’

TALK ABOUT

1. What can change a man’s heart (John 3:8)?
2. Do your friends know what you are like inside?
3. How can Christians enjoy the victory Jesus won for them on the cross?
4. How can Christians have ‘everything in Christ’ and yet seem to have so little (2 Peter 1:3)?

ONE IN CHRIST

☛ Ephesians 2:11-13

Paul thought of the Gentiles who did not know God: They were:

- a) Far away from God.
- b) Shut out from those God had blessed (Romans 9:4).
- c) Not ‘marked’ (circumcised) as God’s people,

God “raised us up with Christ,” Paul said, “and seated us with Him in heavenly realms . . .” (2:6) God’s mercy had worked to save them. Now He saw His work in these Christians just as if it was finished. God sees the Christian saved, sealed and delivered to Heaven.

- d) Not enjoying God's covenants of promise – the Old or the New Covenant,
- e) Without hope.

All that changed for those who trusted in Jesus Christ! “You who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ,” Paul said. Faith in Jesus Christ brought these Gentiles into God's very family!

God is holy and cannot have sinners come near Him. But the blood of t Jesus had 'covered' their sins and, made them holy in God's sight.

JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PEACE

☛ Ephesians 2:14-18

Jesus Himself is our peace (2:14). Jews and Gentiles were always enemies. Now Christ brought those who believed together as one. He “abolished in His flesh” the law's demands and brought peace to their hearts. The law pointed its finger at them and shouted ‘Death to sinners!’ But Jesus took sin's punishment. He died to satisfy the demands, of the law (Galatians 3:13).

In Christ, many groups were made into “one new man” (2:15). They became one when the “dividing wall of hostility” was broken down. A wall kept Gentiles out of the Temple and the things Jews and Gentiles did not like about each other kept them from being friends.

In Christ all men are equal. When they come together in Christ there is no difference between Jew and Greek, slave or free man, male or female. They are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28).

The Jews kept God's laws. They lived by a calendar of feasts. Other people groups lived for pleasure and gain. So the law divided them.

Now Christians are ‘one body.’ The body is the whole Christian Church. God does not see Jew and Greek and Roman, but a new community of faith. We are fellow citizens (Galatians 3:28).

TALK ABOUT

1. Is it possible to know God (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:12)?
2. Can we know God as Adam did?
3. We cannot know God just by our own minds True False ?
4. How had Gentiles and Jews become one?
5. How can we find and follow the path God has planned for us?

JESUS CAME AND PREACHED PEACE

☛ Ephesians 2:19-22

Jesus came “and preached peace” (Matthew 11:28). He preached peace to the Jews first. When they did not listen, He preached to the Gentiles “who were far away” from God and without any hope (2:12,17; John 1:11).

Paul and others went to Ephesus and preached the gospel to Gentiles. The apostles told the good news about Jesus when there were few believers. They laid the foundation of the New Testament Church.

Being humble is not being weak. Pride leads to a fall (Proverbs 16:18), but a humble heart shows a strong spirit. A humble heart brings unity. Jesus was meek (gentle) and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29). He calls us to be the same.

Christians are to be:

- a) Filled with God's love (4:32).
 - b) Joined in their spirits,
 - c) Making full use of God's gifts (4:11).
 - d) Working together to build God's Kingdom.
- Paul gave seven parts of this unity (4:4-6).

Paul prayed to the Father that:
They will have strong faith,
a) They will know how rich they are in Christ,
b) Christ will 'dwell' in them by His Spirit,
c) Christ's love will be deeply rooted in their hearts,
d) They will grasp how great Christ's love is. f) They will be filled up with all the fullness of God. (3:14-19)

EACH ONE IS JOINED TO THE OTHER

☛ Ephesians 4:4-7

When they first received Christ, these Christians were like infants. Paul said. They were not grown up in their faith and could be easily ‘tossed around’ by false teaching and error (4:14). Growing up means to grow in love, to be humble and seek one purpose. Paul called this “the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3).

We cannot make peace where there is none. God gives peace where His Spirit works in men's hearts (John 14:27). As the Spirit bears ‘fruit’ in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), so we have peace. And our peace touches others and

makes them peaceful, as our stress can make others full of stress.

God has made them ‘one new man’ and ‘one body’ made up of many members or parts. In Christ's body:

- a) Each part is joined to the other (4:16).
- b) Each part needs the other (Romans 12:5 TLB).
- c) Each part does its own work (3:11-13).
- d) Each cares for the other (Galatians 6:2).

“To each of us grace has been given . . . ” (4:7).
Jesus brought God's grace to man (John 1:14). Grace is God reaching out in love to sinners who don't deserve His mercy (Romans 5:8). The Holy Spirit brings God's grace to us. He gives grace “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (4:7 KJV).

TALK ABOUT

1. If we try hard enough we can bring unity (oneness) in our churches True False ?
2. How would you recognize a young Christian?
3. Can we ‘walk worthy’ of our Saviour without the Holy Spirit's help?

GOD'S POWER IN US . . .
“Now glory be to God! By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.” (Ephesians 3:20 NLT)

'We know who we are,' Paul said. We are sons and daughters in the Father's house and part of the "whole family in Heaven and earth." We take our name from the Father in Heaven (3:15; Matthew 6:9).

The Holy Spirit wants to fill our lives. He will 'open our eyes' to these great truths. He wants to root us deeply in God's word, like a great tree roots deeply into rich soil. Only God's Spirit can show us how wide and long and high and deep is God's love and power and it is for us (1:18;3:18).

The Holy Spirit wants to fill us with the 'fullness of God.' He wants to make us like Christ. This will bring glory to the Father (2 Corinthians 3:18). We must be "filled to the measure" with Christ (3:19). The fullness of Christ means to be filled with "every spiritual blessing" (1:3).

HE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE . . .

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" to Him be glory (3:20 KJV). This is a closing prayer, a benediction or blessing which ends Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians.

God is able to do more than Paul or they could ever ask or think, but God must get the glory for it (Isaiah 42:8). He will do this work in these Christians as they keep on coming to Him in prayer (Hebrews 7:25).

TALK ABOUT

1. How do you worship and pray? Do you kneel to pray?
2. Do you feel small and without strength when you come before God?
3. If God can do so much more than we ask or even think, what should we be asking for?
4. What does it mean to be "filled to the measure" with Christ (4:7,13)?
5. Paul says God must fill every believer True False ?

ONENESS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

☛ Ephesians 4:1-3 (Colossians 3:12-17)

In the first three chapters, Paul wrote about God's plan. He said God was building His Church and making men and women into new creations so that they could live with Him in Heaven.

In the last three chapters of Ephesians, Paul tells us how God's sons and daughters should live. When these Christians said, 'Yes, we will follow Christ,' they agreed to a new way of life – a calling – something you do every day! Our new life in Christ is like a life's work or vocation.

"I urge you to live a life worthy (or walk worthy) of the calling you have received," Paul said (4:1). When God called us and we answered His call, we entered a 'calling.' Our job is to 'walk worthy of the calling God has given . . . ' (4:1).

To 'walk worthy' means to live our lives to honour God. We do this as we love and forgive and help others. We do this when we live out the gospel message. Our witness is clear when we are humble and gentle, patient and loving, bearing one another's burdens (4:2; Galatians 6:2).

In Christ, men are reconciled to God and to each other. Jesus took away the 'wall' between God and man and made peace. As each one is at peace with God, so he can be at peace with his neighbour (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

We carry the same message of peace. The United Nations may try to bring peace to war-torn countries where there is hatred between people groups, but peace must come first in men's hearts. Only Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, can give true peace in troubled hearts (Isaiah 9:6).

STONES IN GOD'S HOUSE

God was then and still is building a special 'house' to live in. The Christians at Ephesus were 'living stones' and God was setting them in place in His house (1 Peter 2:5). They were being built around the chief cornerstone. Jesus Christ, and on the foundation the apostles and prophets had laid (2:20-21).

As you read this, Christ is building His Church. He is adding to it men and women from every nation, tribe and tongue (Revelations 5:9). They are being "built up into a house" in which God dwells (2:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16). God's house is the invisible Church on earth and the saints who have gone on before us.

When Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:15-16).

Jesus answered, "You are Peter, and on this Rock I will build My Church . . ." The 'Rock' or foundation was Christ! (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus did not build His Church on weak and wavering Peter, but on the great truth Peter spoke that day - on Peter's confession of the Son of God, his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why do we still have wars in the world?
2. Isaiah there any way to stop people fighting?
3. Why don't more people help their neighbours?
4. Who is called 'the chief cornerstone'?
5. What did Jesus say to Peter (Matthew 16:16)?
6. Would Jesus build His Church on Peter?
7. What would He build His Church on?
8. Would Satan be able to destroy Christ's Church (Matthew 16:18)?

PAUL WENT TO THE GENTILES

☛ Ephesians 3:1-9; 2:12-18

'I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ . . . ' Paul wrote (3:1). Paul suffered greatly to take Christ's gospel to the Gentiles. Now he was a prisoner because he preached Jesus Christ and the resurrection.

Men put Paul on a ship and sent him to Rome. In Rome he was put on trial and later killed. Christians at Ephesus knew "this, but in other churches they did not know what had happened to him (3:2).

Paul shared with them how God revealed to him 'the mystery of the Gentiles' (3:3). God's Spirit showed Paul that believing Jews and Gentiles would be joined in one body, the Christian Church.

In ages past the truth of the Gospel Church was hidden with God (3:9):

1. That all peoples -Jews and Gentiles must receive God's blessings through Christ.
2. In the Church they would be joined and be members of one body (3:6; Galatians 3:24).
3. Christ would be Head of His Church.
4. God would gather all things under Christ's rule (1:22).
5. This was God's plan for creation (2:18; Romans 8:21).

Most people think of the Christian Church as buildings and the people who worship in them. They do not discern "the Lord's body."

Satan is angry and attacks Christ's followers. More Christians have died for Christ in the last 100 years than in all the centuries before. So the Church "fills up the sufferings of Christ." So Paul could say to the Christians, "do not be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory" (3:13).

GOD SHOWS HIS WISDOM

☛ Ephesians 3:10-13

Suffering is the Church's glory. This, too, is part of the mystery, "the manifold wisdom of God" (3:10). God told Paul that he would suffer for the sake of Christ and His gospel (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17).

God also showed the mystery of the Christian Church to the "rulers and authorities in the heavens" (3:10). The Christian Church is God's witness to Heaven and Hell. Satan's demons know that Christ's saving gospel, preached on earth, is also their judgment (1:22-23).

1. Christ is the Head of His Church and the foundation of it (1:22; 4:15; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11). When Peter and the other apostles preached the gospel, people left their old ways and followed Christ. They were 'added to the Church' (Acts 2:47). Christ added them to His Church, not Peter. They were born again by His Spirit. No man can add a person to the true Church and no man can put a person out of the true Church. Christ, Himself, is the master builder of His Church (Hebrews 3:3). Without Christ, there can be no Church.

2. The Rock was Christ. He was the "Rock" that went with Israel through the desert (1 Corinthians 10:4).

3. The words of Christ are "living and active . . ." (Hebrews 4:12). They will beat down "the gates of Hell" and rescue lost men. "The gates of Hell" speak of Satan's authority (Matthew 16:18). His authority was broken when Christ died on the cross. Christ's authority, not Peter's, is greater than Satan's (Colossians 2:15). Jesus said to John, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelations 1:18).

4. "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven . . ." Jesus said. He spoke these words to His disciples. He gave them, and us, His authority to preach the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:18-19). He gave us His authority over all the powers of Hell (Luke 9:1). When the gospel is preached it opens Heaven's door to men and women and they enter God's Kingdom (Colossians 1:13). The gospel must be preached with the Spirit's power, and in the Name of Jesus (Luke 24:49).

Paul was not boasting about the things God had shown him. He was simply telling what God has done for him. He had studied the Law of Moses all his life, but he had missed God's plan. Now God's eternal purposes were revealed to him "by the Spirit" (3:11).

Only 'in Christ' can man approach a holy God. Because Christ forgives all our sins, we can come to the Father "with freedom and confidence" (3:12; Hebrews 4:16).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did God include Gentiles in His plan?
2. Was Paul suffering for the Christians at Ephesus?
3. What was God's special gift to Paul (3:2,7)?
4. What did God reveal to the apostles (Acts 14:27)?

PAUL SAID, "I AM

NOTHING"

"I consider my life as nothing," Paul said, "that I may finish my course and complete the task . . ." (Acts 20:22). He wanted to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to the very last Gentile because the gospel is "the power of God" to change this heathen world. It changed Paul's world and it can change our world (Romans 1:16).

God changes men and brings them into His body, the Church. Then He trusts them with the gospel. He gives them spiritual gifts that build the body in unity and strength. He has no other organization on this earth to carry on the business of His Kingdom (Luke 16:1-2).

Men who received Christ went everywhere speaking for their Lord (Acts 8:1,4). To prove the power of the gospel, Paul told how he was saved, and of God's grace that kept him going (3:7).

TALK ABOUT

1. Do you know the Holy Spirit's fullness in your life? Do others see Christ in you? Or do you feel weak in your mind and body?

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

☛ Ephesians 3:14-21

"For this reason I kneel before the Father . . ." Paul worshipped and prayed for the Christians in Ephesus. He knelt on the hard stone floor. God had worked mightily in their lives. This made Paul feel humble. Their city had been shaken by the gospel, but God had more for them! Paul wanted these Christians – and all Christians – to live as true sons of God!

We fellowship in Christ's sufferings (Phi 1:29; 1 Peter 2:21).
a) If we resist the devil and evil we will suffer (1 Peter 5:9).
b) The Apostles resisted Satan and suffered (Act 5:41; 9:16).
c) They suffered for the sake of the gospel and Christ (2 Timothy 1:8, 20).
d) God's servants suffer for the Kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:5).