

EPHESIANS



A Manual for Discipleship

Len Rossow
City Link Resouce Centre
Email: len@citylinkgc.com.au

SESSION 1: THE INCREDIBLE FAVOUR OF GOD

Ephesians sums up the leading themes of Paul's writings. It contains the thought of the earlier letters taken to a deeper level. **Ephesians was written from prison in approx..60AD.**

Paul speaks of himself as an ambassador in chains (6:20) and a prisoner for the Lord (4:1) within the letter.

Scholars suggest that the letter was written to circulate through the towns of the Lychnus Valley.

Ephesians has close affinity with Colossians, where Christ is portrayed as Lord over the Cosmos. Ephesians explores the church's relationship:

- To Christ as Lord over all
- To the eternal purposes of God
- To the principalities and powers

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor, (modern day Turkey). Largely a commercial centre at the intersection of major trade routes, it boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana. (Greek – Artemis; Acts 19:23-31) - Diana was the goddess of hunting - Queen of Heaven - moon goddess.

STRUCTURE: Ephesians falls into 2 sections:

1. Ephesians 1:3 – 3:21 – Encouraging Gentile Christians to appreciate the wonder and the power of their calling.
2. Ephesians 4:1 – 6:20 – Practical teaching on living a life worthy of their calling.

OUTLINE

- The incredible favour of God – Ephesians 1:3 – 1:23
- God's awesome purpose – The great mystery revealed – Ephesians 2 & 3
- On being Church – Radical discipleship for the 21st Century
 - as imitators of Christ – Ephesians 4:1 – 5:20
 - On submission – Practical living in everyday relationships – Eph. 5:21 – 6:9
 - Standing firm in the battle ... Spiritual Warfare – Ephesians 6:10-20

In view of the spiritual blessings with which God has enriched believers, and the deliverance, which He has provided, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to maintain their new standing in Christ by living out their reconciliation by loving one another, and by resisting demonic attacks in accordance with God's provision.

In reading any of Paul's letters it is worth pausing and breaking up the section into the separate ideas, concepts etc. to consider each idea in depth. This is what has been done through these study notes

PAUL'S PRAYER – EPHESIANS 1:15-23 - Paul's prayer is earnest, intelligent & specific.

Paul prays specifically in a way that would meet the heart cry of disciples of Jesus in any age, (Eph. 1:15-23 and 3:14-21) .. the heart cry outlined below:

Hunger for

- Deeper intimacy with God
- A greater power over sinful behavior patterns and attitudes
- A more joyful, exuberant and loving spirit

Remember these prayers themselves are part of the larger context of Ephesians in which THE WHOLE of Paul's teaching meets this heart-cry.

(note vs.17 - "***I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father...***")

This demonstrates:

- Ongoing intercession
- Trust in the character of God as Father of Glory – the source of true glory, true character.

THE ACTUAL REQUEST:

In his prayer, Paul is putting forward a pathway to intimacy.

*That He may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you would **know Him better.***

Paul is praying for a greater and more intimate knowledge of God's character and His ways through the Impartation of heavenly wisdom and revelation by the Holy Spirit.

(see also John 14: 26 & 16:12-15; Isaiah 11:2)

The revelation that Paul has outlined in verses 3-14 is surely part of what he is praying will be imparted to them. Paul goes on to pray very specifically about this wisdom and revelation –*That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.* To be able to see the eyes of the heart must be opened in 3 areas.

NB: The 'heart' refers to the inner being – including will and emotions

That they may know:

1. ***The hope to which He has called them.***
2. ***The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.***
3. ***His incomparable great power for us who believe.***

These are the keys that will open up:

- Deeper intimacy with God
- A more powerful and effective Christian witness

We will explore now each of these 3 in detail to catch the power behind this prayer.

THE HOPE TO WHICH HE HAS CALLED US

Hope in the New Testament has a far stronger meaning than wishful thinking. It carries the idea of certainty – something that is absolutely sure.

Paul outlines this hope in detail in Ephesians 1:3-14.

- This section is one long sentence in the Greek
- Paul joyously and excitably moves from one concept to another - gift after gift, blessing after blessing, wonder after wonder.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST – OUR POSSESSION AND INHERITANCE

These blessings as listed are:

1. **Chosen** ... deliberately, purposefully, in eternity, before the creation of the world.
Chosen to be holy and blameless in His sight.
(ie. Before Him, in His presence, according to His standard.) ... in love. vs 4
2. **Marked out beforehand** (Predestined) – for adoption as sons & daughters vs 5-6
3. **Redemption through his blood** – forgiveness. vs 7-8
4. **Insight into his ultimate eternal purpose** – *the reconciliation of all things under Christ.* vs 9-10
5. **Chosen to be heirs** – to be for the praise of His glory. vs 11-12
6. **Marked with a special seal** – a tangible guarantee of our inheritance. Vs 13-14

The language Paul uses is loaded with meaning:

IN CHRIST: These blessings are only possible in our UNION with Christ.

'In Christ' refers to our new status – a new humanity.

No longer 'in Adam' under death, but 'in Christ' **in the realm of grace and life.** (Rom 5:17)

EVERY – every conceivable spiritual blessing is ours through Christ Jesus.

SPIRITUAL – i.e. originating in God and flowing to us / imparted by the Holy Spirit.

IN THE HEAVENLIES : is used by Paul 5 times in Ephesians – 1:3, 1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12

These are not blessings that relate to the material world, as was the case under the old covenant, (Deut 28.) Rather, they relate to the Spiritual realm. They belong to & flow from the heavenlies as a result of Christ's death, resurrection & enthronement at God's right hand.

What are the specific blessings that make up this Hope?

1. **CHOSEN IN HIM** - *To be holy and without blame - in love*
 - **God had a detailed plan in place before the creation** – a plan which expressed His love and mercy.

- **A choice enacted in grace.**

The idea here is that God determined that there would be a people 'in Christ' before the creation but we are only chosen because we are 'in Him.' We however choose whether or not we will be included. *Chosen in Christ to be*

Alternatively – **God chose us individually** before the foundation of the world. Chose us to be 'in Christ.' Chose you and me to be recipients of the blessings.

- **God's choice has purpose.**

The purpose is that believers might be holy and blameless before Him, in an environment shaped and ruled by love. (*In love*' can either be read to be part of vs. 4 or the introduction to vs. 5.)

- a. **HOLY** – Not just that we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, but that we would be conformed to be like Him. Transformed by the mighty power of God at work in us. (vs.19) We are called to live a consecrated life. **We are the 'hagiois' – the set apart ones.** Our life style now is to reflect His holiness. In Christ we have been chosen for this – now and always. (Jude 24)
- b. **WITHOUT BLEMISH** – Conveys the idea of sacrifice. An animal was to be inspected before being accepted for sacrifice. Involves a wholehearted devotion. Note Romans 12:1-2 – Paul urges us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice – no longer conformed to the values and ways of the world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. This involves deliberate choice on our part.

God has purposed in His heart from the beginning to have a holy people who will be to the praise of His glory.

We have an Awesome Destiny: We are chosen to bear the likeness of our Father – (holy and blameless, in love) **Our destiny is to be holy as our Father is holy** our Father is love (1 John 4:8). **We are predestined to be like our Father.** (1 Peter 1:15-16)

This is to the praise of the glory of God's grace. .. Our transformation is empowered by His mercy and grace

But wait there's more -

2. **WE ARE PREDESTINED FOR ADOPTION** – The Greek here means to mark out beforehand – to set out the bounds in advance. This is not a case of some being predestined for salvation, while others are damned. Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all. (1 Tim 2:3,4 & 6)

This plan of adoption flows from His love and is **ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PLEASURE AND WILL:** This phrase emphasizes God's delight in planning and acting this way, and a reminder of His Sovereignty.

SUMMING UP THUS FAR:

- We were chosen before the foundation of the world;

- We were predestined for adoption as sons and daughters. Predestined to be an expression of holiness and love, not according to what we have done, nor according to our race, nor our religious background, nor our status or wealth but according to the good pleasure of God's will.

We don't ever have to give in to the lie that we are not connected to an awesome purpose.

For God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves...

This plan and its enactment is a glorious expression of His grace – a free gift to those once separated from Him by sin.

ADOPTION:

In Roman law, there was an adoption ceremony where the son being adopted was received by his new 'father.' All rights and obligations from the old family were wiped out – all rights/privileges/ obligations of the new family became his. Adoption into God's family means that:

- We are no longer under a sentence of death,
- nor subject to the power of sin.
- Rather we are under the ethos of Grace;
- A co-worker with God;
- A joint heir with Christ.

There is an inheritance that awaits us (1 Peter 1:3-4.) This adoption comes as an act of grace – a free gift through the agency of Jesus Christ – the beloved One

3. REDEEMED (vs7-9)

The word '**redemption**' appears three times in Ephesians, and it means to set free by the payment of a ransom. The ransom price, in this case, is the blood of Jesus Christ. The penalty for sin is death (Gen 2:17)(Rom 6:23). Only a substitute life without blemish will meet the requirement of the law of God for righteousness. The Son of Man, THE LAMB OF GOD without blemish, gave His life as a 'ransom' (Matt 20:28). Now all who trust in Him are assured of release from the power and penalty of sin.

The blood of Christ – His sacrificial death on our behalf is the means by which freedom from guilt, shame and sin's oppressive power and darkness has been won. This redemption highlighted by forgiveness is an expression of God's abundant mercy poured out lavishly upon us.

Note: Redemption is a present fact: we have redemption.

Redemption has already been imparted in abundant measure but needs to be appropriated as the prayer of Ephesians 1:17 implies.

God displayed His wisdom and power in creation, but only in the death of His Son do we see the full extent of the riches of His Grace ...In the cross we see His great compassion for sinners and the victory over sin and death that leads now to transformed lives.

When God forgives a sinner He actually remits the sin and removes the guilt. **He sets aside absolutely and eternally, by judicial decree, all condemnation and guilt.** Jesus' atoning sacrifice covers all sin and by it the believing sinner is pardoned forever. **It is finished** – full atonement has been made. However we must still confess our sin and turn from it to appropriate this great gift. (1John1: 7-2:2)

This forgiveness is – **“according to the riches of His grace”** (1:7). As we grasp the depth and degradation of our sin we begin to appreciate the vast extent of God's mercy expressed in His forgiveness. **“Riches”** suggests abundant wealth. He has grace enough for every sinner and then some to spare.

CONCLUSION – God, in Christ, has chosen us and predetermined the character of the new life, (ie Holy and without blame) and has freed us by the blood of Christ. We can say with Paul, *Blessed be God... who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing... in Christ.*

4. RECONCILIATION (vs 9 -10)

⁹ *He made known to us the **mystery** of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,* ¹⁰ *to be put into effect **when the times reach their fulfilment**—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.* (NIV)

- **Mystery** – In the NT this refers to something kept secret in the purpose of God, but now has been disclosed. Not only is there a lavish outpouring of mercy in redemption and forgiveness, but also a lavish outpouring of wisdom and understanding giving insight into God's eternal purpose.
- **‘Where is creation headed?’** It was ‘in Christ’ that God chose His people to be adopted as members of His family. It is also ‘in Christ’ that He will bring all creation, now fragmented & distorted, **together in full restoration.** (See Colossians 1:15-20)

The mystery is that all things are to be summed up in Christ.

*The Greek word used here is translated by the NIV as **bringing unity ... under Christ***

The overall idea is that all things in heaven and on earth are to be brought together in Christ.

It is a difficult word to translate into English because it has 3 aspects. It carries the concept of *summing up.* *Sum up all things in Christ.*

- The sum of a column of figures; the total. When we **“add up”** all God's actions in the cause of salvation, the **“total”** is Christ.
- A summary, or bringing together.. **God's saving acts can be summarized in a word: Christ.**
- Greeks used this word to mean a chapter heading. **If we want to put a title over the story of divine redemption, that chapter heading will be “Christ.”**

This bringing together of all things under Christ awaits the moment when **‘the times reach their fulfilment.’ It is planned. It is unfolding** in distinctive and successive stages. It will surely be so, for this is God's ultimate redemptive purpose. Just as in Ephesians 3:9,

Jew and Gentile are brought together in Christ, so mutually hostile elements in the creation will be brought together under Christ.

God has particularly privileged us in unveiling this. This is His master plan towards which all history moves. Throughout the ages God has been redeeming and working through history to bring about this day. **In Christ, everything finds its meaning and purpose. We now know where history is headed – we are being invited to play our part in living out this great reconciliation.**

- The “revealing “of it was the work of the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5.)
- The “proclaiming “of it is the work of the church (Eph. 3:5-8; Matt 28:18-20.)

Ephesians 1:11-12

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (ESV)

5. OUR PLACE IN THIS PLAN:

- **CHOSEN FOR AN INHERITANCE – HEIRS** In Him we become heirs – chosen for adoption into His family. Christians share with Christ in His glory
- **AS A WITNESS – FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY**
Our place in this grand outworking of history **is to be living illustrations of the power and abundance of God's lavish grace releasing praise, thanksgiving, and the bringing of honor to Him.** (See Ephesians 3:10)

Verse 13 - We have:

- **Heard the gospel.** (Romans 10:17) – The word of Truth
- **Believed / trusted.**
- Have now **Been “Sealed” with the Holy Spirit** of promise (Acts 2:38; Lk 24:49.)

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A SEAL and AS A DEPOSIT

- **“Seal” designates ownership. We belong to God. We are stamped as His.** (John 10:14; Rom 8:9) and it **implies protection.** (1 Pet 1:3-5.)

“who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:14

- **Deposit** = down payment, guarantee. This is a word from the world of commerce denoting a pledge made to the seller until the purchase price be paid in full. (2 Corinthians 5:5)

This pledge (the Holy Spirit) gives assurance to believers that the promise in the gospel is well founded – a reality and not an illusion. It is our guarantee of a finished transaction, a full redemption of spirit, soul and body. The Spirit, Himself, empowers our transformation.

Guaranteeing our inheritance until the day of redemption.

The redemption is already ours through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it awaits its fullness when God will redeem His own possession by raising us from the dead. (Romans 8:11; 23; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22.)

Our sealing with the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of His commitment to do so, to the final end that God be praised and glorified.

The exact phrase in the Greek is *"the redemption of the purchased possession"* (1:14.)

CONCLUSION:

The Holy Spirit **has revealed** the ultimate purpose of God (past); **is a seal** and pledge regarding our redemption (present); and will act in our resurrection from the dead. (future)

Through the Holy Spirit we begin to taste the life of the future now.

All this is yet again to the praise of His Glory (Vs 14)

.....

REVISION – DISCUSSION - PRAYER

1. Consider Paul's Prayer: In order for the Ephesians to know God better ...what does he continually ask for?
2. He prays that the eyes of their hearts would be opened to 3 key aspects of that wisdom & revelation. What are they?
 -
 -
 -
3. What is the hope to which He has called us?
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
4. Do any of these mean more to you than any of the others - Why?
5. Are there any of these that you would like to grasp at a deeper heart level?
6. Pray for one another using this prayer as the basis.

Home Activation:

1. Meditate this week on what it means for you to be marked out as His Son
2. Consider the phrase *We have redemption.*

Is there any area in your life where you need to experience His redeeming power?

▪

Share this with someone you trust who can stand in faith with you for freedom!

SESSION 2: GOD'S AWESOME GRACE**PAUL'S PRAYER (Ephesians 1:15-23)**

Having explored the awesome hope we have in Christ as outlined in Ephesians 1: 3-14 we move on in Paul's prayer to where he intercedes for the eyes of the heart to know ***"the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints."***

THE RICHES OF HIS GLORIOUS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

Paul is praying that the Ephesians might:

- **Know the value that God places on them** – we are His treasured possession – His portion. (Note the Old Testament precedent at Deut 9:29 & 32:8-9; & Mal 3:17.) *"For the Lord's portion is his people Jacob, his allotted heritage." Israel is his special treasure – a people of his own possession.* (Ex 19:4-5)
- **Value what they mean to Him.** Though unworthy we are redeemed through the precious blood of the lamb (1 Pet 1:18-21.)
- **Accept, in grateful humility, the grace lavished upon them** and appropriate the fullness of the spiritual blessings available in Christ.

Paul prays that we might know how much we mean to God, and how valuable we are in His sight, as the end result and goal of His work in salvation history." Only as we are *in Christ* are we God's inheritance and the reason He made us his portion is that we should be for the praise of His Glory.

HIS INCOMPARABLY GREAT POWER TOWARD US WHO BELIEVE

Paul's language here emphasizes the magnificence of God's power.

- No power is equal to it – no bondage able to stand.
- **Toward us who believe** – (Greek - **into us**)
- How vast is the spiritual strength actually available **into** us in Christ.

Consider Paul's use of the word "power" in Ephesians.

- 1:19 **The power behind the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus** – every other power is inferior.
- 3:7 Power that gives Paul his **sense of call** and **insight into God's heart** and purpose.
- 3:16 **Power to make positive choices** – a strengthening of inner being.
- 3:18 **Power to grasp** the incredible magnitude of **the love of God for us.**
- 3:20 **The Power** at work in us that enables us **to achieve immeasurably more** that we could ask or even imagine. It is able to take us beyond our limitations.

If such power is really there why do we continue to struggle? Why are we so weak willed, so bound in our insecurities and limited? **Why don't we experience it more?**

This is why Paul is interceding for the Ephesians. **It has to be appropriated.** It has to be known. We haven't realized it's available. We've never bothered to attempt to access it. We've never learnt to draw upon it. Rather we've trusted our own resources.

E.g. A back account ... ACCESS through an automatic teller.

Sometimes our card is rejected. Invalid operation. At times our motivation is self-serving.
(James 4:2-4.)

This power:

- Raised Jesus from the dead.
- Seated Christ in a place of absolute authority, far above the principalities and powers and every title that can be given – in this age and the next.

This is the power at work in us energizing– transforming. We have at our disposal as a gift, the inexhaustible strength of God. How can we fail, with Him as our head and such power at our disposal?

UNIVERSAL LORDSHIP OF CHRIST – vs. 22-23

The subjection of all things under the feet of Christ is a quotation from Psalm 8:6. In **1 Corinthians 15:24-28** the words of Psalm 8:6 are linked with Psalm 110:1. “Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies my footstool.” The enemies are the principalities and powers.

Christ exercises universal Lordship. In particular He has been given as Head over the church – i.e. **the source of the church's life** is its Lord.

As the church exalts and knows Him as head, it enables His fullness to flow to the church and out into the world. All the resources needed to fill all things are available to the church.–**Love and strength, wisdom and might, revelation and inspiration.** ... this incomparably great power.

As the “fullness” of Christ, we (the church) share in the all-sufficient Christ who fills all things. Christ is the fullness of Deity (Col 2:9); we (the church) are the fullness of Christ.

The church as the fullness of Christ is the fulfilment of His saving work – when linked in union with our head we share in all the benefits that God has brought through Him.

Isaiah 11:9-10

*They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, **for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.** In that day the **Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.***

GOD'S AWESOME GRACE ... HOPE FOR THE GENTILES

1) THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD – EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature^[1] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath

A) OUR FORMER STATE – SEPARATION FROM GOD

*“You **being dead** in your transgressions and sins.”*

- Transgressions – *falling aside*
- Sins – *missing the mark.*

In these you formerly walked these things characterized you.

In Ephesians Paul speaks of spiritual death. The unsaved may be physically and mentally alive to all of the pleasures of this world but dead spiritually to God.

“We cannot live a life for God until we receive life from God.”

In physical death, the function of the body ceases; in spiritual death there is no function of our spirit toward God. Many are dead towards God. There is a state of intense physical activity, but until we pass from death to life (John 5:24), we remain alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18).ⁱ

Three opposing forces of evil are responsible for holding humanity in the state of spiritual death:

- **The ‘aeon’ of this world.** This present evil age (Gal 1:4) as opposed to the age to come. The culture of the world around us.
- **The ruler of the Kingdom of the air** – Satan, who operates in the disobedient – prompting further their rebellion against the authority of God
- **Our sin-controlled natures** heavily influenced by the world age and the devil cause us to follow our sensual appetites – our ‘natural’ thoughts and desires, without any other reference point. (Note the work of the flesh – Gal 5:19-20) Includes pride and self-seeking.

As a result, not only were we cut off from God, but, we were *‘by nature children of wrath.’* I.e. As part of humanity we were under the judgment and condemnation that flows from God's opposition to sin. Our position was hopeless – condemned to futility and death.

B) GOD'S ACTION ON OUR BEHALF: **BUT GOD... BEING RICH IN MERCY**

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

It is by grace you have been saved.

GOD HAS INTERVENED!

GOD ..WHO IS RICH IN MERCY – This is His character (Psalm 103:8)

Consider a Holy God – just and true in all His ways, who hates sin. Consider we were separated from Him in rebellion, under condemnation, living in a way that violated, distorted and destroyed his creation –ie In a way that is totally contrary to His nature. And wonder of wonders – He acts towards us in mercy (2 Corinthians 1:3; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 1:3.)

WHY? BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE ...

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

C) GOD'S GRACE: MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST

God's grace has worked a stunning transformation. A Biblical understanding of **Grace** is the following definition – **God's empowering presence that enables us to be all that we were meant to be and empowers us to do all we were meant to do.**

God's grace empowers a transformation that we are incapable of
PRODUCING OURSELVES – religious activity does not produce salvation.

We were spiritually dead but now are spiritually connected to the One who is Life. The believer passes through the same experience spiritually that the Lord Jesus did physically.

- We were crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20; Rom 6:6)
- We were dead with Christ (Rom 6:8)
- We were buried with Him (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12)
- **We have been made alive with Him**

The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us giving us new life. This is the gift of salvation – this new life is a quickening of our spirit towards God and the beginning of eternal, ever expanding life. We are now in a new position in relationship to both God and the world. We are a new creation with a new inner power.

RAISED UP WITH CHRIST

Raised up with Christ speaks of the breaking of the bondages of the law and sin. We are called on, as our part, to reckon ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God. (Rom 6:11.) God's grace empowers this reckoning. We have been raised to live in a new way.

SEATED WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLIES IN CHRIST

We are in a new position relative to the principalities and powers.

- A place of authority in Christ.
- No longer under their control/ bondage.

This position flows from our identification in Christ in His Ascension.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

All this is leading to a glorious future (an end-goal) wherein He will display the incomparably great scope of His kindness towards us. Through all eternity, He will display His glory and grace in those whom He has redeemed. **Look at what the mercy / love / the grace of God can do.** Angels and demons will see that God has triumphed through His son (Ephesians 3:10.)

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--* ⁹*not by works, so that no one can boast.* ¹⁰**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

God's empowering grace leads to salvation. **Saved from wrath**, condemnation and cut off forever from a Holy God. – **Saved from the bondage of sin.**

Saved for the display of God's glory. Saved for inheritance as fellow heirs of Christ. This grace, this salvation, is appropriated by faith and even that is not of ourselves but is God's gift – so no-one can boast!

Through His grace as a new creation in Christ **we become God's work of artistic splendour.** This is displayed through our actions that flow from this enabling relationship with Him. These actions reflect His character and ways and point to the power of His saving grace.

These works are not our path to salvation but are evidence of its reality in our lives. From start to finish this is a work of God in us not our own attempt at meeting His standard.

2) HOPE FOR THE GENTILES ... THE WONDER OF RECONCILIATION**Ephesians 2:11-22****a) ONCE FAR OFF – NOW BROUGHT NEAR**

Gentiles were:

- Separate from Christ – no types or symbols, no prophecies or expectation of the coming work of the Messiah (1 Corinthians 10:11.)
- Excluded from citizenship in Israel – not part of the people for God's own possession.
- Foreigners to the covenants of promise.
- Without hope.
- Without God in the world.

BUT NOW (Vs. 13) – Brought near through the sacrificial death of Christ. Again God has intervened. Not only is there redemption through the blood but also there is reconciliation. The basis of this reconciliation is being 'in Christ.'

'He himself is our Peace' – reconciling people to God and to one another. He brings us into a new unity. The old distinctions – Jew and Gentile no longer hold.

The barriers of *circumcision* (Galatians 6:15); *ceremonial food laws* (Romans 14:5-12); These promoted the Jewish sense of separateness and superiority.

It is not the law as a revelation of the character and will of God that has been done away with in Christ, but rather the law as a written code, bringing condemnation and death rather than imparting life.

Now the basis of right standing with God is not found in the keeping of the law with all its regulations, but rather by faith in what God has done in Christ. Thus there is no need for the separateness that once marked the division between Jew and Gentile. The new creation does not make a Gentile into a Jew or visa versa – **There is one new man.**

The believing Gentile has received every spiritual privilege that Israel enjoyed –They are fellow citizens with God's people; members of God's household. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant and only through Him can there be access to the Father.

b) THE CROSS ... THE INSTRUMENT FOR PEACE

At the cross:

- Jew and Gentile were condemned as sinners.
- There is forgiveness/ redemption.
- There is reconciliation with God and with each other.

At the cross every enmity is overcome and every provision is made for redemption and reconciliation.

c) THE PICTURE OF THE NEW TEMPLE

Christ – **the cornerstone** - holds together the foundation and superstructure.
Apostles and Prophets – **the foundation** – the base on which the building rises.
Built together into a dwelling place for God. **Note the corporate focus.**

JESUS - THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE



Our thinking and practical living needs to line up with Him Think of some examples that are relevant to who you are and what you are involved with in life. Now think about this in the context of your local church.

Apostles represent the authority of the primary witness to Jesus – His person, character and teaching. Prophets represent the living guidance of the Spirit by which these are applied in the life of the Christian community

In what ways can you see the local churches of the city living out this alignment to the cornerstone as they come together as living stones?

REVISION – DISCUSSION - ACTIVATION

1. What is meant by His glorious inheritance in the Saints?
2. What power is available to us who believe and how do we access this power?

For Reflection and Discussion:

Focus on Ephesians 2: 21 -22

Picture / consider how the whole building is joined together in Him.

We are used to thinking of ourselves, individually, as being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). Apply this now; first to your local church ...*living stones joined together.*

**What does this picture tell us about how we are to value one another in the body?
Are there any other implications you see?**

Now apply this picture to your local church being joined to other churches in the city *to become a holy temple in the city ... a dwelling place in which God lives*

Activation:

- Pray for release of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation over the group.
- Seek Him for words of knowledge / pray blessing over one another to release His redeeming Power and / or deepen intimacy with Him.

SESSION 3: THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY – THE UNITY OF THE BODY

Ephesians 3:1-9

1. **PAULS ROLE:** Paul is a prisoner. He has by God's call – a special responsibility of preaching to the Gentiles. He became a servant of the gospel by the gift of God's grace. His preaching is of no human innovation or invention.

“My insight into the mystery of Christ”

This **mystery** – **Paul's particular revelation** - was not revealed to the prophets and patriarchs of earlier times (Col 1:25-27; Rom 16:25-27.) In the Old testament the Gentiles certainly were to be included as God's people – Gen 12:3; Isa 11:10, 19:23-25.

But **Paul's insight** – revealed by the Spirit – indeed endorsed by others, is that **this blessing of the Gentiles involves the removal of the barrier that marked them off from the Jews and involved their incorporation into Christ on the same basis as Jewish believers** (by grace through faith.)

The key tenet of this mystery is that Jew and Gentile together form His body. A new community of God's chosen people is being raised up as heirs to all that was promised.

Paul's preaching stirred up the Jews on the following grounds:

- Proclamation of Jesus as Messiah.
- Salvation by grace through faith apart from the law.
- Gentiles incorporated by faith on an equal footing with Jewish believers.

‘Administration of this mystery’ – The Greek here literally means management / stewardship (of a household.) The household of God must be managed according to a particular plan. Paul is a steward with a sacred trust.

Paul undertakes his task with a strong awareness that God is his source, bringing Christ to the Gentiles is his mission, and faithfulness is the key responsibility.

Paul undertakes his task with a passion – *‘surely you have heard...’*

‘Mystery’ – God alone must reveal it – until then it is ‘hidden in Him.’

Paul's task is to make plain (Greek – *‘to illuminate’*) to everyone the *mystery of Christ* – to impart this revelation. His God-given task is *to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ* – for this, he has been empowered by God.

Mystery of Christ. It is centered on the person and work of the crucified, risen and ascended Lord.

2. **PAUL'S CALL... This is a model for understanding our own call.**

As we consider Paul's ministry outlined here, we catch a glimpse of the ways of God in his call. We see something of the way God empowers disciples of Jesus Christ and we are given insight into the nature of the gospel itself. We see too the humility, passion and concern to be faithful, that marks a servant of Jesus Christ.

The key for Paul is the effective working of God's power.

- A persecutor of the church transformed to be an ambassador of the Kingdom.
- From arrogant self righteous Pharisee to one who is *less than the least* (Eph. 3:8)

3. GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE Ephesians 3:10-12

¹⁰*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,* ¹¹*according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.* ¹²*In Him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

NOW – in these days in contrast to ages past.

Before all ages, God's undisclosed purpose had existed in His own mind, but now it's fulfillment is evident not only to human beings on earth but also to the principalities and powers. **The church serves as an object lesson of the multifaceted wisdom of God** - a lesson observed by all creation including the principalities and powers.

God's eternal purpose of cosmic reconciliation under Christ is in view. The church, composed of both Jew and Gentile is living testimony to the power and reality of this reconciliation. **This renewed people have the task of displacing the principalities and powers as they fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God.**

4. PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO HIS IMPRISONMENT Ephesians 3:13

His readers are not to be discouraged on his account. Rather Paul understands his imprisonment as part of the discharge of his stewardship of the *mystery*. An imprisonment, which in the providence of God, will bring advancement to Paul's readers.

THE COMPLETION OF PAUL'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER - EPHESIANS 3:14-21

This prayer flows out of the revelation of God as Father – all other fatherhood in the universe is derived from Him.

1. **He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being** – abounding endowment of spiritual strength – inexhaustible (Isa 40:28-31.) Power to stand firm in the midst of temptation and the pressures of life.
In 1:18 Paul prays that they might know "*the glorious wealth of His inheritance in the saints*. This is an aspect of the wealth of His glory which is the sum total of all His attributes.
2. **So that they will experience Christ as resident in their hearts through faith.** This is a prayer for strengthening of that faith and an accompanying recognition of the implication of the new life. **The outcome would be that people are rooted and grounded in love.**
3. He prays for them **to have the power to grasp the fullness of Christ's love**, which surpasses knowledge. This is the language of hyperbole – for it's dimension is so great it can never fully be known. Knowledge of Christ's love is the only way that we might hope to attain divine fullness at least as far as human beings can do so.

The full realization of God's gracious purpose for us and in us becomes possible, through the Spirit who imparts His surpassing great power (1:19-20) to us who believe

DOXOLOGY Vs. 20-21

God's capacity for giving far exceeds our capacity for asking or even imagining.

God is to be glorified in the church because the 'one new man' is His masterpiece of grace. It is through the church that the spiritual forces in the heavenlies see the wisdom of God displayed. God's glory in Christ Jesus is seen in the life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming and in the effectiveness of His redemptive and reconciling work.

This ascription of glory will have no end as the surpassing wealth of His grace continues to demonstrate His kindness towards the church in Christ Jesus (2:7) and provides occasion for eternal praise.

Chapter 4: 1-6

AN EXHORTATION TO UNITY – ATTITUDES TOWARDS EACH OTHER

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Eph.4:1-3

Paul begins this section with ***As a prisoner for the Lord.*** – Why?
Why does Paul include the *then*?

He '*urges*' them to live a life worthy of the calling they have received – '*passionate encouragement.*' To walk out life in a way that is in keeping with this calling.

As members of the new humanity we have a high calling – a calling outlined in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians. A calling that results from the lavish outpouring of His incomparable grace. (Note Ephesians 1:18)

- Son-ship,
 - Redemption,
 - Revelation of His purpose of reconciliation.
- } **for the praise of His glory.**

WHAT DOES A LIFE 'WORTHY' OF THE CALLING LOOK LIKE?

- ***Humility***

In Graeco-Roman society, the word 'humility' carried a negative connotation (*cringing, cowering, servile, and ignoble*)– it was not a virtue.

Yet Paul sets it as the foremost of virtues. This flows from a different understanding of humanity – **no longer the Greek concept of a *free man subject to no one but of one submitted to God.***

Not one who is self-seeking, self-promoting, but rather one more concerned about others' welfare than one's own. A heart attitude that seeks to serve – Jesus is the example. (Philippians 2:5-11; John 13:1-17.) Only by refraining from self-assertion and having a willingness to serve can the unity of the body be established and sustained.

Note Paul's '*less than the least*' of Ephesians 3:8.

How do we grow in humility?

- **Gentleness** - One of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:23)

Barclay (pp. 137-138) understands this word to suggest a person upset at the wrongs and sufferings of others, but one never moved to anger by the wrongs and insults they have to bear. I.e. *A person 'always angry at the right time but never angry at the wrong time.'*

This Greek word is used also for an animal that has been trained and domesticated until it is completely under control. This could suggest a gentle person is one who has every instinct and passion under self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What are the keys to growing in this grace of the Holy Spirit?

- **Patience** – An inner attitude that endures to the end.
 - Someone who will not give up.
 - Unable to be broken by misfortune, suffering, disappointment, discouragement.
 - Someone who refuses to retaliate and bears insult and injury without bitterness.

Every community has people who are hateful, vengeful, bitter, antagonistic – such people slander, gossip, and judge, criticize, complain and ostracize. *Patience* refuses to be drawn into the antagonism. Consider the incredible patience of God!

- **Bearing with one another in love** – to put up with; to receive, take up and endure; to restrain oneself. Deliberately applying love including forgiveness, acceptance, and tolerance.

'Agape' – Barclay writes (pp.140) "*the real meaning of agape is unconquerable benevolence... nothing that a person can do will make us seek anything but their highest good.*" **It is an act of the will.**

Every one of these virtues involves a dying to self. While preoccupation with self is present anywhere in our hearts, true unity can never fully exist.

The opposites of these virtues are:

- Bigotry as seen in ethnic humor, snide remarks, hateful actions.
- Self-promotion, one-upmanship in conversation, continually talking about oneself, one's experiences, showing off.
- Indignation accompanied by sarcasm or bitter talk.
- Insisting on one's own way, ideas, plans, programs.

All this shows lack of interest in others, (ie lack of love,) hence, the need for growth in these areas of mental attitude." ⁱⁱ

'Make every effort... – be diligent – zealous to 'keep' the unity of the Spirit.

This unity is essential for the church to fulfill its calling and a key in the equipping of the saints for their work of service. **Note this is about keeping a unity that is already present through the Holy Spirit**

WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THIS UNITY?

1. **It is an outcome of the cross.** Our unity is based on what God has done in Christ. (Ephesians 1-3.)
2. **Unity is 'of the Spirit'** – we cannot produce it – it is organic not mechanical – It starts within and works outward. E.g. The human body is an organic unity. It consists of many parts. It begins from one cell – a miracle of creation.

When we trust in Christ, we are joined to Him by the renewing power of the Spirit – we become part of a larger organic whole. The Spirit imparts the unity - a natural outflow of being in Christ, through whom we are reconciled – a new creation – one new man.

..... ***the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***

This is an exhortation to live at peace with one another. Christ himself breaks down all walls of hostility – one-upmanship, bigotry, jealousy etc – He is our peace (Eph 2:14.)

The unity of the Spirit is maintained as the members of the body function together harmoniously for the well being of the whole.

Unity involves diversity not uniformity. The parts do not look alike, do not function alike, yet all are important, all are needed, all work to the same end – There is an integral interdependence. Some are 'visible', others not so. Some more obvious, some less so, yet all are essential to the effective work of the body.

PRACTICAL OUTWORKING

- **A unity of calling** – each of us is called to discipleship and to serve in His body.
- **A unity of common life and service.** The unity of the Spirit is created through our union in Christ Jesus.
- **A unity of ministry** – Only as each part takes its proper place and begins to operate effectively does the body reveal it's full glory.
- **A unity of purpose** – The primary goal of the unity, the equipping of the saints is maturity in Christ. I.e. Christ likeness – His character, His ways, His mind.
- **The confession of faith – the ground of unity.** The unity of the spirit springs from the deep underlying unities of the Christian faith.

Note Paul's use of the prefix '*with*' – '*together with*' – in Ephesians. He joins this prefix to a number of key words to express our joint life & the impossibility of life outside of this unity.

2:5 made ***alive with*** Christ
 2:6 ***raised*** us up ***with*** Christ
 2:19 fellow ***citizens with*** God's people

2:21 In Him, the whole building is ***joined together***
 2:22 ***built together*** – a dwelling place for God
 3:6 Gentiles are ***heirs with*** Israel – members of one body

ONE BODY – THE SPIRIT BINDING TOGETHER

There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6

What is the one hope?

One Lord: He is the one we all serve – involves a dying to self and submission to Him.

One Faith: A common trust in Christ as redeemer and Lord, not a body of doctrine,

One Baptism: Into the name of Jesus Christ – into relationship with Christ and His Body.

One God and Father of all:

- **Over all** – Lordship
- **Through all** – “There are varieties of working but the one God who works them all in everyone” (1 Corinthians 12:6)
- **In all** – We together are his dwelling place

It is the Christian belief that we live in a God created, God controlled, God sustained, God filled world.

Discussion:

- Consider the phrase: *live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*
- What is that calling according to what you have read in Ephesians thus far?
- What virtues does Paul identify that contribute to us *living a life worthy of our calling?*
- How can we *maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?*

Activation: Pray for one another in accordance with Ephesians 3:14-21

SESSION 4: GOD'S PROVISION FOR GROWTH IN CHRIST (EPH 4:7-16)

While we are all to be servants of one another – equal before God, some have been given a place of authority in the church as a gift to enable the church to be equipped for ministry and mature in Christ.

⁷*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.* ⁸*This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."*⁹

- **to each one of us grace has been given - We each have a part to play** – a distinctive function as set by Christ.
- **Christ bestows the gifts** – see also 1 Corinthians 12:11. See Ps 68:18
The psalm speaks of God receiving gifts from men while Paul's quotation has the gifts coming from Christ to men. *The picture* is of "Christ the mighty conqueror who on returning to heaven in triumph, distributes gifts to signal His ascension and triumph as would a victor in an earthly battle". He distributes gifts in this case to His comrades in arms – the church.

Christ is He who descended; the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

- He is greater than anything of the earth because He came from heaven
- He is greater than the principalities and powers. He is supreme in power

Each person has a measure of the 5 fold heart motivations / anointing as Christ has apportioned according to the assignments God has prepared for them.

To enable the fullness of this to be brought to the surface each of us needs the input of the 5 fold people - **Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. These are given by Christ to the church as gifts to equip us and bring us to maturity.**

THE ROLE OF THE FIVE FOLD MINISTRY (EPH 4: 7-16) Gifts to the Body of Christ.

These 5 fold ministry people have the role of **preparing the saints for works of service** so that the Body of Christ may be built up...i.e. as an edifice

Prepare - The Greek here, - *katartizo*- carries the following nuances

- To mend/ restore
- To lay foundations (Build Faith & establish a base of Knowledge)
- To equip (Skill development ... Anointing)

The activity of the five-fold ministry is not so much about providing a program but rather a depth of relationship and an atmosphere of grace in which the disciple experiences accountability, encouragement, and persevering love.

Those graced with this 5 fold anointing (empowering) are assigned as Christ's gifts to the body of Christ and **these gifts function through honour.** (Matthew 10:41; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17) **Through honour, our hearts are engaged** and our attitudes and mindsets are renewed.

The task of these ministries **is to mend, establish and prepare each person** in the body so that they are **brought into their place and purpose, functioning in maturity. In this way the church is built up** (i.e. Part of their role is in actually placing us in the right place at the right time.)

Each of us needs to be guided, encouraged, challenged when we go astray, and equipped and placed with purpose to be all that we can be in Christ.

We need to consider developing people from this perspective from the nursery up... The goal is to raise up people into their assignments as part of Kingdom advance.

Of course, we have a responsibility to pursue relationship with Christ ourselves, but those called as five- fold ministry to the body have been commissioned by Christ to the task of preparing God's people for their ministry (service) in Him.

To recap: The gifts, Paul refers to here, **are particular individuals** whose function it is to prepare God's holy people for their works of service.

- They are an expression of the ministry of Jesus who carried each of these functions in His ministry.
- These are servant ministries undertaken for the sake of the people of God.
- They are distinct callings of God who appoints & equips individuals for this work.

To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up

- *Until we reach unity in faith*
- *Until we become Mature*

The restoration of relational Christianity and five fold ministry, under apostolic leadership, is not based in power and status, but in servant-hood and fathering. This is a significant element in the new wineskin towards which the Holy Spirit is leading.

The Gifts of Christ to the church - Apostle, Prophet, Pastor, Teacher and Evangelist are describing particular functions that flow from a particular heart motivation and calling. It is a way of serving...a way built on servant-hood and sonship.

Note what Jesus said of himself. Luke 4:16-20; Isaiah 61:1-4

He carried the fullness of the 5 Fold Ministry

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| ▪ Preach good news | Evangelistic |
| ▪ Freedom for the prisoners – truth will set you free | Teaching |
| ▪ Recovery of sight to the blind | Prophetic |
| ▪ Release the oppressed – shepherd of our souls | Pastoral |
| ▪ Proclaim year of the Lord's favour | Apostolic |

We each have been designed to carry the presence of the Holy Spirit.... This is called "anointing". (2 Corinthians 3:18 and I John 2:27)

Today the ministry of apostle is being restored to the church. In truth apostles have been present in every age though often not recognized and thus not released to pursue their calling.

Effective Christian leaders are committed to advancing the mission in ways that also enable others to make their Kingdom contribution.



With the benefit of hindsight, we can recognize those that were successfully able to pursue such ministry often in spite of strong opposition from the church of their day. (eg Francis of Assisi, John Wesley, Francis Xavier, Hudson Taylor, William Carey)

What exactly is an Apostle? These are people ...gifts to the body, appointed and sent by Christ to equip the people of God.

The word “**apostolos**” means “**sent one**” - sent by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Kingdom of God, heal the sick and cast out demons. (It has a specific reference to the disciples of Jesus who were with Him over His ministry years and were witnesses to His resurrection.) However, in the New Testament “Apostle” has a wider usage - including Paul & Barnabas and quite a number of others each with different assignments. (Rom 16:7)

Philip Spence brings out the concept of a particular sphere of an apostle's assignment in his book, *'The Governance of the Kingdom (C) 2012*

In 2 Corinthians 10:13, Paul speaks of the field that God has assigned to him. Spence comments: “*An Apostle's sphere may be geographical; it may be a city, a region, or a nation. An Apostle's sphere may be a people group. The Apostle Paul was primarily called to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, while Peter and others felt they were Apostles to the Jews. An Apostle is to exercise the authority and influence of the Kingdom in their particular sphere / assignment.*”

For further notes on Apostles and Prophets see the APPENDIX in these study notes.

The Role of the Prophet:

One who has the **office** of prophet (eg *Agabus - Acts 11:27-30; Acts 21:10*) will give guidance to individuals and the church community and will not only strengthen, exhort and encourage the body, but will bring correction and rebuke.

- The prophet has an important role in **BUILDING** the people in their ability to hear God for themselves and their willingness to obey His voice.
- Prophets are to assist people to catch something of the Father's heart and His specific calling upon them and to release His creativity through them.

Prophecy is speaking out the mind of the Holy Spirit. It can be expressed in a number of contexts include preaching, counselling, normal conversation and even business meetings. The prophet also has a role working with an apostle to bring revelation of God's heart & ways into a particular kingdom advance. The apostle then, in wisdom, applies the revelation into strategic pathways, correct order, & timing.

Jeremiah Johnson writes: *Prophets are committed to consistently evaluating and critiquing man-made structures and religious traditions out of a deep love for God and for His church. A true prophet's ministry will appear at times very confrontational and critical of existing church structures that have become or are becoming obsolete, irrelevant, and a great hindrance to the Spirit of God.*

Prophets are a tremendous asset to pastors and apostles because they help them from becoming rigid, legalistic, controlling, and authoritarian. Prophets are protectors of the church from unhealthy and unbiblical control that will constrict the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Prophets are the eyes of the body of Christ. Prophets help the church "see" what is coming and feel deeply moved to prepare themselves and others for the days ahead. True prophets live ahead of their time and are plagued by constant frustration that the people around them have not partnered with the revelation they are releasing."

The Role of Evangelists:

All of us are called to "give witness" to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord - but an evangelist has a special anointing (*measure of grace*) enabling effectiveness in bringing unbelievers to Christ. Their task is not only geared to proclaiming the gospel and leading people to Christ, but in **equipping the body** to be effective witnesses to the King (Jesus) and the presence of His Kingdom.

The Role of Pastors / Teachers:

The scriptures indicate the early church pastor was appointed to teach. (*1 Timothy 3:2*) They were expected to have sound doctrine and be diligent in studying the scriptures. (*Titus 1:9 & 1 Timothy 5:17-18*) The role of pastor / teacher is to be that of shepherd and like the Good Shepherd of John 10, their focus is to be on the welfare of the flock rather than on wages or working conditions. (*1 Peter 5:1-4*)

Pastors:

Their ministry is to see the wounded made whole and the saints established in their identity as sons and daughters of the Living God. The task is to encourage and challenge the saints to discover for themselves that *God is our refuge and strength ... a very present help in trouble*. They are to assist the saints in learning to access the refuge, abundance, strength and security that is available in Christ.

Teachers:

Paul and Barnabas taught the new followers of *the Way* in Antioch for a year, establishing them in the faith. (*Acts 11:25-26*) The Church in Antioch had a leadership group composed of prophets and teachers. (*Acts 13: 1-3*)

The **teacher** has the task of equipping people to rightly interpret the scriptures and to build their lives in the foundations laid by Jesus Christ. They have the task of encouraging and enabling people to build their lives from a Kingdom of God perspective.

Such ministry comes with heavy responsibility before God.

(Note James 3:1 – “not many of you should presume to be teachers.... and I Tim 5:22 which suggests leaders need to be cautious before ordaining people to ministry.)

We cannot choose to be an apostle, pastor, teacher etc. We dare not and in reality cannot appoint ourselves to such a task. While each of these offices will have a distinct sense of God's call to that ministry – that call needs to be affirmed by recognized apostolic and prophetic leaders in the body and confirmed by God's special guidance (Acts 14:1.)

SO THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST MIGHT BE BUILT UP – INTO CHRIST – VS 12-16

So the church might be **built** into the dwelling place of God (2:20-22.)

This building up is speaking of spiritual growth rather than physical expansion.

'Until' – conveys more than duration ... it includes purpose.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE !

Until we all might attain:

- *Unity in **the faith*** – unity that binds together those that share the common faith in Christ as redeemer and Lord.
- *In the **knowledge** of the Son of God* – an intimacy with Jesus in relationship.
- The church becomes fully developed – **mature** – walking in the fullness of the character, ways and power of Jesus Christ.
- **No longer infants** tossed to and fro, no longer deceived by false teachers.

'Trickery' – literally means dice playing. It is not referring to a misunderstanding of the gospel, but rather a deliberate deceitful scheme. The truth is not loved and cherished by these tricksters. This scheme produces error in those who accept it. Instead of being deceived the believers are to speak the truth in love. By doing this, the believers would be enabled to grow into Christ in all things.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:16

Discussion:

Consider the concept of being prepared for your works of service.

- What works of service are you being called to take up?
- What preparation would you feel you need to enable this to be done well?
- What ongoing support would you love to have?

Activation: Pray for one another regarding these assignments.

SESSION 5: A NEW LIFESTYLE FOR A NEW HUMANITY. EPH 4:17–6:9**THE OLD NATURE AND THE NEW CREATION (4:17-24)**

This passage is one of the strongest and most graphic outlines of the difference between the old and the new natures to be found in the scriptures.

It follows Paul's great vision of the Church because THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH is dependent upon the personal choices we make. Paul exhorts his readers in the strongest terms to put off the old self corrupted by its deceitful desires.

The character of the life outside Christ is marked by:

- **Futility of thinking** – empty, fruitless, powerless
- **Darkened understanding** – wrong thinking about God and the purpose of life

There are two types of active thinking possible for the Christian. One flows from a renewed mind – a repentant heart – the other from thoughts framed by futility, darkness and alienation from God.

'Separated from the Life of God': Caused by ignorance – literally *'no thinking'*

The word describes someone who is ignorant of the content of something that they are supposed to know. To ignore is to 'not think about'. The mind orientated to ignoring God is like a vacuum open for the adoption of value systems and thoughts opposed to God – BUT GOD IS LIFE.

Repentance is changing one's mind – as it were to rethink – to orient toward God.

'Darkened in their understanding' – Dowd suggests the following repercussions

Darkness causes a Christian to fail to orient to the plan of God. In this darkness we do not know God's plan or how it works, & we don't know how we fit into God's plan.

1. Darkness brings about a failure to orient to the grace of God. The result is arrogance and legalism, lack of forgiveness, lack of graciousness.
2. Darkness causes inner misery, unhappiness and lack of peace. These things cannot be compensated for by anything in life, but the negative Christian spends their life in a frantic but futile pursuit of happiness through the details of life.
3. Often this darkness manifests in anxiety and fear.
Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer an supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard (stabilise) your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7
4. Darkness leads to slavery to the things of life pursued by those who know nothing of God - money, success, pleasure, sex, social life, family, loved ones, career, hobbies, health, status symbols.
5. Darkness leads to apostasy, erroneous thinking and false doctrines.

- 6. Darkness is accompanied by a lack of capacity to love, leading to pseudo-love towards God, family and the community.

This orientation to ignore God – ‘not think about’ flows from a hardening of the heart. This is the progressive inability of conscience to convict of wrong doing – the conscience becomes seared (1 Tim 4:2) – **calloused** – this leads to a *loss of all sensitivity* and “*giving of themselves over to sensuality*” – “*have betrayed themselves*”...

- Where all restraint is thrown off - where they are unmoved by shame or fear.
- Without regard for - self respect
 - the rights and feelings of others
 - public decency

Every kind of impurity – has a wider meaning than sexual misconduct.

With greediness – willing to do whatever it takes to obtain or achieve what one desires.

But this is not the way of Christ. (Eph. 4:20) Paul now reviews the apostolic teaching on the way of life ‘*in Christ*’.

THE WAY OF CHRIST:

1. **PUT OFF YOUR OLD SELF** – ie. Lay aside, like you would a garment. The old self is marked by corruption framed by our deceitful desires. – lust for power, sexual lust, desire for place, position and status. The result is to become enslaved to these.
2. **TO BE MADE NEW IN THE ATTITUDE OF YOUR MINDS.** – By the creative action of God. This new life is not built on working hard to meet the new standard – rather it arises out of an inner spiritual transformation under the creative empowering of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 12:1-2) – continual progressive transformation (2 Cor. 3:18)

However, a deliberate decision of the will is needed:

3. **PUT ON THE NEW SELF** – created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
 - to be like God – in the image of God.
 - Jesus Christ is the new man and so we are to put on Christ

A) Practical Outworking of the Put Off – Put On Principle (4:25 – 5:7)

PUT OFF	PUT ON
1. Falsehood	Speak Truthfully to your neighbour

Basis: *For we are all members of one body.*

(If we deceive we break the bond of love, fellowship and trust)

PUT OFF

PUT ON

<p>2. In Your Anger – Do Not Sin (<i>Orgismos</i>)</p> <p><i>Don't let the sun go down on your wrath – 'Para orgismos'</i></p> <p>(Wrath here is anger that has been nursed / harboured – brooded over)</p> <p>Note: Matt 5:22 Nursing Anger – Magnifies the grievance, Makes reconciliation more difficult, destroys friendly relationship</p>	<p>Reconciliation and Forgiveness</p> <p>Psalm 4:4</p> <p>(See also Romans 12:19)</p>
--	--

Basis : *Don't give the devil a foothold* (an opportunity, a place to build pride, hatred & resentment)

<p>3. Do Not Steal</p> <p>4. Foul Language (more than obscene vulgarity – slanderous and contemptuous talk. Belittling, Verbal Abuse. 'Rotten' like bad fruit</p>	<p>Work to Provide for those in need.</p> <p>Edifying / Encouraging Speech Prov 15:23 "A man has joy in giving an apt reply and how good is a timely word" See Col 3:16-17 and Col 4:6</p>
---	--

Basis: *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit enables us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. He is the source of our fellowship with God and with one another – consider what is at stake if we alienate Him.

Basis: *Be imitators of God*, then, live a life of love, a life of sacrifice. This will be a life of fragrant offering to God.

<p>5. GET RID OF: All Bitterness 'Pikria' a resentful spirit that refuses reconciliation. <i>Rage</i> – outbreak of passion <i>Anger</i> – (habitual) long, lived, harboured. <i>Brawling</i> – quarrelsome shouting <i>Slander</i> – 'blasphemous' (against people and God) insulting language Every form of Malice – Exclude everything that will lead to speaking evil of another</p>	<p>Rather;</p> <p>Be kind and compassionate to one another.</p> <p>Forgiving one another (<i>just as in Christ God forgave you</i>)</p> <p>To forgive means to forgo a claim ...to cease bearing resentment or offence</p>
---	---

PUT OFF	PUT ON
<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Sexual Immorality • Any kind of Impurity • Greed 	<p><i>Such unholy things should not be acceptable subjects of conversation for God's people</i></p>
<p>7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Obscenity – talk about shameful things • Foolish Talk – empty • Coarse Joking – cultured insolence 	<p><i>Let your conversation rather be marked by thanksgiving</i></p> <p>'Out of the heart – the mouth speaks'</p>

Basis:

- *Such unholy things should not be acceptable subjects of conversation for God's people*
- *No immoral, impure or greedy person has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. (Such a person is an idolator)*

Notes:

- 1. On Anger:** Consider these issues:
- What's the difference between sinful anger and righteous indignation? Note Mk 3:5 & John 2:13-17
 - Does God get angry?
 - What causes me to get angry, and what can I do about it?
 - How can I have victory over the sin of anger?

2. On Stealing: There must be no more common pilfering, but honest work instead.

Dishonesty was a way of life for many in ancient times, just as it is for many people today. Whenever discipline or personal integrity is even slightly relaxed, honesty and productivity slip markedly. Most employees are in a position to steal something; pencils, computer time, petty cash, working time.

The honest Christian labourer stands out in a society like this. Honesty and good character are two of the most important aspects of the Christian's testimony. In any witnessing situation, these traits are necessary before any verbal testimony can be successful. Leviticus 19:35,36, Deuteronomy 25:13-16.

God has forgiven us even though we had no inner resources to put things right with Him. He is not expecting or demanding some kind of payment in return for His grace gifts... We are to be channels of grace to the world. 'Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' In Him we have the resource available to choose to forgive those that wound, abuse or offend us in some way.

B) Live as Children of the Light. (Ephesians 5: 8- 20)

There are two diametrically opposed paths;

1. **Darkness - *Don't be 'partners' with them.***
(In which they once walked) (Paul uses the same word here as in Ephesians 3:6)
2. **Light - *Live as children of the LIGHT***

The works of darkness are to be shunned. They are not to be;

- Given credence – 'don't be deceived'
- Condoned or excused but rather exposed
- The topic of conversation

Deception that encourages or makes light of the deeds of darkness must be resisted.

There were two particular deceptions of this kind faced by the early church.

- a) The concept that it is only the spirit that matters – deeds done in the physical realm are of no real consequence.
- b) An anti-law stance – "let us sin that grace may abound all the more..."

The task of the children of the light was to set themselves to discover what manner of life pleases God and give that their endorsement. (The same verb is used here as Paul uses in Rom 12:2)

The light enables the believer to;

- Discriminate between that which is well pleasing & that which is not pleasing to God.
- Expose that which is evil (so long as a thing is done in secret it has power over us)

The light makes everything visible – (shows it for what it is). This way of life is the way to all goodness - ie generosity of spirit, righteousness, truth – moral truth – something to be known and done.

Paul encourages the believers to;

- a) ***Give careful attention to their way of life. – Be alert – ever ready.***
To rescue (redeem) the times (buy up the opportunity) for the days are evil and increasingly so. (The best bargains are to be found by the alert and early shopper.)
- b) ***Rise up and Live in the Light***
- c) ***Discern the will of GOD*** – a matter of reflection and action

Paul concludes this section with a contrast between a pagan and a Christian gathering.
"Do not be intoxicated with wine" – Prov. 23:31 rather ***"be filled with the Spirit"***

Instead of raucous debauchery with drinking songs celebrating Bacchus, now the Spirit brings a new song to encourage and uplift the family of God and make music in the heart to the Lord.

The Christian life is one marked by thanksgiving – thanksgiving in everything – a thanksgiving flowing from the Spirit – (the guarantee of our inheritance) and finding spontaneous expression in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

THE PRINCIPLE of SUBMISSION (EPH 5:21 – 6:9)

1. **Mutual Submission (5:21) – This is a principle of the new creation.**
 - a. Not about seeking to get our own way – self assurance,
 - b. But serving in love out of reverence for the Lord. This is His way (Phil 2:3-8) (John 13:12-17) (Mark 10:42-45)

Having set the principle of mutual submission out of reverence for Christ, Paul now goes on to draw out its implications for marriage, family and economic life.

- **Wives & Husbands (5:22-33)** – For background comment on this section (See Barclay pp. 168-177.)
- **Children and parents** (6: 1-4)
- **Slaves and masters** (6: 5-9)

(a) Wives and Husbands

“Sometimes the emphasis of this passage is entirely misplaced; and it is read as if its essence was the subordination of wife to husband. To read it this way, the phrase, “ The husband is the head of the wife”, is quoted in isolation. **But the basis of the passage is not control; it is love.** If a husband uses this passage to demand submission He is out of order. The passage is not addressed to him but rather to the wife.

Husbands: His love for his wife is to be a sacrificial one.

He must love her as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for the Church. It must never be a selfish love. Christ loved the Church, not that the Church might do things for him, but that He might do things for the Church.

John Chrysostom (Bishop of Constantinople 347 -407 AD) has a wonderful expansion of this passage: *‘Have you seen the measure of obedience? Hear also the measure of love. Would you have your wife obey you as the Church does Christ? Have care yourself for her as Christ for the Church. And if it be needful that you should give your life for her, or be cut to pieces a thousand times, or endure anything whatever, refuse it not... He brought the Church to His feet by his great care, not by threats nor fear nor any such thing; so should you conduct yourself towards your wife. Barclay p173*

The wife's submission to her husband has its counterpart in his obligation to love his wife – This is not about sexual attraction nor affectionate feeling – “but it involves his active and increasing care for her well being” (Bruce p164)

Headship = Authority = Responsibility.

It is the function of the head to plan for the safety of the body, to secure it from danger and to provide for its welfare – involves responsibility of nurture and care. **It is a servant role.**

Vs. 25. Christ's love for the Church is the model for the husband in his love for his wife.

- Gave himself up for her – self sacrificing love
- Christ's love is love with purpose – the picture is of the preparation of the bride
- Dressed in bridal finery (sanctification) (Ezekiel 16:6-14; Psalm 45:13)

The bridal finery of the church is the fullness of the character with which Christ has endowed her. (free from blemish – the bride's fine linen in Rev 19:8 symbolises the righteous deeds of the saints.) Holy and blameless reminds us of Ephesians 1: 4

Vs. 28. Paul makes the application of this bridal picture now to the husband.

- Love your wives as your own body - Leviticus 19:18
- He who loves his wife loves himself – Genesis 2:24

Just as a man by nature provides for his own comfort and well-being, so he should provide for his wife just as Christ provides for & empowers the church. He nourishes & cherishes her.

Wives: **“Submit ‘as to the Lord’ “** – as part of your obedience to Christ

The Church's submission to Christ is the pattern for the wife's submission to her husband.in everything!

Vs. 32. ‘The profound mystery’ – Genesis 2:24, which on the surface explains why a man will leave his parent's home and live with his wife, is taken to convey a deeper, hidden meaning, a ‘mystery’, which could not be understood until the time of Christ. He loved his people from eternity, and gave himself up for them in the fullness of time. In the light of his saving work, the hidden meaning of Genesis 2:24 now begins to appear: **his people constitute his bride**, united to him in ‘one body’. The creation of Eve to be Adam's companion is seen to prefigure the creation of the church to be the bride of Christ. This seems to be the deep “mystery” contained in the text, which remains a mystery no longer to those who have received its interpretation. (Bruce p395)

Now in summary Paul emphasises the practical lesson to be drawn from his exposition of Christ's love for the church – his bride.

“Husbands must love their wives as they love themselves, A wife must reverence her husband.”

(b) CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Children for your protection, your development as people and your health - honour your parents as an act of obedience in the character of Christ - in attitude and in action. (Deut 5:16) **The common life of the home is a priority in Christ.**

Ephesians 6:1-4

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 "Honour your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--

3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."^[1]

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Children are addressed first giving them a dignity and status unknown in the Graeco–Roman world. – Children are to honour their parents. – obey, respect, care for – This law is a description of how reality works. Problems in our relationships flow in areas where we have failed to honour our parents.

Barclay comments, (p177-178) “There are 3 ways we can do injustice to our children...

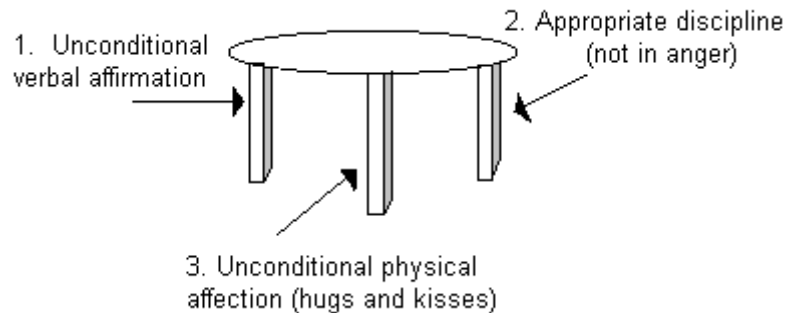
- a) We can forget that the world / culture changes – the customs of one generation are not necessarily going to be appropriate for those of the next.
- b) We can exercise to tight a control.
- c) We can fail to encourage.

Fathers are urged to exercise their authority over their children in a manner which will lead to ready obedience, rather than in a way that leads to resentment and bitterness.

If a child is to be brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord the parents must surely model discipleship with and before them.

The parent in fact models God to us (the heavenly father) i.e. represents God – His image.

For full emotional development 3 things are needed from parents in early childhood.



A violation in one of these will result in some measure of behavioural / emotional distortion / incapacity

The atmosphere of peace in the home should not be marred by a father's thoughtless, harsh or undisciplined conduct. If a father follows this instruction of love, then a safe environment is provided in which wives / children are free and secure to take their place.

C) Slaves and Masters. (Eph. 6: 5-9) A new law now governs slaves and masters.

In Graeco-Roman society, a slave was not a person – they didn't have 'rights'. Seen more as property than people. In law the slave was not a person but a thing –

Aristotle ... “a slave is a living tool.”

The master possessed the power of life and death over the slave. The slave was absolutely at the disposal of his master. – Whatever a master does to a slave undeservedly; in anger, willingly, unwillingly; in forgetfulness, after careful thought, knowingly or unknowingly; in judgement, justice and law. (Barclay p180) – for further background Barclay (pp179 – 180)

Note here that no political agenda for a new social order is set forward, rather the transforming power of love is set forward as the determining basis in relationship. Early Christianity did not destabilise the society – the existing hierarchies were left unchallenged. The authority of master, husband and father was endorsed **but only as is fitting in the Lord** as a mark of obedience to Christ.

Paul, however, does something here that is very radical and is often missed by people interpreting today. **He addresses the one in the least powerful position first.** (Thus highlighting their value in the Lord.)

Slaves: *Don't just work to win the master's favour – when he's watching. But like slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your heart.*

In whatever you do:

- *work at it with all your heart*
- *as to the Lord, not to men. This is your service to Christ.*
- The new creation is not a blank cheque for rebellion or slackness in the name of freedom.
- With an attitude marked by a heartfelt:
 - Respect (*phobou*) – (reverence)?
 - Fear (*tromou*) – trembling
 - Obedience – as you would obey Christ.

Inner attitude not outward show.

Discussion:

- Consider the concept of *Put Off – Put On*. In practice how do we get victory over areas that trip us up.
- In any discussion or outworking of headship what principles should govern the way this is exercised?

Activation: Pray for one another for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and release encouragement through the spirit to one another based in song and scripture

SESSION 6:

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Ephesians 6: 10-18

TAKING OUR STAND

Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.... Ephesians 1:19

This section provides a conclusion to the teaching on living up to our calling in the previous chapters. We are to be battle ready, dressed in the armour supplied through the spiritual blessings we have received. We have been chosen, adopted, redeemed and sealed.

THE REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Whether we are aware of this or not we are engaged in a spiritual battle.

Spiritual warfare is deadly serious business. Satan and the demons under his control are real beings with warped personalities, wicked hearts and malicious intents. The forces of darkness work to deceive and divert unbelievers from repentance and to harass & hinder the Body of Christ corporately as well as individually from enjoying and engaging in effective, fruitful service.

Jesus Christ won the decisive battle at the cross and utterly defeated and disempowered the forces of darkness. (Colossians 2:15) The only power they now have is through feeding off the rebellion and sin of people.

Consequently the battle will still rage until Christ has put all His enemies under His feet. (1Cor. 15: 24-28) Until then, the followers of Jesus have been commissioned under Him and in His authority, to bring light into the darkness and set Satan's captives free.

Paul uses 2 metaphors to describe the spiritual battle that we face individually and together as the Body of Christ.

- He points to the **armour of a Roman soldier** to convey our protection and weapons.
- He uses the concept of a **wrestler** to convey the concept of the close quarters struggle we face - This could be a life / death struggle.

We need to be battle ready by putting on the full armour of God:

- **The armour of a Roman soldier** ... Part of a unit. ... Positioned in the church
- **We need a good understanding of the devil and his schemes:** (*methodeia*)

Mention of the schemes of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable and perfectly legitimate. It is a bated and camouflaged trap. Snodgrass p339

Satan's Strategies: **Satan masquerades as Angel of light** 2 Corinthians 11:14

- **Shoots Fiery Arrows** .. slander / accusation / condemnation / curses. These are designed to create fear, doubt, confusion, etc.
- **Blinds eyes** .. deception / discouragement / oppression / secrecy (2Cor 4:4)
- **Intimidates .. Sarcasm / ridicule / harassment**
- **Raises doubts:**
 - a) Over what God's word says .. (Genesis 3 and Matthew 4:1-11)
 - b) Over our place and / or our identity in Christ.
 - c) Seeks to undermine our authority by causing compromise and thus giving opportunity for oppression

Satan has 2 key strategies as he comes against us.

- 1) **Seeks to undermine our identity.** (Matt 4:1-11)
If you are the Son of God....?! Raises doubt over our place in God's family.
- 2) **Seeks to undermine our authority....** *Turn these Stones into Bread.*
eg. Ephesians 4:27-30

The devil's schemes include deception through

- **Materialism / Humanistic Philosophies**
- **Enticement to sin**
- **Direct oppressive attack:**
 - On personal weaknesses / On our family
 - On our Kingdom assignment:

The attack comes through:

- **Exploitation of unresolved sin:** through immorality, deceit, bitterness, etc,
- **Exploitation of mindsets** – sceptical rationalism, fear or inadequacy.
- **Doctrinal deviation** / deception - twisting Scriptural truth (1 Tim 4:1-3)
- **Curses from witchcraft covens**

Demons gain a foothold by: Unforgiveness, habitual sin, occult activity, mindlessness; severe physical or emotional shock or grief; fantasy - eg. pornographic or violent video

Paul encourages us to **give Satan no opportunity – NO FOOTHOLD!** (Eph 4:25-27)

If the forces of darkness can divide the Church (Ephesians 4:27), the enemy is able to regain jurisdiction over the Church and at that point at least, undermine its power. He attacks at our most vulnerable points, and continues to apply pressure until we crack. We have no authority to repel it until we get our act together. We need to walk according to our calling as Sons and Daughters. (Ephesians 4: 22- 6: 9)

... ¹² *For **our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world & against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Paul reveals here the concept of **wrestling** against a demonic hierarchy (Ephesians 6:12)

- **'Archas'** – rulers/principalities.
- **'Exousias'** – authorities
- **'Kosmokratoras'** – world rulers
- **'Pneumatka tes ponerias'** – spiritual forces of evil.

Our Struggle: *(The concept in the Greek is that of our wrestle)*

Paul chooses the word **wrestle** here perhaps to emphasize the closeness of the encounter. Rather than human opposition as in wrestling in the games in the arena, this is a wrestling with dark spiritual forces. Through sinful activity and mindsets these powers dominate different spheres of cultural influence in a society and impact the populations of communities, cities and nations.

eg

- Religious (1 Cor 8:5, 10:20) - idols - the demons behind the idols.
- Family and Business relationships (Ephesians 6:1-4)
- Education
- Politics
- Justice
- Health
- Sports
- Arts and Entertainment
- Media

TAKING OUR STAND

Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Note the repeated use of 'stand'.



Paul paints a picture of a Roman soldier with secure footing standing his ground and holding it no matter what! (vs 11)

1) THE BELT OF TRUTH belt of truth is buckled around the waist.

There are 4 foundational truths that make up this belt

- ***Jesus Christ Himself is the truth*** (John 1:14;14:6)
 - He's the embodiment of absolute truth about the Father and what leads to life.
- ***The Word of God is the word of truth*** [2 Tim.2:15; James.1:18; Ps.119:42-43].
Truth comes by God's revelation:
 - We know where to stand - it is written in the Word.

- We fight the enemy - with the word of truth...
- We deal with temptation and judge it for what it is through the word of truth.
- We face the future with confidence ...we know where creation is heading.
- ***The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth*** [John 16:13]. The Holy Spirit always leads us to beliefs, actions and attitudes that are in complete harmony with the Living Word and the word of truth.
 - Always ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into truth.- there is protection here.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to protect you from being drawn into movements or practices not consistent with this truth. Claim the Spirit of truth to protect daily.
- ***The Truth of our Identity as Sons and Daughters of the King.***
 - Chosen, redeemed, sealed (Ephesians 1:3-14)

Uncertain / confused / downcast / defeated / discouraged / indifferent... How do you fight such things? When we start feeling *defeated, doubtful, distressed ...* **'buckle-up with the belt of truth. Aggressively apply the Word of truth to your situation.** [John. 8:32)

2) BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS [Compare: Isa. 59:15-17)

The breastplate is designed to protect an area of extreme vulnerability.

This breastplate of righteousness is the only protection we have against Satan's attack on the very heart of God's servants particularly through accusation.

- Righteousness is thus given a place of special importance in the believer's warfare.
 - Righteousness is all that Satan is not. [John. 8:44; 13:2; I John 3:8)
 - Righteousness is one of God's attributes. [Ps. 48:10; 145:17; Jer. 23:6)

Righteousness has two aspects:

- A gift through faith in Christ's sacrifice at the cross. (Phil. 3:8-9; Ephesians 1:7-9)
- Imparted righteousness in us. [Phil. 2: 13) God's grace bringing inner transformation. (Ephesians 1:4)

Righteousness also protects us in several ways:

1. It helps to give us confidence and courage.
2. *It allows us the opportunity to repudiate all forms of self- righteousness.* (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:9-18)

3) THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Sandals were vital for firm footing.

Firm footing is to be found in the gospel – appropriated and ready to be proclaimed. The sandals represent a heart prepared and set by the gospel. (See Isaiah 52:7)

- **Peace as an objective reality** – Romans 5:1 – appropriated by faith.
- **Appropriated experientially** Phil. 4:6-9 It will also guard our hearts & our minds.
- Jesus Christ is our Peace. He is the Prince of Peace. (Ephesians 2:13-14)

Shoes of peace:

It's a privilege to be a bearer of good news to those who are in need of it, to be an ambassador of true Peace ... the Lord Jesus Christ.

4) SHIELD OF FAITH

The Shield was a large oblong one made of 2 sections of wood glued together (covered with skins). As the flaming pitch -soaked arrow sank into the wood the flame was extinguished.

The Christian's protection against the flaming arrows of the evil one is our faith (trust) in God. – (Romans 8:28-39) (see 1Thessalonians 5:8)

However we need to grasp that our faith in and of itself is not our shield ... rather the object of our faith ... Jesus ... is our shield. (Ps 18:2 & 30; Prov. 30:5]

Paul highlights taking up this shield ... the shield provides the believer with confidence of protection. However this does not mean the enemy won't try to inflict us with difficulty or that we are immune from suffering or persecution. (1 Cor. 10:13]

Remember there may be a purpose in the battle – Hebrews 12:5-11

5) HELMET OF SALVATION

"take the helmet of salvation."

From the beginning Satan's target has been and still is our minds. A helmet protects the head. We are under assault all the time for the control of our minds.

An unguarded or undisciplined mind makes a Christian vulnerable. If not dealt with, Satan easily builds up strongholds in our minds - 2 Tim. 2:25-26; James 1:8; I Thess. 5:8.

The victory of the cross – our redemption and reconciliation is the helmet that protects our minds.(See Isaiah 59:17) (see also Ephesians 4:17-18 and 5:19-20)

6) SWORD OF THE SPIRIT *"Take ... the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."*

Our stance...

- Our spiritual sight must extend beyond just a protective stance.

The Sword is the only offensive weapon mentioned - see Matt 4:1-11 and the way Jesus uses the sword of the WORD OF GOD to resist the tempter (vs 4. – Deut. 8:3) (Rev.19:15)

The Sword of the Spirit is **the Word of God.** (Heb. 4:12)

- This Sword has the power to penetrate the inner working of one's life.

Guidelines for using the Sword:

The obvious requirement for using the 'Sword' is to know the Word of God (2 Tim.2:15)

Recognize that behind the 'Sword of the Spirit' is a Person, the Holy Spirit.

Important to remember, not to resist the Holy Spirit – Ephesians 4:29 - 5:2

A Roman sword was short, sharp and strong and with it the world was won. The Word of God is a powerful weapon. (Heb. 4:12) Col. 3:16-*"Let the Word of God dwell in you richly"*

- It is the Word of God that will save us from error and delusion.
- It will stop us from becoming disobedient.
- It will pull us back from powerful temptation ...

It's vital therefore that we read, meditate, memorize and obey the Word otherwise we will be terribly exposed to Satan's attack.

The full armour of God consists of:

- *The belt of truth - He is truth.*
- *The breastplate of righteousness - He is our righteousness.*
- *The gospel of peace - He is our peace.*
- *The shield of faith - He is strength - our faith is in Him.*
- *The helmet of salvation - He is our salvation.*
- *The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God - He is the Word made flesh.*

These are the major pieces of our protective armour.

*What we are doing is putting on **JESUS** - because that armour is a symbolic description of Christ himself. (Ephesians 4:24)*

We are not free to play the part of a civilian living as if there was no war.

If we accept His commission ... His mission becomes our mission.

He is victorious - *Therefore we are victorious in Him as we clothe ourselves in the protective armour He has provided!*

How do we put on this armour that we cannot see, touch or feel?

- *Buckle on the belt of truth – Jesus you are my truth. (John 14:6)*
- *Strap on the breastplate of righteousness – Jesus you are my righteousness*
- *Put on my feet the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace – Jesus I am ready – You are my peace.*
- *Take up the shield of faith – Jesus you are my faith. (Gal 2:20) – my Shield.*
- *Put on the helmet of salvation – Jesus you are my salvation. (Eph. 1:3-7)*
- *Take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God – Jesus you are the Word. (John. 6:63)*

Taking our Stand: *Finding Freedom in the Provision and Power of Jesus Christ.*

Recognise: the real source of your trouble

Repent: of any known sin

Resist: the lies and accusations of the enemy

Receive and Rest: in the favour of the Heavenly Father

The Lord is faithful and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one
(2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Our Armour is Mighty and Effective .

Refiner's Fire Discipleship Training

Paul's letter to the Ephesians

Satan is the **Deceiver:**

He assaults the mind & twists the truth. ***Belt of Truth / Sword of Spirit.***

Tempter: He entices to sin. ***Shield of Faith. Prayer.***

Accuser: He assaults the conscience. ***Helmet & Breastplate***

The Body must maintain **Purity and Unity** to cover the attacks of the evil one and advance the Kingdom of God. (2 Thessalonians 3:3,4: 1John 5:18)

Cleaning up the Junk:

We have choices to make on what we allow into our lives

- a) What do we bow down to?
- b) What idolatry have we mixed with our worship of Almighty God?
- c) What are the Idols; the Baals; the Molech etc. in our lives?

WATCH AND PRAY (Ephesians 6:18 – 20)

Similar to Colossians 4:2-5

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

This prayer is part of the spiritual warfare – ‘the standing’.

Pray in the Spirit – praying under the spirit's influence and with his assistance.

(Romans 8:26-27, 1 Corinthians 14:15)

... on all occasions:

1. Constancy
2. Intensity (set boundaries to keep the enemy out)
3. For the saints – we are a team together – reduces judgments

with all kinds of prayers and requests.

- Thanksgiving
- Supplication – earnest pleading
- Petition – asking
- Confession
- Adoration
- Tongues
- Birthing

Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

- **Alert as if a Watchman:**
 - Through prayer to contribute to the creation of a secret place of protection for the saints.
 - To foresee the attack of the enemy and be proactive.
 - To determine who goes in and out.

Watchmen lean forward, "peering" into the distance, watching for the enemy's attacks. They are sentries, bodyguards, gatekeepers, boundary setters, and preservers of the Kingdom.

A very important role indeed!

Watchmen must:

- **Pay attention...** *Be on the alert.* Lives are at stake! The harvest must be guarded.
- **Observe.** ... Don't just look!...see! Watchmen must see what others fail to see.
- **Protect:** Watchmen warn. – In prayer set up boundaries of protection against the attacks of the demonic. They release the blessing of the Lord.
- **Maintain:** Watchmen maintain things for the Lord. They keep things working well and prevent breakdown. They maintain the anointing, integrity, and health etc.
- **Beware** ... A sober spirit is needed. 1 Peter 5:8
Watch for the lion and when you see him at work immediately *meet* him, and enforce Calvary's victory.

Watch over your family, a city, people, church, community and / or workplace.

The Hebrew words that are translated as watchmen, have one other aspect . They are not just defensive (protection) - but also **offensive - to besiege, lay siege to a city**

Keep in mind - **laying siege involves time - persistence.** It may take some time before breakthrough.

Our task - to cut off the enemy's supply lines and remove that which has given Satan place over people, cities and nations. God is giving strategies - helping us to discern the enemy's strategies and to 'spy out' his plans.

Watching over Leadership ... Protection. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

Paul urges them to pray for Him: that He would proclaim the gospel fearlessly and that He may fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel – the one new man!

Peter Wagner in '**Prayer Shield**' offers 5 reasons why pastors and team leaders are in great need of watchmen interceding for them.

- 1) **Pastors have more responsibility and accountability.**
James 3:1 *'My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.'*
- 2) **Pastors are more subject to temptation.**

The higher up you go on the ladder of Christian leadership, the higher you go on Satan's hit list. Satan would love to scatter the sheep by taking out the church leader.

- 3) **Pastors are more targeted by spiritual warfare**
Satanists, witches, New-Agers, occult practitioners, shamans, spiritists and other servants of darkness have entered into an evil covenant to pray to Satan for the breakdown of marriages of pastors and Christian leaders.
- 4) **Pastors have more influence on others.**
By the very nature of their ministry they have more influence on others.
- 5) **Pastors have more visibility.**
Because pastors are up front, they are constantly subject to gossip and criticism.

He says *"to the degree intercessors pray, the leaders gain protection against the fiery darts of the wicked one, over and above the whole armour of God they are responsible for using."*

Discussion:

- Discuss the importance of the helmet of salvation and how in practice to use the sword and the helmet.

Activation: *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

- Pray in the Spirit for the people of Genesis
- The Body of Christ in the city
- Bruce and Nadene – Jenny and Scott

¹ Lehmann Strauus, "The calling and Design of the Church – A Study in Ephesians"

APPENDIX A FURTHER NOTES ON APOSTLES & PROPHETS TODAY.**Priorities of the Apostolic:**

- To see Christ formed in everyone in the body of Christ
- To see the body of Christ built up and become mature

If we consider the example of Paul, an apostle could be seen as a **father figure** who gave birth to a number of churches & who interceded for them & warred for them to see them established on firm foundations. He spoke of himself as an ambassador of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 5:20-21) We need to recognize though that Paul is but one example of New Testament Apostles.

There is a sense in which the Apostle is charged in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the perspective and strategy of heaven to a particular setting on the earth.

E.G. Paul has a mission to proclaim the mystery – Gentiles and Jews as one new man.

Paul identifies the marks of an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:12 as signs, wonders and miracles and thus they stir in the people a faith in the God of the impossible. He does this in the context where his apostleship is under question when compared to others who are boasting in their revelations and spiritual experiences. However Paul is not wanting to boast in these, but rather, sets out a list of his trials and sufferings as a demonstration of his credentials. (2 Corinthians 11: 16-33)

If we examine the **Graeco-Roman background to this word *Apostle* we are able to grasp something of the significance of the apostles task as a foundational ministry gift to the church.**

The Admiral of a Fleet of Ships

In Greek culture, the word apostolos was a naval term that described an admiral, the fleet of ships that travelled with him, and the specialized crew who accompanied and assisted the admiral. The fleet would be sent out to sea on a mission to locate territories where Greek civilization was non-existent. Once an uncivilized region was identified, the admiral (called the apostolos) — along with his specialized crew and all their cargo and belongings — would disembark, settle down, and work as a team to establish a new community. Then they would begin the process of transforming a strange land into a replica of life as they believed it should be. Their purpose was total colonization of the uncivilized territory.

When that fleet pulled up to shore, it contained workers trained to build roads, construct buildings, and teach uncivilized natives how to read, write, and function in a new kind of social order. Thus, the admiral became the team leader for the construction of a new society.

You can easily see how this definition had application to a NT apostle, whose primary task was to travel with an apostolic team to establish the Church in places where the Church was non-existent.

An Ambassador or Envoy

The word "apostle" also described a person who had the authority to act much the same way an ambassador represents his government to another government. This classical and secular meaning of the word apostolos meant - an envoy sent to do business on behalf of

the one who sent him. Thus, a governmental apostle served as a personal representative, emissary, messenger, agent, diplomat, ambassador, ...

This person officially possessed the clout and influence to speak and act in the place of the one who sent him on his assignment. So when the ambassador — apostolos — spoke, his words were counted as the words of his sender

This reveals the New Testament apostle's position to speak and act on behalf of the Lord. This is a governmental position within the Body of Christ, and as such, an apostolic ministry gift should be received as one with great spiritual clout and the backing of Heaven.

<https://renner.org/the-historical-meaning-of-the-word-apostle/> accessed 25th Nov 2018

While it could be debated that this usage would not have been in the mind of Jesus, but given the strong influence of this culture in the Galilee it is not impossible for it to have some relevance. - certainly it would have done so as the apostles fanned out across the Roman world.

The notes below are from notes from a presentation to a Queensland gathering of pastors from the Southern Cross Association of Churches by David Balestri in 2017

An apostolic culture prioritizes building over blessing

The English word *build* used in Matthew 16:18 and also in Ephesians 4:12 is the Greek word "oikodome"; it means to construct something according to a blueprint or a specific design. It also means to increase the potential of someone with a focus on the process involved. God has a design for the body of Christ and He has a specific blueprint for every city and human life!

Haggai 1:2-8 NKJV *“Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “**The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.**” ’ ” Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “ Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! “You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.” Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD.”*

The apostolic commission isn't just to build local churches, but rather to disciple nations.

Outworking of the restoration of apostolic culture in the saints:

- 1) Kingdom minded believers in their sphere of vocations ... Monday to Saturday
- 2) Maturing image of Christ built inside the hearts of believers
- 3) A people who are apostolically sighted towards their kingdom assignment and prophetically led and equipped to build their lives on the voice of God.

Each ascension gift ministry (5 fold ministry) is graced to express and equip the body of Christ with a dimension of the Christos.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- SNODGRASS, Klyne. *Ephesians* (N.I.V. Application commentary) Zondervan 1996
- BOICE, J.M. *Ephesians* Baker 1997
- BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and to the Ephesians* Eerdmans 1984
- O'BRIEN, PETER T. *The Letter to the Ephesians* Eerdmans 1999
- PATZIA, A.G. *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* Hendrickson 1990
- BARCLAY, W. *The letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* St Andrew Press 1976
- ELWELL, W.A. & - *Encountering the New Testament* Baker 1998
YARBROUGH, R.W.
- MARTIN, G.C.- *The Century Bible – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians* TC & EC Jack 1902
- SILVOSO, ED *That None Should Perish* Regal 1994
- Ben F. Gray | CHI-Ministries | ben(5)benfgray.org | www.chiministries.com | Update March '16. Watchmen School of Intercession notes on the Armour of God.
- <https://renner.org/the-historical-meaning-of-the-word-apostle/> / accessed 25th Nov 2018
- W.Dowd *Ephesians – Grace Notes* <http://www.realtime.net/~wdowd/ephesians>